

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: March 9, 1978

Forwarded to:

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

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-78-11 through 13

The National Transportation Safety Board's investigation of several recent derailments has disclosed that the probable causes or contributing causes of the accidents were the breaking of wheels due to overheating. In each case the broken wheels contained a high carbon content designated as 70T, or UI, and were manufactured by the Southern Wheel Company (ABEX) between May 7, 1958, and December 31, 1969.

Because of a history of broken Southern wheels, the Association of American Railroads (AAR) required by their Interchange Rules on April 1, 1977, that when a freight car was on a repair track and it was necessary to dismantle the truck, any wheel of this type in the dismantled truck was to be replaced. Then, on January 1, 1978, the AAR further required that when a freight car with this type wheel was on a repair track for any reason the wheel would be replaced. However, if this procedure is not vigorously pursued, it will require a number of years to replace the Southern high carbon wheels.

The Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company has reported that they have had 11 derailments since January 1, 1977, which were caused by the breaking of the Southern wheels. Until these wheels are replaced or adequate precautions are instituted for the operation of cars equipped with these wheels, there is imminent danger of derailments with the possible release of hazardous materials.

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

Use emergency powers to prohibit the use of cars equipped with Southern Wheel Company high carbon wheels from carrying hazardous materials or from being placed in trains moving hazardous materials. (Class I- Urgent Action) (R-78-11.)

Use emergency powers to expedite the replacement of Southern Wheel Company high carbon wheels 70T and UI. (Class I- Urgent Action) (R-78-12.)

Promulgate regulations to establish adequate service records so that similar wheel problems will be promptly detected in the future and corrective action taken. (Class I-Urgent Action) (R-78-13.)

BAILEY, Acting Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and KING, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.



By: Kay Bailey
Acting Chairman