

Log R-659A



National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: DEC 15 1995

In Reply Refer To: R-95-44

Honorable Jolene M. Molitoris
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

About 5:21 a.m., Pacific standard time, on December 14, 1994, a westbound Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company (Santa Fe) intermodal train, PBHLA1-10, collided with the rear end of a standing westbound Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) unit coal train, CUWLA-10, at milepost 61.55, near Cajon, California, on the Cajon Subdivision of the Santa Fe's San Bernardino Division. The two crewmembers from the Santa Fe train were injured when they jumped from the moving train before the collision. Two helper crewmembers on the rear of the UP train detrained before the collision because they had heard radio conversations among the Santa Fe crewmembers, the train dispatcher, and UP crewmembers. As a result of the collision, a fire broke out that burned the two UP helper locomotive units. Four Santa Fe locomotive units and three articulated five-pack double-stack container cars were also destroyed. Total estimated damages were \$4,012,900.¹

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the collision was insufficient available train braking force for the Santa Fe train due to a restriction or blockage in the trainline between the third and fourth cars. The Safety Board concludes that there would have been no accident had the Santa Fe train had a two-way end-of-train (EOT) device, which offers a key advantage that a one-way EOT device does not. The two-way device allows the locomotive crew to telemetrically initiate an emergency brake application at

¹ For more information, read Railroad Accident Report--Rear-End Collision of Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Freight Train PBHLA1-10 and Union Pacific Railroad Freight Train CUWLA-10 near Cajon, California, December 14, 1994 (NTSB/RAR-95/04).

the end of the train. Thus, the whole train can be braked even if the trainline is blocked, as it was in this accident.

The Safety Board has a long history of advocating the use of two-way EOT devices. As a result of a runaway train near Helena, Montana, on February 2, 1989, the Safety Board recommended that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA):

Require the use of two-way EOT telemetry devices on all caboosless trains for the safety of railroad operations. (R-89-82)

The FRA has recognized the importance of requiring two-way EOT devices in its proposed changes to the "Power Brake Regulations."² The comment period for the proposed changes was extended to April 1, 1995, and the FRA has been evaluating the responses. The Safety Board is pleased that 6 years after the recommendation was made, the FRA has finally addressed the need for two-way EOT devices. Nonetheless, the Safety Board believes that until a rule requiring two-way EOT devices is in effect, runaway train accidents like Cajon will continue to happen, and the Safety Board is superseding Safety Recommendation R-89-82.

The National Transportation Safety Board therefore issues the following recommendation to the Federal Railroad Administration:

Separate the two-way end-of-train requirements from the Power Brake Law notice of proposed rulemaking, and immediately conclude the end-of-train device rulemaking so as to require the use of two-way end-of-train telemetry devices on all caboosless trains. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-95-44)


Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations R-95-41 through -43 to the Association of American Railroads, Safety Recommendation R-95-47 to the American Short Line Railroad Association, and Safety Recommendation R-95-48 to all Class 1 railroads.

The Safety Board is vitally interested in any action taken as a result of its safety recommendations. Therefore, it would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendation R-95-44 in your reply. If you need additional information, you may call (202) 382-6840.

² *Federal Register*, Vol. 59, No. 179, Friday, September 16, 1994, "Proposed Rules," page 47678.

Chairman HALL, Vice Chairman FRANCIS, and Members HAMMERSCHMIDT and
GOGLIA concurred in this recommendation.

By:


Jim Hall
Chairman