



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: December 20, 2001

In reply refer to: R-01-24

Mr. George Warrington
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Railroad Passenger Corporation
60 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

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

The National Transportation Safety Board determined that the probable cause of the February 5, 2001, collision of Amtrak train 286 with the rear of CSXT freight train Q620 was the Amtrak engineer's inattention to the operation of his train, which led to his failure to recognize and comply with the speed limit imposed by the governing wayside signal, and the lack of any safety redundancy system capable of preventing a collision in the event of human failure.

On February 7, 2001, Safety Board investigators examined Amtrak café car 48910 at DeWitt Yard. They found one convection oven displaced from its normal locked position. The oven was on the counter between the wall and the coffeemaker. The hinged retaining bar, which folds down over the top of the oven to secure it in place, was unlocked. No injuries were attributed to unsecured appliances.

According to Amtrak officials, appliance securement checks are performed during scheduled maintenance, which for passenger cars is every 120 days and for food service cars, such as the café car involved in the accident, is every 60 days. Café car 48910 had had its most recent 60-day maintenance on December 12, 2000.

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 Syracuse New York, February 5, 2001*, Railroad Accident Report NTSB/RAR-01/04 (Washington, D.C.: NTSB, 2001).

Daily or initial terminal inspections do not include a securement check of appliances. During turnaround equipment servicing, written reports of mechanical defects are noted, and repairs are made before departure. According to Amtrak, the turnaround inspection for onboard appliances is a cursory inspection with no formal list or book of required tasks.

Passenger car maintenance requirements are found in the *Northeast Corridor 120-Day Preventive Maintenance Program Fiscal Year 2000* book. The book contains lists of tests, tasks, and inspections specified for the various maintenance personnel to follow for cleaning, repairing, and preparing cars for passenger service. A review of the 120-day maintenance book by Safety Board investigators revealed no requirement to ensure that appliances are secured and locked in place. The only appliance criterion was “disinfected, free of all food particles, grease, debris, and dirt inside, outside and underneath the appliance.”

As a result of its investigation of a December 19, 1989, accident in which an Amtrak train struck a truck semitrailer combination in Stockton, California,² the Safety Board made the following safety recommendation to Amtrak:

R-90-48

Establish system wide rules to ensure that only properly secured appliances are used in revenue service and to establish procedures for enforcing those rules.

On June 21, 1991, Amtrak responded:

The chief mechanical officer issued procedures to all field mechanical officers, which detail the requirement to utilize food service appliances that are compatible with available restraints. Division mechanical superintendents will ensure that cars are properly equipped with restraints during 120-day maintenance. They will also enforce the daily maintenance of applied restraint systems when appliances are replaced. In addition...all microwave, coffee, and convection oven restraints will be installed by 10/1/91.

Based on this response, the Safety Board classified Safety Recommendation R-90-48 “Closed—Acceptable Action” on August 21, 1991.

As noted, while a restraint bar was in place on the convection oven in café car 48910, it was unlocked and did not secure the equipment. Because Safety Board inspection of the passenger car maintenance requirements in the *Northeast Corridor 120-Day Preventive Maintenance Program Fiscal Year 2000* book found no requirement to ensure that appliances are secured and locked in place and because daily and initial terminal inspections do not include a securement check of appliances, the Safety Board concluded that Amtrak procedures are inadequate for ensuring that food service appliances in passenger service are secured sufficiently to prevent their becoming a source of passenger or crew injury in the event of an accident.

² National Transportation Safety Board, *Collision Of Amtrak Passenger Train No. 708 on Atchison, Topeka And Santa Fe Railway With TAB Warehouse and Distribution Company Tractor Semi Trailer, Stockton, California, December 19, 1989*, Railroad/Highway Accident Report NTSB/RHR-90/01 (Washington, D.C.: NTSB, 1990).

The National Transportation Safety Board therefore issues the following safety recommendation to the National Railroad Passenger Corporation:

Modify your procedures, as appropriate, to ensure that all onboard appliances are properly secured. (R-01-24)

The Safety Board also issued safety recommendations to the Federal Railroad Administration, the National Emergency Number Association, the Association of American Railroads, and the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association.

Please refer to Safety Recommendation R-01-24 in your reply. 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