



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: August 25, 2005

In reply refer to: R-05-08

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

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency charged by Congress with investigating transportation accidents, determining their probable cause, and making recommendations to prevent similar accidents from occurring. We are providing the following information to urge your organization to take action on the safety recommendation in this letter. The Safety Board is vitally interested in this recommendation because it is designed to prevent accidents and save lives.

This recommendation addresses the National Railroad Passenger Corporation's (Amtrak's) emergency response training of its employees. The recommendation is derived from the Safety Board's investigation of the April 6, 2004, derailment of National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) train No. 58 (*City of New Orleans*) on Canadian National Railway Company (CN) railroad track near Flora, Mississippi, and is consistent with the evidence we found and the analysis we performed.¹ As a result of this investigation, the Safety Board has issued four safety recommendations, one of which is addressed to Amtrak. Information supporting this recommendation is discussed below. The Safety Board would appreciate a response from you within 90 days addressing the actions you have taken or intend to take to implement our recommendation.

About 6:33 p.m. central daylight time on April 6, 2004, northbound Amtrak train No. 58 (*City of New Orleans*) derailed on CN railroad track near Flora, Mississippi. The entire train, consisting of one locomotive, one baggage car, and eight passenger cars, derailed near milepost 196.5 while traveling about 78 mph. The train was carrying 61 passengers and 12 Amtrak employees. The derailment resulted in 1 fatality, 3 serious injuries, and 43 minor injuries. The equipment costs associated with the accident totaled about \$7 million.

¹ For additional information, see National Transportation Safety Board, *Derailed Amtrak Train No. 58, City of New Orleans, Near Flora, Mississippi, April 6, 2004*, Railroad Accident Report NTSB/RAR-05/02 (Washington, DC: NTSB, 2005).

The National Transportation Safety Board determined that the probable cause of this accident was the failure of CN to properly maintain and inspect its track, resulting in a rail shift and the subsequent derailment of the train, and the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA's) ineffective oversight to ensure the proper maintenance of the track by the railroad.

During emergency situations, particularly those involving passenger evacuations, the train crew and on-board service personnel are responsible for managing and directing the safe evacuation of passengers. Passengers rely on the training, experience, and leadership of the on-board service personnel. Required periodic emergency situation training should prepare the train crewmembers to perform their duties confidently when emergency situations occur. This periodic training is important because policies and procedures change over time, both skills and memory erode unless exercised and emergencies are rare, and the training is required by Federal regulation (Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) Part 239).

The Safety Board has long been concerned with the emergency preparedness training of Amtrak crewmembers, and has previously made six recommendations (R-79-36, R-83-24, R-83-72, R-89-35, R-93-23, and R-98-59) to Amtrak regarding this issue. Safety Recommendation R-79-36,² which asked Amtrak to establish a program to train crewmembers in the proper procedures for care of passengers in derailment and emergency situations, was classified "Closed—Acceptable Action" on October 8, 1980, after Amtrak said that all employees had received training and that an ongoing training program was in place. In response to Safety Recommendations R-83-24³ and R-83-72,⁴ Amtrak developed an advanced 4-hour course on emergency procedures for on-board crewmembers and supervisory personnel.⁵ Safety Recommendation R-89-35⁶ asked Amtrak to develop procedures and equipment for evacuation of passenger cars involved in an accident and train employees in those procedures and equipment. Amtrak updated its emergency evacuation procedures manual and provided annual refresher training to all train and engineering and on-board crews. Safety Recommendation R-89-35 was classified "Closed—Acceptable Action" on January 16, 1990. In response to Safety Recommendation R-93-23, Amtrak now provides all on-board service personnel with comprehensive training in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and the use of the public address system.^{7,8} Safety Recommendation R-98-59 asked Amtrak to implement effective

² National Transportation Safety Board, *Rear End Collision of Conrail Commuter Train No. 400 and Amtrak Passenger Train No. 60, Seabrook, Maryland, June 9, 1978*, Railroad Accident Report NTSB/RAR-79/03 (Washington, DC: NTSB, 1979).

³ National Transportation Safety Board, *Derailment of Amtrak Train No. 5 (the San Francisco Zephyr) on the Burlington Northern Railroad, Emerson, Iowa, June 15, 1982*, Railroad Accident Report NTSB/RAR-83/02 (Washington, DC: NTSB, 1983).

⁴ National Transportation Safety Board, *Fire Onboard Amtrak Passenger Train No. 11, Coast Starlight, Gibson, California, June 23, 1982*, Railroad Accident Report NTSB/RAR-83/03 (Washington, DC: NTSB, 1983).

⁵ Safety Recommendation R-83-24 was classified "Closed—Acceptable Action" on October 12, 1984, and Safety Recommendation R-83-72 was classified "Closed—Acceptable Action" on June 3, 1986.

⁶ National Transportation Safety Board, *Derailment of National Railroad Passenger Corporation Train 7, on Burlington Northern Railroad near Saco, Montana, August 5, 1988*, Railroad Accident Report NTSB/RAR-89/03 (Washington, DC: NTSB, 1989).

⁷ National Transportation Safety Board, *Derailment and Subsequent Collision of Amtrak Train 82 with Rail Cars on Dupont Siding of CSX Transportation Inc. at Lugoff, South Carolina, July 31, 1991*, Railroad Accident Report NTSB/RAR-93/02 (Washington, DC: NTSB, 1993).

⁸ Safety Recommendation R-93-23 was classified "Closed—Acceptable Action" on December 5, 2000.

controls to monitor and ensure that all train crews and on-board service personnel receive the necessary initial and recurrent emergency training to provide for passenger safety.^{9, 10} In response, Amtrak established a computerized database that tracks the attendance of all on-board crewmembers in initial and recurrent training in passenger emergency preparedness and response education. However, Amtrak had difficulty locating accurate training records for 4 of the 12 crewmembers after this accident because the database had not been updated. Amtrak also centralized the training records into a single database for compliance monitoring by Amtrak's human resources office.

Despite the existence of an employee training database, an Amtrak on-board employee in this accident had not had training as required by Federal regulation. Amtrak's continued failure to provide passenger emergency training to its crews has the potential to put the traveling public at risk should an emergency occur on an Amtrak train. Although it was not a factor in this accident, the Safety Board concluded that Amtrak was not assuring that all of its crewmembers received emergency preparedness training.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board makes the following safety recommendation to the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak):

Report to the Board within 90 days a schedule for training your employees who have not received emergency preparedness training as required by 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 239. (R-05-08)

The Safety Board also issued safety recommendations to the Federal Railroad Administration and the Canadian National Railway Company. In your response to the recommendation in this letter, please refer to Safety Recommendation R-05-08. If you need additional information, you may call (202) 314-6177.

Acting Chairman ROSENKER and Members ENGLEMAN CONNORS and HEALING concurred in this recommendation. Member HERSMAN disapproved. (For further information, see Member HERSMAN's dissenting opinion in the published report referenced on page 1 of this letter.)

By: Mark V. Rosenker
Acting Chairman

⁹ National Transportation Safety Board, *Derailment of Amtrak Train 4, Southwest Chief, on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway near Kingman, Arizona, on August 9, 1997*, Railroad Accident Report NTSB/RAR-98/03 (Washington, DC: NTSB, 1998).

¹⁰ Safety Recommendation R-98-59 was classified "Closed—Acceptable Action" on December 5, 2000.