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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: April 28, 1982

Forwarded to:

Mr. William Dempsey
President
Association of American Railroads
1920 L Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

I-82-1 through -4

On March 25, 1981, at Enos, Indiana, a railroad flatcar which had derailed struck three of four 1,000-gallon farm truck tanks loaded with anhydrous ammonia parked near the mainline tracks. The flatcar breached two of the tanks, opening a tear in one tank and shearing off all of the valves from a second. Ammonia escaped and mixed with fog, drifted across a divided highway 1/4 mile away, obscured motorists' vision, and led to multiple motor vehicle crashes. As a result of the accident, the train conductor and a motorist died and the rear brakeman and two motorists were injured. The distance from the tanks to the track ranged from about 19 to 40 feet. The flatcar traveled 65 feet from the track before coming to rest.

On November 26, 1976, in Belt, Montana, one of a number of derailed railroad cars struck a 16,000-gallon gasoline storage tank; in the ensuing fire the entire bulk storage plant burned; 2 persons were killed and 24 others were injured as a result. ^{1/} The tank was located about 42 feet from the mainline track; several of the derailed cars traveled more than 100 feet from the track.

While the farm truck tanks and the storage tank at Enos and Belt were far enough away from the tracks to provide adequate clearance for normal train operations, they were not far enough away to prevent them from being struck by the derailed cars. No specific protection against damage by derailed cars was provided or required. At both Enos and Belt, the hazardous materials tanks were on property leased from the railroad.

In both cases the hazardous materials tanks complied with regulations, codes, and contract requirements regarding minimum clearance and construction. The farm truck tanks involved in the Enos accident were built in accordance with the American Society of Mechanical Engineers Boiler and Pressure Code. The carrier's right-of-way boundary at Enos was 18 feet from the track; the tanks were at least 19 feet from the tracks, in compliance with the minimum clearance requirements of a 1963 contract between the carrier and the facility operator.

^{1/} "Railroad Accident Report: Derailment of a Burlington Northern Freight Train, Belt, Montana, November 26, 1976," (NTSB-RAR-77-7).

Apart from the minimum clearance requirements in the Enos lease, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), in its consensus standard K 61.1 - 1972, specifies a 25-foot minimum distance from the mainline of railroads for storing 1,000-gallon anhydrous ammonia containers. The Milwaukee Railroad, which was operating the train which derailed on Conrail tracks at Enos, requires at least a 20-foot clearance for 1,000-gallon above-ground anhydrous ammonia tanks along Milwaukee Railroad rights-of-way. 2/

The above-ground storage tanks in the Belt accident were inspected by the State fire marshal and found to be in compliance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) No. 30, "Flammable and Combustible Liquids Code" which prescribes 20 feet as the minimum distance for 16,000-gallon above-ground fuel storage tanks from adjoining property. The Association of American Railroads (AAR), in its Bureau of Explosives Circular No. 17, incorporates this provision of NFPA No. 30.

State statutes and administrative orders usually do not prescribe specific separation or other safeguards for bulk hazardous materials stored along railroad rights-of-way. A 1951 Indiana statute established an 8-foot general horizontal track clearance requirement primarily for train crew protection. In Montana, Railroad Commissioners' Order 2597 established a similar general horizontal clearance requirement of 8 feet 6 inches. Thirty-eight other States have established similar general clearance requirements ranging from 8 feet to 12 feet. 3/

In 1976, the Safety Board began recording the maximum lateral distance traveled by derailed cars after they leave the track. The results of such measurements from 298 NTSB investigations from 1976 to 1979 follow:

MAXIMUM DISTANCE TRAVELED BY DERAILED CAR (Ft)	NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS
1-10	39
11-20	33
21-30	28
31-40	29
41-50	46
51-60	31
61-70	25
71-80	24
81-90	9
91-100	15
101-110	2
111-120	2
121-800	15

2/ "Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific Railroad Company: Rules and Specifications Governing the Location, Construction and Operation of Loading Apparatus, Unloading Apparatus, Storage Tanks and Buildings Used for Storage and Handling of Flammable Liquids, Liquids Emitting Flammable Vapors, Compressed Gases and Other Hazardous Liquids Transported in Tank Cars or Other Containers." Red Book, January 1, 1948.

