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**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD**  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: SEP 2 1982

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Forwarded to:

Mr. William H. Dempsey  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Association of American Railroads  
American Railroads Building  
1920 L Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-82-88

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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 bowl rim severely hampered the capability of car No. 25 (DWC 606813) to negotiate the curve. The In-Date-Test (IDT) stencil on the car indicated that car No. 25 had been on the owner's (the Duluth, Winnipeg and Pacific Railway) repair track on October 18, 1981, only 26 days before the derailment. However, the amount of wear to the center plate and the bolster rim appeared to be in excess of what should have normally occurred in the 26-day period. The Safety Board believes that the interference between the truck bolster rim and the car body center plate 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 Association of American Railroads' "Field Manual of the AAR Interchange Rules" Rule 47e.(9), recognizes the seriousness of interference between the truck bolster bowl rim and the car body center plate.

Top surface bolster bowl rim must not be in contact with center plate horizontal surface. This condition may be corrected by liners as shown in paragraph 8 above provided vertical bearing surface of 1 1/8" or more is maintained.


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 car No. 25. 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, the failure to follow proper inspection procedures 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 Association of American Railroads:

Inform its membership of the circumstances of derailment of the Seaboard Coastline train on November 13, 1981, to emphasize the potentially serious consequences of inadequate inspections to detect interference between truck bolsters and body center plates of cars on repair tracks and in train yards. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-82-88)

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility "...to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations." (P.L. 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any actions taken as a result of its safety recommendation. Therefore, we would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter.

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, McADAMS, and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in this recommendation.

By:   
Jim Burnett  
Chairman