

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
(202) 426-8787

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Forwarded to:  
  
Mr. James F. Shugrue  
State Transportation Commissioner  
Connecticut Department of Transportation  
24 Walcott Hill Road  
Wethersfield, Connecticut 06109

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)  
R-76-46 and 47

At 6:30 p.m. on July 13, 1976, Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) train No. 1994 collided with the rear of Conrail train No. 1992 in New Canaan, Connecticut. The commuter trains were operating from Grand Central Station in New York eastward to New Canaan over a single track line. The collision killed 2 persons and injured 30 others. 1/

Train 1992 had arrived at New Canaan on the single-station track about 6:15 p.m., had discharged its passengers, and had moved westward on the station track to clear a switch which led to another track. Train 1992 was to enter the other track so that the station track would be clear for train 1994, which was due to arrive at New Canaan at 6:31 p.m. Train 1994 had passed an approach signal 2.1 miles west of New Canaan, which required that the train be operated prepared to stop at the next signal, but not exceed 30 mph. The next signal, located 760 feet west of the switch at New Canaan, marked the end of the main track and was a dwarf signal which continually displayed a "restricting" aspect. This aspect required that a train be operated prepared to stop short of a train, obstruction, or switch not properly lined, but not exceeding 15 mph. Train 1994 passed the signal at an undetermined speed and struck the rear of train 1992, which was located about 340 feet east of the signal.

1/ The National Transportation Safety Board's report, which contains the facts, analysis, and conclusions concerning this accident, will be issued in the future.

(2)

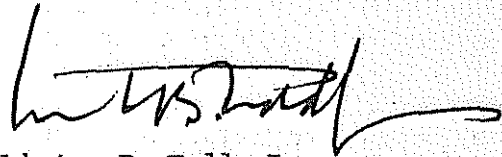
The track from the dwarf signal to the end of the line at New Canaan station is not part of the automatic-block signal system. Regardless of the occupancy of the station track, the signal displays the same "restricting" aspect and does not require an engineer of an approaching train to stop when another train is already occupying the track. As a train approaches New Canaan, a curve and vegetation restrict an engineer's view of the station track until the train is almost to the yard track switch.

Although the Safety Board has not completed its investigation, it is already obvious that if the last signal had displayed a "STOP" aspect to alert the engineer of train 1994 that a train was already occupying the track, the collision may have been avoided. Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Connecticut Department of Transportation require the Consolidated Railroad Corporation to:

Extend the automatic-block signal system to the end of the track at New Canaan so that the last signal will require the engineer to stop when that portion of the track is occupied. (R-76-46) (Class I, Urgent Followup)

Establish procedures until such signal protection can be provided to require that the engineer of each train approaching the New Canaan station be notified of the occupancy of the track between the last signal and the station and be authorized to pass the last signal, based upon that condition. (R-76-47) (Class I, Urgent Followup)

TODD, Chairman, BAILEY, Vice-Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.



By: Webster B. Todd, Jr.  
Chairman