3/ American Railway Engineering Association Manual for Railroad Engineering, "Legal Clearance Requirements," 28-3-25, 1975.

Based on the Safety Board's measurements, in more than half of these derailments hazardous materials placed as close to the tracks as the hazardous materials in Belt could have been struck. Had hazardous materials been placed as close as those at Enos, they could have been struck by derailed cars in three-fourths of the accidents. Storage tanks 8 feet from tracks would have been vulnerable to damage by derailed cars in over 90 percent of the 298 accidents investigated by the Safety Board. (See figure 1.)

The Safety Board also investigated a 1979 accident in which derailed freight cars damaged mobile living cars for railroad maintenance-of-way workers, temporarily parked as close as 18 feet from the main track. While none of the workers in the cars were seriously injured, the foregoing derailment data suggest that trackside placement of such temporary facilities could be hazardous to the occupants. At that distance, they could have been struck by derailed cars in three-fourths of the accidents surveyed.

The Safety Board could not determine the extent to which hazardous materials are stored in vulnerable locations near railroad tracks because records are not available. However, industry and carrier representatives have indicated to the Safety Board that the Enos and Belt storage locations were not unique. The Safety Board recognizes that there have been few serious derailments involving hazardous materials storage; however, the accidents and data cited suggest that railroads should reevaluate existing requirements influencing the location and protection of hazardous materials storage near mainline railroad tracks to assure that the risks such storage poses are adequately controlled.

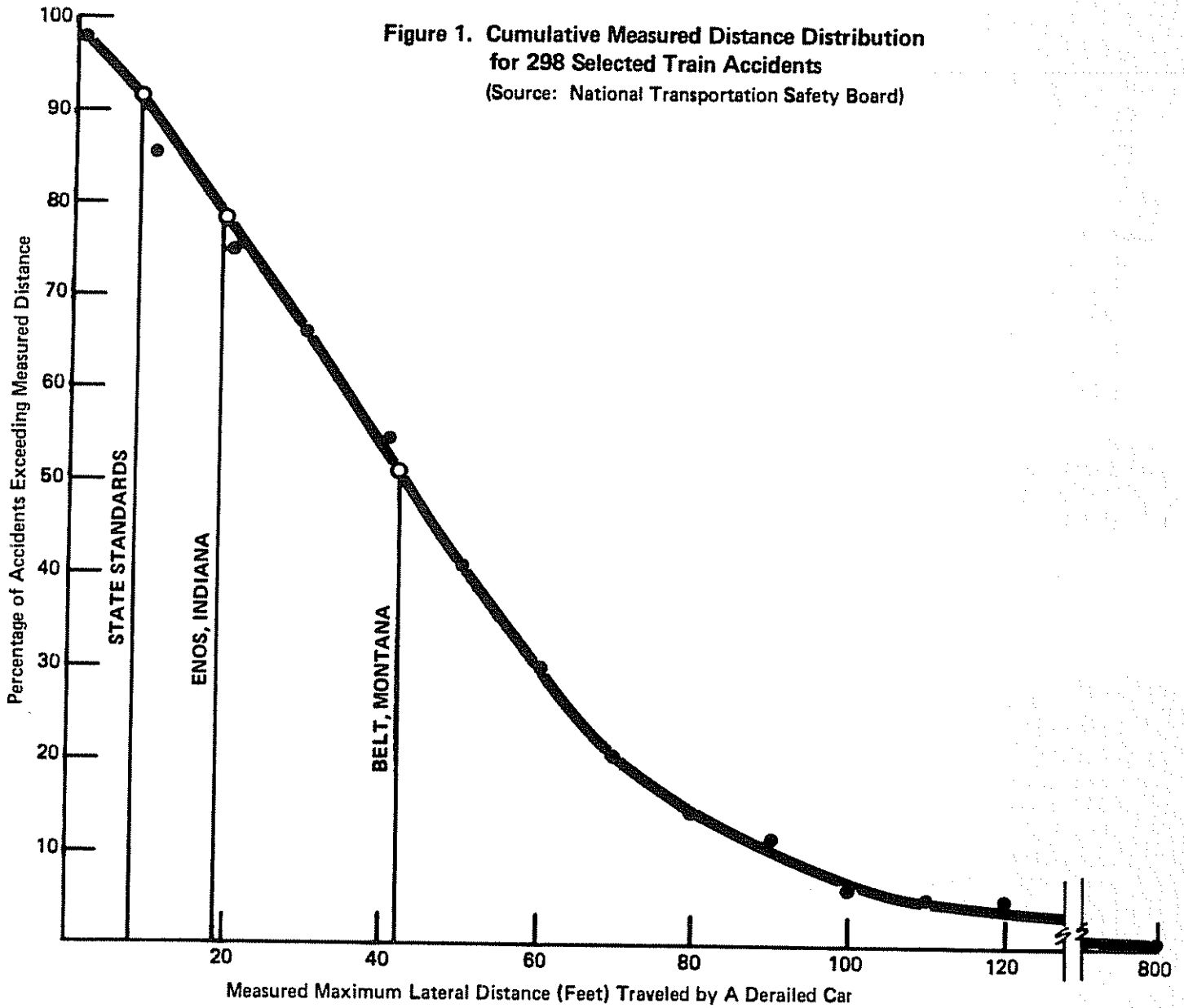
Railroads can control the location of hazardous materials storage on their property under the terms of leases they negotiate for use of the property by other parties. However, railroads have little control over storage on property that is beyond railroad right-of-way boundaries. Storage on property beyond railroad right-of-way boundaries is addressed by a NFPA code and ANSI standards. State track clearance statutes or regulations can affect storage on and beyond right-of-way boundaries. Therefore, these organizations and State authorities also should reevaluate their standards or statutes and regulations to more effectively control the risks of hazardous materials storage adjacent to rights-of-way.

