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R-350

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: August 11, 1981

Forwarded to:

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

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-81-81

On May 17, 1978, a northbound Missouri Pacific freight train struck the rear of a standing St. Louis Southwestern freight train near Gorham, Illinois, on a section of Missouri Pacific track over which the St. Louis Southwestern Railway Company has operating rights. The engineer and head brakeman on the striking train saw the impending collision and abandoned their train. They were unable to warn the occupants of the caboose since the radios were not on the same operating frequency. The conductor inside the caboose was killed, and five employees on the two trains were injured. The total damage was estimated at \$484,000.

In another accident on April 9, 1980, a Western Pacific Railroad Company train with a Union Pacific Railroad locomotive as a lead unit derailed when excessive locomotive power was applied behind the caboose by a Western Pacific pusher locomotive. The train derailed at Hayward, California, and resulted in two employee fatalities, two employee injuries, and damage estimated at \$1,382,000. The crew on the Union Pacific locomotive could not communicate or provide guidance regarding proper power application to the crew of the pusher locomotive because their radios operated on different frequencies.

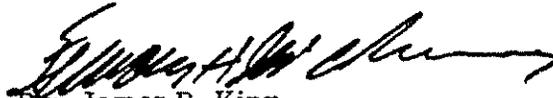
In a third accident on February 1, 1981, a southbound Kansas City Southern train collided with a northbound Missouri Pacific extra train at New Roads, Louisiana. The trains collided 5 minutes after a meet order had expired and 3 minutes after the Kansas City Southern train had left the designated meet point. The accident resulted in damages totaling \$555,000. Again, neither train could communicate with the other because of different radio operating frequencies.

Radio contact from one train to another to establish meeting points is not allowed under standard industrywide operating rules; however, a radio may be used to convey train location and other data from train to train. The National Transportation Safety Board is concerned that although these trains had operating radios they were not able to communicate. The inability to communicate increases the probability that accidents similar to those described above will continue to occur.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Railroad Administration:

Initiate rulemaking to require trains which operate on common trackage to have compatible radio equipment which will permit emergency communication. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-81-81)

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



By: James B. King
For Chairman