



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: July 19, 1996

In Reply Refer To: R-96-15

Mr. Thomas M. Downs
Chairman and President
National Railroad Passenger Corporation
60 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002

On August 3, 1994, Amtrak (National Railroad Passenger Corporation) train 49, en route from New York, New York, to Chicago, Illinois, was traveling westbound about 79 mph on trackage belonging to the Consolidated Rail Corporation. About 3:44 a.m., the train derailed near Batavia, New York. No fatal injuries were sustained; 108 passengers and 10 crewmembers were injured.¹

Among the cars on the train was a Heritage class dome coach; its seats, which rotated and reclined, differed from all the other seats in the train cars. Each back frame was attached to its pan frame by two 12-inch-long tapered metal braces. During the derailment, the pan frames remained attached to the pedestals, and the pedestals remained anchored to the floor tracks and sidewalls. However, 20 back frames, including the back cushions, separated from the pan frames, exposing the metal braces.

No occupant of the dome car reported being injured by the exposed metal braces. The Safety Board concludes, however, that the metal braces were a hazard to passengers in the car, particularly because the car overturned in the derailment. Therefore, the Safety Board believes that Amtrak should install, in all Heritage coach dome cars in its possession, a positive locking feature that will prevent the separation of the car seat backs from the seat back braces.

¹ For further information, read Railroad Accident Report—*Derailed Amtrak Train 49 on Conrail Trackage near Batavia, New York, August 3, 1994* (NTSB/RAR-96/02).

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board issues the following recommendation to the National Railroad Passenger Corporation:

Install, in all Heritage coach dome cars in its possession, a positive locking feature that will prevent the separation of the car seat backs from the seat back braces.
(Class II, Priority Action)(R-96-15)

The Safety Board also issues Safety Recommendations R-96-12 through -14 to the Federal Railroad Administration, R-96-16 and -17 to the Association of American Railroads, and R-96-18 and -19 to the American Short Line Railroad Association

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" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is 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-96-15. If you need additional information, you may call (202) 382-6840.

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

By: 
Jim Hall
Chairman