



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

Research and  
Special Programs  
Administration

The Administrator

DEC 4 1989

400 Seventh Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

The Honorable James L. Kolstad  
Acting Chairman  
National Transportation Safety Board  
800 Independence Avenue S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20594

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to NTSB recommendation R-89-53 resulting from a collision of two locomotives at Altoona, Iowa, July 30, 1989. Denatured alcohol, released through the pressure relief valves and the manway domes of two derailed tank cars, was ignited by the fire resulting from the collision of the two locomotives. The recommendation states as follows:

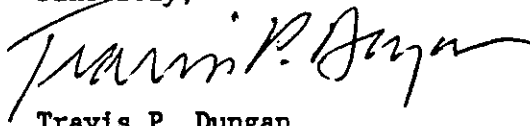
Assist and cooperate with the Federal Railroad Administration in amending 49 CFR Part 179 to require that closure fittings on hazardous materials rail tanks be designed to maintain their integrity in accidents that are typically survivable by the rail tank. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-89-53).

The Tank Committee of the Association of American Railroads (AAR) has a research study underway that addresses the intent of recommendation R-89-53. The study, Manway Cover Designs for Possible Improved Securement, was initiated in July of 1989 as result of the Tank Car Committee's review of an RPI/AAR report concerning the behavior of non-pressure tank cars in accidents. The design parameters of six tank car builders are being studied for possible design improvements. Some of the more critical areas under study include: bolting; manway diameter; gasket location, securement and size; hinge pinhole arrangement; and manway cover materials. The FRA and the RSPA are monitoring this study and will keep the NTSB informed of its progress. We anticipate that some time next year there will be sufficient information to determine if there is a need to require specific design parameters for closure fittings on tank cars and if so, what the specific design requirements should be.



As a result of the action being taken, we request that the NTSB classify recommendation R-89-53 as "Open-Acceptable Action".

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Travis P. Dungan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Travis P. Dungan