



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: December 20, 2001

In reply refer to: R-01-23

Mr. Edward Hamberger
President
Association of American Railroads
50 F Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

Mr. Frank Turner
President
American Short Line and Regional Railroad Assn.
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The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency charged by Congress with investigating transportation accidents, determining their probable cause, and making recommendations to prevent similar accidents from occurring. We are providing the following information to urge your organization to take action on the safety recommendation in this letter. The Safety Board is vitally interested in this recommendation because it is designed to prevent accidents and save lives.

This recommendation addresses the adequacy of maps used by emergency response personnel for railroad accidents. The recommendation is derived from the Safety Board's investigation of a February 5, 2001, railroad accident in Syracuse, New York, and is consistent with the evidence we found and the analysis we performed. As a result of this investigation, the Safety Board has issued four safety recommendations, one of which is addressed jointly to the Association of American Railroads and the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. Information supporting this recommendation is discussed below. The Safety Board would appreciate a response from you within 90 days addressing the actions you have taken or intend to take to implement our recommendation.

At about 11:40 a.m., eastern standard time, on February 5, 2001, eastbound Amtrak train 286, with 100 passengers and 4 crewmembers, struck the rear of eastbound CSX Transportation (CSXT) freight train Q620 on the CSXT railroad near Syracuse, New York. On impact, the lead Amtrak locomotive unit and four of the train's five cars derailed. The rear truck of the last car of the 92-car CSXT freight train derailed, and the car lost a portion of its load of lumber. At the time of impact, the passenger train was traveling 35 mph; the freight train was traveling 7 mph. The accident resulted in injuries to all 4 crewmembers and 58 of the passengers aboard the Amtrak train. No CSXT crewmember was injured. A small amount of diesel fuel spilled from the fuel tank on the lead Amtrak locomotive unit, but no fire resulted. Total damages were estimated to be about \$280,600.¹

¹ For more information, see National Transportation Safety Board, *Rear-End Collision of National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) Train 286 With CSXT Freight Train Q620 on the CSX Railroad at*

Crewmembers from CSXT train Q620 and Amtrak train 286 immediately notified the CSXT train dispatcher after the collision. The dispatcher asked for the location of the head end of the Amtrak train and was told by an Amtrak train 286 conductor that the train was east of control point 290 and he “could see milepost [MP] 290.”

About 11:43 a.m., the CSXT dispatching center at Selkirk, New York, notified the Onondaga County Department of Emergency Communications 911 telephone operator of a train accident with multiple minor injuries, but no fire. The CSXT dispatcher provided a milepost (MP 290) and street name (Factory Avenue) to assist responders in locating the accident; however, mileposts were not included on maps used by the Onondaga Emergency Communications Center (ECC). The ECC provided responding units with the locations of Lemoyne Avenue or Factory Avenue, which are about a mile from the accident. The Safety Board therefore concluded that in the emergency response to this accident, some initial confusion about the accident location occurred because the emergency response agency maps did not identify railroad milepost locations.

After a postaccident meeting between Amtrak representatives and all the accident emergency response organizations that responded to the Syracuse accident, the Onondaga County 911 Communications Control Center began including mileposts locations on its maps. This measure may allow responders to locate train accident sites more quickly and reliably. The Safety Board endorses such proactive action and believes the inclusion of railroad mileposts on emergency response maps throughout the United States could help minimize response times to railroad accidents.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board issues the following safety recommendation to the Association of American Railroads and to the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association:

Work with the National Emergency Number Association to facilitate the inclusion of railroad milepost markers on all emergency response maps across the country. (R-01-23)

The Safety Board also issued the following safety recommendation to the National Emergency Number Association:

Facilitate the inclusion of railroad milepost markers on all emergency response maps across the country. (R-01-22)

Additionally, the Safety Board also issued safety recommendations to the Federal Railroad Administration and Amtrak. In your response to the recommendation in this letter, please refer to R-01-23. If you need additional information, you may call (202) 314-6607.

Chairman BLAKEY, Vice Chairman CARMODY, and Members HAMMERSCHMIDT, GOGLIA, and BLACK concurred in this recommendation.

By: Marion C. Blakey
Chairman