



Friday, June 23, 2006



Failure To Adhere To Track Warrant Control Rules Caused Collision Of Two BNSF Trains In Gunter, Texas

The Safety Board determined, on June 13, that the probable cause of a fatal collision of two trains was the southbound train crew's failure to adhere to an after-arrival track warrant requiring them to stay in one location until the northbound train arrived. Contributing to the accident was BNSF Railway Company's use of after-arrival track warrant authority in nonsignaled territory and the Federal Railroad Administration's failure to prohibit the use of such authority. Also contributing to the accident was the train dispatcher's informal communications regarding planned train meeting locations.

On May 19, 2004, two BNSF Railway Company freight trains collided head on near Gunter, Texas. When the collision occurred, the southbound train (BNSF 6789) was traveling about 37 mph, and the northbound train (BNSF 6351) was traveling about 40 mph. The collision resulted in the derailment of 5 locomotives and 28 cars. The southbound train engineer was killed, and the southbound train conductor sustained serious injuries. The crewmembers on the northbound train also sustained injuries.

Public Hearing Held on Southwest Airlines Midway Airport Accident

The Safety Board held a 2-day public hearing as part of its ongoing investigation into the runway overrun of a Southwest Airlines Boeing 737 at Chicago Midway Airport. The hearing convened on Tuesday, June 20, 2006, in the Board Room and Conference Center. Acting Chairman Mark Rosenker chaired the hearing.

As part of the continuing fact-finding phase of this investigation, the Board gathered information regarding the measurement of runway friction and the methods used to relay runway friction estimates to landing flight crews; runway safety areas at Midway Airport and other airports with land use constraints; and Boeing 737 landing data that take into account the use of thrust reversers.

On December 8, 2005, Southwest Airlines flight 1248 landed on runway 31C at Chicago Midway Airport, Chicago, Illinois. The runway was contaminated with snow. The airplane departed the end of the runway and rolled through a blast fence, a perimeter fence, and into traffic on an off-airport street. The airplane came to a stop after colliding with one car, which resulted in the death of a child passenger in one of the vehicles. The airplane was substantially damaged.



Member Hersman Addresses Transportation Conference

Member Debbie Hersman addressed the summer transportation conference of the Multistate Highway Transportation Agreement on June 5 at Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. She was assisted by Michele McMurtry of HS-30. Member Hersman's presentation included facts about the Safety Board's investigation process, highway accident reports that were submitted to the Board in 2006, and ongoing highway investigations. Participants in the conference included State legislators, State trucking associations, the American Trucking Association, the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, the Transportation Security Administration, the Western American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, and the American Transportation Research Institute.



New Chief of Railroad Division

The selection of Jim Southworth as the new chief of the Railroad Division in the Office of Railroad, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Investigations became effective June 11.

Mr. Southworth has served as an investigator-in-charge with the Board since 1998. He has more than 20 years of comprehensive experience in the rail transportation industry.

NTSB Acquisition Information Session

The Acquisition Division (AD-20) is hosting an information session on the following topic areas: Market Research, Statement of Work (SOW), Technical Evaluation Factors, and Sole Source Justifications.

As many of you may have discovered, these documents/steps build on each other: good market research helps develop a good SOW; the SOW helps identify the factors that you will use to evaluate proposals; and sole source justification documents why a vendor is the only source, not the best source.

The information session is scheduled for June 28, 2006, in the RE Tech Room from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The session will have booklets and a qualified instructor, and it will be limited to only a half day. There are approximately 10 spots remaining. If you are interested in attending, please e-mail an RSVP to Keith O'Neill.

