

LK R-385

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: AUG 31 1982

Forwarded to:

Honorable Robert Blanchette
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
400 Seventh Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-82-86 and -87

On November 13, 1981, cars No. 25 through No. 29 of a 35-car Seaboard Coastline freight train derailed in a 7° curve near Montgomery, Alabama. The accident occurred shortly after the train left the yard. A 111A-100W tank car (ACFX 84799) carrying methyl alcohol sustained a head puncture from another car in the derailment sequence. The ignition of the leaking alcohol resulted in evacuation of approximately 150 persons. There were no injuries and the total estimated damage was \$62,000.

Preliminary findings indicated that interference between the car body center plate and the truck bolster rim severely hampered the capability of car No. 25 (DWC 606813) to negotiate the curve. Operation of cars that have interference between the car body center plate and the truck bolster is covered by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulation 49 CFR 215.119(e):

- (e) A railroad may not place or continue in service a car, if the car has interference between the truck bolster and the center plate that prevents proper truck rotations.

Further investigation revealed that car No. 25 was on the owner's (the Duluth, Winnipeg and Pacific Railway) repair track on October 18, 1981, (26 days before the derailment) for an "In-Date-Test" (IDT) of the air brake system. However, the amount of wear between the truck bolster and center plate appeared to be in excess of what should have normally occurred in the 26-day period. The Safety Board believes that the truck bolster and center plate interference existed at the time the car was on the owner's repair track and that the defect should have been detected and corrected at that time. In addition, the defect was not detected during the required (49 CFR 215.13) inspection conducted at the Seaboard Coastline yard in Montgomery, Alabama, immediately before the train left the yard.


The Safety Board is concerned about the inspection procedures on the Seaboard Coastline Railroad and the Duluth, Winnipeg and Pacific Railway; their personnel should have inspected and detected the interference condition on this car. Such interference between the truck bolster and car body center plate, if left uncorrected, will almost invariably result in a derailment and should be a priority inspection item on repair tracks and in train yards.

While the consequences of this accident were not serious, failure to properly inspect and detect freight car defects of this type creates a situation of unnecessary risk, especially in the transportation of hazardous materials, and increases the probability of a catastrophic derailment. Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Railroad Administration:

Conduct a safety review of Seaboard Coastline Railroad and the Duluth, Winnipeg and Pacific Railway to determine if inspection practices on these railroad properties are adequate to detect bolster and center plate interference problems, and provide the National Transportation Safety Board with a report of the findings. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-82-86)

Inform Federal Railroad Administration safety inspectors of the circumstances of the derailment of the Seaboard Coastline train on November 13, 1981, emphasizing the potentially serious consequences of inadequate bolster and center plate inspections, and require them to include in their scheduled inspections a review of the adequacy of the inspection procedures employed by railroads to detect interference between truck bolsters and the car body center plates. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-82-87).

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


By: Jim Burnett
Chairman