

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: April 21, 1980

Forwarded to:

Mr. Alan S. Boyd
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Railroad Passenger Corporation
400 North Capitol Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-80-20

At 9:05 p.m., c.s.t., on October 12, 1979, northbound Amtrak passenger train No. 392 was traveling at 58.5 mph on track No. 4 at Harvey, Illinois. Illinois Central Gulf Freight Train No. 51 was waiting on track No. 3 to crossover to track No. 4 after train No. 392 went north. The switchtender on duty at Harvey aligned the crossover switch on track No. 4 seconds before train No. 392 arrived. Train No. 392 entered the crossover and struck train No. 51. The engineer and head brakeman of train No. 51 were killed, and all 6 crewmembers and 38 passengers on train No. 392 were injured.

During the investigation, the conductor of Amtrak train No. 392 testified that he had no training on the emergency features of the new superliner coach. Consequently, he had difficulty initially in operating the upper level door which interconnected two of the coaches. The door was opened successfully by other crewmembers, and an inspection indicated the door functioned as intended.

The Safety Board also determined that Amtrak does not require that these doors be locked, but the boarding doors had been locked with a key from the inside by crewmembers. There is no means provided for rescue forces to open these locked doors from the outside. A problem would have existed with these locked doors if it had been necessary to quickly evacuate passengers or if rescuers had to remove severely injured victims. Since the crewmembers were not incapacitated, they were able to unlock the doors for the passengers to exit the last four cars. The conductor of the train had not received any familiarization instructions on these new cars.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the National Railroad Passenger Corporation:

Ensure that all crewmembers on Amtrak passenger trains are trained to identify and operate all pertinent features of the equipment. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-80-20)

KING, Chairman, DRIVER, Vice Chairman, McADAMS, GOLDMAN, and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.


By: James B. King
Chairman