

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: August 15, 1980

 Forwarded to:

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

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-80-31 and 32

About 4:00 p.m., on March 14, 1980, westbound Amtrak train No. 7, the Empire Builder, derailed two locomotive units and eight cars while moving at 37 mph through a 6°08' curve on the Burlington Northern (BN) track at Glacier Park, Montana. Of the 170 passengers and 20 crewmembers, 115 persons were injured and 35 were hospitalized. Property damage was estimated to be \$546,800. 1/

Investigation of this accident disclosed that maintenance forces were to replace several of the low rails in the curve because of corrugations and shelling. These rail conditions were noted by BN inspectors as early as March 7, 1980; however, no slow order was issued to reduce the speed of trains to 20 mph until the rails were replaced as required by Federal regulation 213.113(b). Track inspection records also did not indicate that these rails were in the track and that any remedial action was to be taken as implied by Federal regulation 213.241(b).

Investigation also revealed that the baggage car in train No. 7 was being operated with a number of defective conditions which could cause the derailment of a passenger train. These defects, which are not covered by Federal regulations, should be, even though they did not cause or contribute to the cause of the derailment at Glacier Park. Minimum safety standards for passenger car inspection and maintenance are vital to safe railroad passenger transportation.

A major problem encountered during the evacuation was removing the injured passengers from the overturned cars. Some of the injured had to be lifted to overhead windows and down ladders; some of those injured were removed on stretcher boards.

1/ For more detailed information read, "Railroad Accident Report-- Derailment of Amtrak Train No. 7 on Burlington Northern Track, Glacier Park, Montana, March 14, 1980 (NTSB-RAR-80-6)."

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

Promulgate regulations to establish minimum safety standards for the inspection and maintenance of railroad passenger cars. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-80-31)

Amend track safety standard 49 CFR 213.241, Inspection Records, to require railroad inspectors to list on their inspection records the location of rails which exhibit the external conditions listed in subpart (b) of 49 CFR 213.113, Defective Rails, and the remedial action they have taken. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-80-32)

In addition, the Safety Board reiterates the following recommendation:

Require that rail passenger equipment be fitted with roof hatches so that passengers can escape through the ceiling of a car which is lying on its side. (R-76-21)

KING, Chairman, GOLDMAN and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in these recommendations. DRIVER, Vice Chairman, and McADAMS, Member, did not participate.

for

James B. King
By: James B. King
Chairman