

Accident No.: DCA12MR006

Accident Type: Train Derailment with Release of Hazardous Materials and Subsequent Fire

Location: Columbus, Ohio

Date: July 11, 2012

Preliminary Report

The information in this report is preliminary and will be supplemented or corrected during the course of the investigation.

On Wednesday, July 11, 2012, about 2:05 a.m. Eastern Standard Time, Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NS) freight train 186L809, traveling eastbound on main track number 1, derailed 17 cars. The derailment occurred in Columbus, Ohio, on the NS Lake Division, Sandusky District. The train consisted of 2 locomotives with 97 loaded cars and 1 empty car. The 3rd through 19th cars derailed. The 12th through 14th cars, which contained denatured ethanol, were breached, causing a significant fire.

Emergency responders from the Columbus Division of Fire initiated a voluntary evacuation of residents within a 1-mile radius of the accident location. About 100 people were evacuated. Two citizens in the derailment area sustained minor injuries; no additional injuries were reported. Main tracks No.1 and No.2 were destroyed. The damage is estimated to be \$1.22 million. Weather conditions at the time of the accident were clear skies and dark; the temperature was 70° F.

Train movements on the Sandusky Subdivision are governed by signal indications of a traffic control system. The maximum authorized speed for the track is 25 mph due to a 9.1-degree curve. The event recorder data showed the train was traveling at 23 mph when it derailed.

NTSB investigators reviewed track maintenance records, including rail inspections, previous failures, and repairs, for the area where the accident occurred. Rail samples from the accident area were collected and sent to the NTSB Materials Laboratory for analysis. In addition, NTSB investigators studied and documented each of the failed ethanol tank cars. Samples cut from the tank cars were also sent to the NTSB Materials Laboratory for additional analysis.

Parties to the investigation are the Federal Railroad Administration; Columbus Division of Fire; Norfolk Southern Railway Company; Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen; United Transportation Union; and GE Capital, Rail Services.