



PRELIMINARY REPORT

RAILROAD

DCA16MR004

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

On March 14, 2016, at 12:02 a.m. central daylight time, eastbound Amtrak passenger train 4 derailed near Cimarron, Kansas. The Los Angeles-to-Chicago train was operating on BNSF Railway track; it included two locomotives and 10 cars. The last four cars derailed on their sides, and two other cars derailed upright. (See figure 1.) There were 130 passengers and 14 crew members; 28 injured passengers were taken to area hospitals. Amtrak and BNSF estimated their damages were more than \$1.4 million. It was dark at the time of the accident with a 10-mile visibility. The temperature was 42°F with light wind, clear skies.



Figure 1. Aerial photograph of Amtrak passenger train 4. (Photo courtesy of Kansas Highway Patrol)

National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigators observed that the railroad ties and tracks at mile post 373.07 were out of their normal positions and established the point of derailment as 25 feet beyond this location. The forward-facing video from the lead locomotive showed abnormal track immediately before the derailment.

At the scene, investigators found fresh damage to the north ends of the ties at MP 373.07 and fresh tire tracks perpendicular to the railroad tracks. They also found a small amount of flaked corn, a type of cattle feed. (See figure 2.)



Figure 2. Perpendicular impression of tire tracks on north side of BNSF main track.¹

Investigators traced the tire tracks to a feed lot owned by Cimarron Crossing Feeders, LLC, where the tread on a 2004 Kenworth International truck matched the tire track impressions at the scene. The truck hauls flaked corn and distributes it to feed bins.

Investigators observed damage to the truck's front bumper. The front bumper's left and right mounting brackets were broken; the fracture faces were clean and had no sign of oxidation—indicating a recent break. Investigators examined the tire treads of the vehicle and matched it with the tire track patterns observed at MP 373.07. (See figures 3 and 4.)

¹ All photographs in this document were provided by the Kansas Highway Patrol.



Figure 3. Tire tread pattern adjacent to MP 373.07.



Figure 4. Right rear tires of Cimarron Crossing Feeders' truck.

This accident occurred on the BNSF, La Junta Division. The maximum authorized speed on this section of track is 60 mph for passenger trains and 40 mph for freight trains. Based on the NTSB's preliminary review of the train's event recorder data, the train was traveling at 60 mph when the emergency brakes were applied.

Parties to the investigation are the Federal Railroad Administration; Amtrak; BNSF; Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division; International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers; Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen; and the Gray County Sheriff's Office.

The Kansas Highway Patrol assisted with the investigation. The American Red Cross aided uninjured passengers.