

Correspondence

Letter dated October 16, 2003

From: Gregory P. Sphon

Mail Control 102360

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CONTROL 102360 **ACTION OFFICE** MS **DATE OF LETTER** 10/26/2003
RECEIPT 10/24/2003 **RESPONSE DUE** 11/23/2003 **REPLY**

From Gregory P. Sphon

Organization

Subject Andrew J. Barberi NTSB accident Investigation

Recs

Notation

Writer Henry

Division MS-10

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Notes Letter written to Bob Ford

MS-2 12/16/2003 11:03 AM Draft reply

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SIGN 12/23 RWR

NMC 102360

GREGORY P. SPHON

Thursday, October 16, 2003

Mr. Robert Ford
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, SW
Washington, DC 20594

Dear Mr. Ford:

This letter is regarding the tragic loss of life in the Staten Island Ferry (New York) accident that occurred on Wednesday, October 15, 2003.

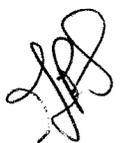
Although originally from the Midwest, I have been a resident of Staten Island now for over eight years and I ride the Staten Island Ferry - hereafter referred to as "Ferry" - on nearly a daily basis.

The purpose of this letter is to bring to your attention what I feel to an existing and ongoing safety problem. Put another way, it is my belief that what happened yesterday was "an accident waiting to happen" and that if the United States federal government - namely the NTFS - does not get involved and conduct a thorough investigation and prosecute all liable parties, that such an accident will likely happen again in the future!!!

Simply put, ever since living in Staten Island, I have noticed a "mentality" of the Staten Island Ferry Crew which is not only rude and unprofessional, it is a safety risk to tens of thousands of people on a daily basis.

Below are things which I have witnessed over the years...

(**NOTE: While some of these things may seem "petty", they paint a larger picture of the Staten Island Ferry Crew's arrogance, apathy, and unwillingness to do their jobs.)



STATEN ISLAND FERRY			
ISSUE	PROBLEM(S)	OCCURRENCE	OUTCOME
No soap in Men's Restrooms	Sanitation/Health risk	Ongoing	Ferry Captain(s) claims people stole bottles and therefore there is no solution. (This was 6-7 years ago?!) They say it cannot be resolved and so "Deal with it."
No toilet paper in Men's Restroom	Sanitation/Health risk	Ongoing	Ferry Crew is unresponsive.
Gum, spilled coffee, glue, candy, food, etc all over seats/benches	Sanitation risk, Damage to passenger's clothing	Ongoing	Ferry Crew makes a quick swipe with a dirty broom used to sweep floors to half-heartedly clean up items that require a rag and cleaning solvent.
Captain and Crew standing/sitting around talking and/or eating while Ferry is in motion	Safety risk	Regular	Captain and Crew seem to be inconvenienced to do their jobs
Captain is walking around or talking and not operating or assisting in operating the Ferry while it is in motion.	Safety risk	Regular	No one sees this as a problem?!
<i>Crew members making "monkey & baboon sounds" and other "childish sounds" over P.A. system while Ferry is in operation.</i>	<i>P.A. system is <u>only</u> for the Captain to use to inform passengers or page Crew. It is not a toy.</i>	<i>Numerous times</i>	<i>Crew members seemed indifferent when complaint was made.</i>
Cracked wooden bench	Pinched my back when I sat down and could rip clothing	Remained un-repaired for several months	Captain and Crew laughed when I pointed it out to them.
Human urine and feces all over Men's Bathroom stalls, toilets, and floors.	Sanitation/Health risk	Several times	Crew seems unresponsive to cleaning bathrooms.
<i>Ferry hitting the</i>	<i>People have been</i>	<i>Numerous times</i>	<i>Problem continues</i>

<i>loading areas very violently when arriving into Staten Island and Manhattan docks</i>	<i>knocked over</i>		
Ferry Crew having a general apathy towards helping passengers have a pleasant ride and doing their jobs and making SAFETY a #1 priority!!!	The Ferry accident this week does NOT surprise me based off of years of seeing Crew Members' apathetic and negligent behaviors.	Ongoing	Problem persists

In addition to these problems, I feel there are equal or greater issues on the Staten Island Rapid Train that leaves from the Ferry Terminal. And while I realize these areas are under different departments/jurisdictions, as a resident of Staten Island who uses these forms of transportation daily, I again feel that workers' arrogant, pompous, and negligent attitudes create a great risk to the public!!

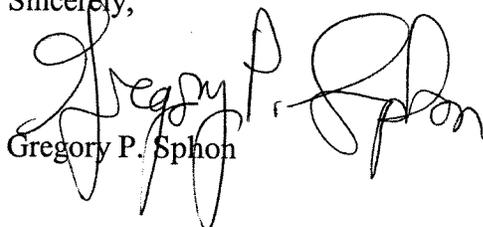
STATEN ISLAND RAPID TRAIN			
ISSUE	PROBLEM(S)	OCCURRENCE	OUTCOME
Train Operators allowing random passengers and friends into the Conductor's Cabin while train is in operation	Distraction to train operator and a grave safety risk	Frequent	Reported several times to SIRR Managers but problem persists
Train Operators leaving cabin while train is in motion so they can chat with friends in main passenger area.	Distraction to train operator and a grave safety risk	Frequent	Reported several times to SIRR Managers but problem persists
Deafening Volume on P.A. System	Harmful to passengers' ears	Frequent	Once when I told a SIRR Worker and asked if he could adjust the speaker volume he gave me an indignant look and said, "That's not my job!" and then he walked away in mid sentence.

			This has been reported numerous times yet nothing gets done.
Train Operator slamming on brakes and taking off to fast	Knocked a passenger to the floor, knocked my bags onto the floor and whipped my neck.	Week of October 6, 2003 on 4:26 pm train from Jefferson Avenue.	Reported to Manager – outcome unknown.
Train arriving 2-3 minutes early	Passengers miss train	Week of Sept 29 and October 6, 2003 on 4:26 pm train from Jefferson Avenue.	Reported to Manager – outcome unknown.
Conductor announcing wrong train stations as train enters and leaves stations	Confuses passengers and makes them likely to get off at wrong station	Ongoing/Daily	Reported to Managers but little concern.
Train Crew has a general apathy towards helping passengers have a pleasant ride and doing their jobs and making SAFETY a #1 priority!!!	It is just a matter of time before a SIRR Train Accident occurs which is as bad or worse than the Ferry accident this week!!	Ongoing	Problem persists

In closing, it is my hope that the NTSB thoroughly investigates the policies, procedures, and daily practices of the entire Staten Island Ferry Crew and Administrative Staff here in Staten Island, New York. **This Ferry accident was an accident waiting to happen, and if some people are not fired or prosecuted and a major overhaul of the Ferry System is not done immediately, then a similar tragedy is likely to happen again!!!** Moreover, I feel the same accident is waiting to happen on the Staten Island Rapid Train!!!

It is my hope that you will contact me by telephone at your convenience to further discuss these grave public-safety issues, and if need be, I will offer to testify in a court of law against the Staten Island Ferry Crew and Administration (or the Staten Island Rapid Authority).

Sincerely,


Gregory P. Sphon