Differing safety provisions in existing practices, standards, statutes, and regulations affecting storage indicate a need for better coordination among the organizations and authorities recommending or establishing these provisions. The railroads can provide the best information about the behavior of derailed cars during train accidents and the factors which determine risks posed to hazardous materials storage along their tracks. Therefore, the Safety Board believes that the railroad industry should take a lead role in assuring consistent safety provisions for such storage in the future. To attain this consistency, the railroad industry should coordinate its reevaluation with the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, whose members issue relevant State regulations and other organizations which publish related standards to control these hazards.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Association of American Railroads:

Reevaluate existing practices and standards influencing the placement of hazardous materials storage which may be vulnerable to damage by derailed railroad cars in train accidents. (Class II, Priority Action)
(I-82-1)

Figure 1. Cumulative Measured Distance Distribution for 298 Selected Train Accidents
(Source: National Transportation Safety Board)

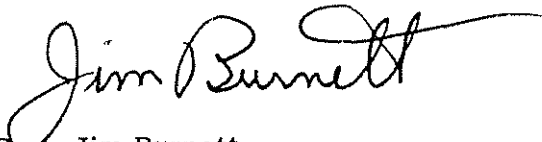


Based on the results of a reevaluation of existing practices and standards, develop necessary changes in recommended practices to identify and protect vulnerable hazardous materials storage near mainline railroad tracks and disseminate these recommended practices to member companies for implementation. (Class II, Priority Action) (I-82-2)

In coordination with the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, identify actions States might take to require adequate protection of future hazardous materials storage near mainline railroad tracks against damage by derailed railroad cars in train accidents. (Class II, Priority Action) (I-82-3)

Coordinate development of recommended practices for identifying and protecting hazardous materials storage near mainline railroad tracks with the National Fire Protection Association and the American National Standards Institute, to assure consistency among related recommended safety practices. (Class III, Longer Term Followup) (I-82-4)

BURNETT, Chairman, and McADAMS, GOLDMAN, and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in these recommendations.


By: Jim Burnett
Chairman