

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: April 21, 1977

Forwarded to:

Mr. J. R. Wolfe
President
Chicago and North Western
Transportation Company
400 West Madison Street
Chicago, Illinois 60606

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-77-11

About 4:25 a.m., on May 16, 1976, the locomotive and 27 cars of Chicago and North Western Transportation Company's (CNW) freight train No. 242 derailed as they moved around a 1°54' to 2°15' compound curve near Glen Ellyn, Illinois. Another CNW freight train, No. 380, which was moving on an adjacent track, collided with the derailed cars of No. 242; the locomotive and nine cars of No. 380 derailed. The tankhead of No. 380's fifth car was punctured by the coupler of another car during the derailment. The tank car's anhydrous ammonia cargo escaped. Fifteen persons were injured as a result of the derailment and release of ammonia. Damage from the accident amounted to \$1,914,000. 1/

The investigation of the derailment disclosed that train No. 242 was the first eastbound freight train permitted by CNW to operate at a passenger train speed of 60 mph on track 2 and was moving at 60 mph when the accident occurred. A freight train speed of 60 mph requires that the track be maintained to the Federal Track Safety Standards requirements for Class 4. An examination of track 2 immediately west of the derailment point disclosed five locations where the crosstie conditions only complied with Class 3 specifications and one point where they did not even comply with Class 1. There were several locations where the differences in cross levels were marginal and several joint locations where unsecured track shims had been used to adjust levels.

1/ For more detailed information on this accident, read "Railroad Accident Report: Chicago and North Western Transportation Company, Freight Train Derailments and Collision, Glen Ellyn, Illinois, May 16, 1976." NTSB-RAR-77-2.

(2)

It is obvious from the conditions found that track 2 did not comply with the requirements for Class 4 track. Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Chicago and North Western Transportation Company:

Maintain tracks to the specifications of the Federal Track Safety Standards for each class and do not increase train speeds until it is determined that the track is adequate for such speeds. (Class II, Priority Follow-up) (R-77-11).

TODD, Chairman, BAILEY, Vice Chairman, McADAMS and HOGUE, Members, concurred in the above recommendation. HALEY, Member, did not participate.

Kay Bailey
for By: Webster B. Todd, Jr.
Chairman