

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 A.M., E.D.T., OCTOBER 19, 1976

ISSUED: October 19, 1976

Forwarded to:

Honorable Asaph H. Hall  
Administrator  
Federal Railroad Administration  
400 Seventh Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-76-50 and 51

About 11:52 p.m. on February 4, 1976, Penn Central Transportation Company freight train NY-12 collided head-on with freight train BM-7 near Pettisville, Ohio. The 3 locomotive units and 21 cars of train NY-12, and the 4 locomotive units and 4 cars of train BM-7 were derailed. One locomotive unit of each train was destroyed and the derailed cars were heavily damaged. The two crewmembers in the lead locomotive of both trains were killed and one crewmember on each train was injured as a result of the collision. The estimated cost of damages was \$1,165,000. 1/

Westbound train BM-7 was to be routed from track No. 2 to track No. 1 at crossover CP 327 to permit eastbound train NY-12 to pass on track No. 2. The crossover had been lined and the route established for the westward movement of BM-7; this automatically caused the signal governing eastward movements on track No. 2 at CP 327 to display a "stop" aspect.

Train NY-12, approached the eastward signal at CP 327 at an estimated speed of 35 mph. It passed the "stop" signal without reducing its speed, ran through and damaged the switch, and continued eastward about 1 mile, where it collided with train BM-7.

A number of factors indicate that the engineer and front brakeman were not responsive as train NY-12 passed the "stop" signal at CP 327 and continued eastward. It is also questionable if these crewmembers were responsive while the train traversed the 16 miles between Bryan and the collision point.

1/ For more detailed information on this accident read "Railroad Accident Report--Head-on Collision of two Penn Central Transportation Company Freight Trains near Pettisville, Ohio, February 4, 1976. NTSB-RAR-76-10.

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The crewmembers on the train which was westbound on track 1 watched NY-12 for about 4 miles and stated that the headlight of NY-12 never changed to bright, although the rules of the carrier require the headlights to be on bright except when a train is closely approaching or passing another train. Since there were no other trains between NY-12 and the westbound train on track 1, the engineer of NY-12 should have had the headlights on bright until his train was near the westbound train.

The last brake application of NY-12 was made near Bryan. Shortly after NY-12 passed signal 3292E, it entered a speed restriction zone where the speed was required to be reduced to 30 mph. The engineer made no attempt to reduce the speed of the train as it continued eastward at 35 mph. In fact, the train's speed did not change appreciably between Bryan and the collision point.

There was no reported radio communication between the crewmembers on the locomotive of NY-12 and anyone else after the train departed from Elkhart, and they did not answer the call which the engineer of BM-7 made just before the trains collided. Since the radio was operable when the train departed Elkhart, the lack of radio communications apparently was not caused by faulty equipment.

The conductor and flagman, who were in the caboose, noted no discrepancies in the operation of the train. They were not able to see the aspects displayed by the signals before the locomotive passed them; therefore, they had no knowledge of the aspects which governed the train's operation.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Railroad Administration:

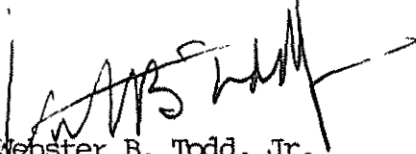
Promulgate rules to require engine crews to communicate fixed signal aspects to conductors while trains are en route on signalized track. (R-76-50) (Class II, Priority Followup.)

Promulgate rules to require the engine crew of a train to exchange signals with engine crews of passing trains and/or wayside employees. If passing crews do not acknowledge the signal, the responsive engine crew or wayside employee shall notify the dispatcher and/or conductor of the non-responsive engine crew for corrective action (R-76-51) (Class II, Priority Followup.)

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

(3)

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By: Webster B. Todd, Jr.  
Chairman

THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THE INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN SHOULD BE MADE BEFORE THAT DATE.