

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: June 28, 1978

Forwarded to:

Mr. T. S. Carter
President
Louisiana & Arkansas Railway Company
114 West 11th
Kansas City, Missouri 64105

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-78-25

About 2:15 p.m., December 28, 1977, Louisiana & Arkansas Railway freight train Extra 4102 North collided with a log-laden tractor-semitrailer at the Vine Street crossing in Goldonna, Louisiana. A "jumbo" tank car loaded with liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) ruptured and the gas ignited. The resultant fireball enveloped the train's locomotive units and parts of Goldonna's business and residential districts. Two train crewmembers were killed; the truckdriver, a train crewmember, and eight bystanders were injured. Property damage was estimated to be \$1,256,000. 1/

The investigation disclosed that the train was moving about 50 mph when it struck the tractor-semitrailer, whereas maximum authorized speed was 40 mph. It was calculated that had the train been moving at the authorized speed, the collision with the tractor-semitrailer may not have occurred.

The investigation also disclosed that the LPG tank car which ruptured and two other loaded LPG tank cars were the 4th, 5th, and 6th cars behind the locomotive units at the time of the accident. The close proximity of the ruptured tank car to the locomotive units was responsible for the death of the flagman riding in the trailing locomotive unit and caused fuel leaking from the ruptured tank of the lead locomotive unit to be ignited. The fuel oil fire caused the death of the engineer and seriously injured the head brakeman.

1/ For more detailed information about this accident read: "Railroad/ Highway Accident Report--Collision of a Louisiana & Arkansas Freight Train and a L. V. Rhymes Tractor-Semitrailer at Goldonna, Louisiana, December 28, 1977." (NTSB-RHR-78-1.)

Federal regulations (49 CFR 174.91) required that a loaded tank car placarded other than "combustible" cannot be placed closer than the 6th car from the engine or occupied caboose when the train's length permits. L&A General Order No. 2, dated January 1, 1977, embodies this regulation. At the time of the accident, Extra 4102 North consisted of 79 cars, 19 of which were loaded placarded tank cars.

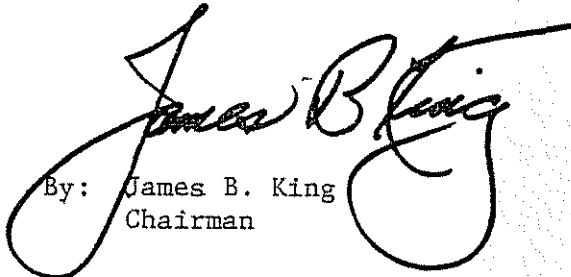
The conductor of Extra 4102 North testified that he understood the meaning of L&A General Order No. 2 and was aware of the location of the three LPG tank cars. He also stated that he took no action to assure that the cars were placed properly.

Interviews with members of the traincrew and other train-service employees at Alexandria, where the crew reported for duty, indicated they had little contact with their supervisors. A number of men did not know their supervisor's names. It was also learned that there are only the two division trainmasters on the L&A system and only these men are required to make periodic fitness and efficiency checks.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Louisiana & Arkansas Railway Company:

Assure that traincrews are properly supervised and comply with speed restrictions and other instructions.
(Class II, Priority Action) (R-78-25)

KING, Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and DRIVER, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.


By: James B. King
Chairman