

R-299A

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: October 24, 1980

Forwarded to:

Mr. Nello J. Bianco
President
Bay Area Rapid Transit District
800 Madison Street
Oakland, California 94607

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-80-47

About 6:55 p.m., on April 9, 1980, Western Pacific Railroad (WP) freight train Extra UP 3734 West (Sealand 6) had its caboose, three helper locomotive units behind the caboose, and seven freight cars derailed at the Industrial Parkway overpass at Hayward, California. Of the nine crewmembers, two were killed and two were injured. Three locomotive units and the caboose were destroyed. Damage was estimated at \$1,382,000. ^{1/}

The fuel tanks of the locomotive units were ruptured in the derailment, and escaping fuel was immediately ignited by severed 15,000-volt powerlines. The resulting fire consumed more than 10,000 gallons of fuel oil, engulfed the width of Industrial Parkway, and threatened the adjacent overpass of the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART). The powerlines sagged over the BART tracks, and there was danger that the remaining clearance would be critically reduced by the loss of the remaining pole support. About 11 minutes after the accident, a northbound five-car BART train with passengers aboard crossed the Industrial Parkway overpass and proceeded beyond the emergency area.

The investigation disclosed that BART supervisors at the Hayward yard, about 1 mile south of the accident site, heard explosions and saw fire and smoke between the yard and BART's South Hayward station. They notified BART's Central Control by "hot line" telephone at 6:55:10 and 3 minutes later advised BART Central that the Hayward fire department had informed them that the fire was the result of the derailment of a WP freight train. At 7:01:20, the Hayward police contacted BART Central and requested that no trains be operated through the fire area.

^{1/} For more detailed information, read "Railroad Accident Report--Derailment of Western Pacific Railroad Company Freight Train Extra UP 3734 West (Sealand 6), Hayward, California, April 9, 1980" (NTSB-RAR-80-10).

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At the time of the accident, BART trains were approaching the fire area from both directions. The southbound train was stopped north of South Hayward station, but the northbound train was advanced past Union City station. At 7:04:30, the train was ordered by BART Central to proceed in manual mode, without restrictions and without having the passengers off-loaded, to the fire area to determine the situation and advise BART Central. When the train operator reached the fire area, he saw derailed track cars, a column of fire, and powerlines sagging across the BART tracks. The operator decided it was too dangerous to stay in the area, and after unsuccessfully trying to reach BART Central by radio, he proceeded across Industrial Parkway to a point clear of the fire area. He then advised BART Central not to operate other trains into the area due to the intensity of the fire and the low-hanging powerlines. Operations were suspended and the southbound train was off-loaded at South Hayward station.

At the time of the accident, the BART and the WP had no joint procedure for timely notification in the event an emergency occurred on the common right-of-way between Fremont and Oakland, California. BART Central did not have the telephone number of the WP director of train operations at San Francisco who is responsible for notifying concerned parties in emergencies. BART Central did have a number for WP's chief train dispatcher in Sacramento on a Rollex file. However, the number listed for the train dispatcher was not correct. WP's director of train operations did not know who to notify at BART.

As a result of this accident, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Bay Area Rapid Transit District:

Establish procedures to prevent trains from being operated into an area where an emergency exists until it is known that it is safe to do so. Develop and maintain on a current basis with the Western Pacific Railroad Company a plan for immediate notification of any emergency occurring on the common right-of-way between Oakland and Fremont. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-80-47)

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

By:  James B. King
Chairman