

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Railroad Accident Brief Report

CHI 96 FR 014
COLLISION/DERAILMENT
GATEWAY WESTERN RAILWAY
PLEASANT HILL, ILLINOIS
MAY 12, 1996

Gateway Western Railway (GWR) train Extra 2942 East, consisting of 5 locomotive units and 51 loaded intermodal cars, collided into the side of the rear car of the standing GWR train Extra 2037 West, which had entered a siding to permit the eastbound train to pass. The Extra GWR 2037 West train consisted of 4 locomotive units, 44 loaded and 47 empty freight cars. The accident occurred at about 5:50 a.m., central daylight time, on May 12, 1996 at milepost (MP) 264.2 of the GWR No. 2 Subdivision, about 2 miles east of Pleasant Hill, Illinois.

The 5 locomotive units, the 9 head cars of the Extra 2942 East, and the rear car of the Extra GWR 2037 West derailed in the collision. A fire started at the seventh car of Extra 2942 East, which contained a liquid compound cleaner, and spread forward igniting about 2,500 gallons of diesel fuel.

Both crewmembers of the Extra 2942 East sustained minor injuries. Damages were estimated by GWR to be \$1,261,850.

The three-person crew of the Extra 2037 West arrived at the GWR Pleasant Hill siding at about 4:30 a.m., and received a track warrant instructing the train to enter the siding, clear the main track and await the passage of the Extra 2942 East. The conductor decided to wait on the main track until he overheard a radio transmission coming from the Extra 2942 East, which would indicate the approach of the eastbound train. The conductor heard the approaching train about 5:30 a.m., and instructed the conductor trainee to get off of the locomotive and stay at the east end of the siding until such time as the rear of the westbound train had cleared the main track by "3 or 4 car lengths from the clearance point." The conductor also instructed the trainee to then align the switch for the main track and report the train in the clear. The trainee was instructed to board the rear car and ride until such time as the train was pulled down to the west end of the siding, and the engineer would then shove back to shorten the trainee's walk to the head-end of the train. This instruction set the stage for this accident. The company rules required that a member of the crew

must provide protection for the rear of the train while it was being shoved (pushed in a reverse direction).

The crew of the Extra 2942 East approached Pleasant Hill siding with the proper authority to proceed east if the Extra 2037 West had passed and was in the clear. The crew of the eastbound train was informed by a radio transmission from the Extra 2037 West that they were in the clear and that the switch was lined for their passage. Particularly, in nonsignaled territory, the traincrew rely on the information they receive to be correct.

PROBABLE CAUSE

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of this accident was the failure of the conductor and engineer of Extra 2037 West to provide adequate protection for the rear end of the train and ensure that the rear end of the train did not obstruct the main track.

Adopted: August 18, 1998