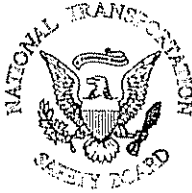


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F-103B

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation



Date: September 30, 1994

In Reply Refer To: I-94-8

Mr. James Lee Witt
Director
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Federal Center Plaza
500 C Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20472

On September 22, 1993, about 2:45 a.m., barges that were being pushed by the towboat MAUVILLA in dense fog struck and displaced the Big Bayou Canot railroad bridge near Mobile, Alabama.¹ About 2:53 a.m., National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) train 2, the Sunset Limited, en route from Los Angeles, California, to Miami, Florida, with 220 persons on board, struck the displaced bridge and derailed. The three locomotive units, the baggage and dormitory cars, and two of the six passenger cars fell into the water. The fuel tanks on the locomotive units ruptured, and the locomotive units and the baggage and dormitory cars caught fire. Forty-two passengers and 5 crewmembers were killed; 103 passengers were injured. The towboat's four crewmembers were not injured.

During rescue activities, an Amtrak representative provided the incident commander with a partial passenger and crew list and told him that about 200 people were on board. A list compiled later the next day showed 207 people. The delay in providing an exact count caused problems because the incident commander had to assign personnel to spend a day counting tickets to help develop a passenger list. In addition, emergency responders did not know when to discontinue rescue operations because the count changed frequently. The railroad was not aware that three infants were on board because they were not ticketed. If Amtrak had issued nonrevenue tickets for the infants, they would have been included on the passenger list.

¹For more information, read Railroad-Marine Accident Report—*Derailed of Amtrak Train No. 2 on the CSXT Big Bayou Canot Bridge Near Mobile, Alabama, September 22, 1993* (NTSB/RAR-94/01).

The owner of the Big Bayou Canot bridge, CSXT, did not have an up-to-date telephone listing of local authorities. The number for the Coast Guard in the Mobile telephone directory was incorrect. Consequently, the yardmaster was unsuccessful in his initial attempt to contact the Coast Guard and had to call the operator for assistance.

Although the Mobile County Emergency Management Agency (MCEMA) held drills to simulate transportation accidents before this accident, those drills did not include simulations of an accident involving railroad operations. In testimony, representatives from Amtrak, CSXT, Mobile County, and the Coast Guard said that they had never discussed the potential for an accident on the CSXT bridge.

The MCEMA had most recently conducted a drill, simulating an aircraft accident, on June 17, 1993, in Mobile Bay. The local police and fire departments, Coast Guard, Sheriff's Department, and other agencies involved in the September 22 Amtrak accident participated. Similar drills for accidents involving railroad operations would give participating agencies an opportunity to learn about their responsibilities and jurisdictions and to practice notification procedures, as well as methods of accounting for passengers and crew.

The Safety Board concludes that if the MCEMA had held drills to simulate a train accident, the incident commander may have known about Amtrak's procedures for ticketing passengers, and CSXT may have had the correct telephone number for the Coast Guard.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Emergency Management Agency:

Encourage local authorities to conduct emergency drills that simulate transportation accidents involving railroad operations.
(Class II, Priority Action) (I-94-8)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations I-94-3 through -6 to the U.S. Department of Transportation; I-94-7 and M-94-30 to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; M-94-31 through -38 to the U.S. Coast Guard; R-94-6 through -8 to the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak); M-94-39 through -41 to The American Waterways Operators, Inc.; M-94-42 through -45 to the Warrior & Gulf Navigation Company; R-94-9 and -10 to the Association of American Railroads; and R-94-11 and -12 to the American Short Line Railroad Association.

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 I-94-8 in your reply. If you need additional information, you may call (202) 382-6840.

Acting Chairman HALL and Members LAUBER, HAMMERSCHMIDT, and VOGT concurred in this recommendation.



By: Jim Hall
Acting Chairman