

Log R-76 Not 1755 Rev R-76-37  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: January 6, 1977

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Forwarded to:

Honorable Asaph H. Hall  
Administrator  
Federal Railroad Administration  
400 Seventh Street, S. W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590  
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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-76-58

Since June 8, 1976, Amtrak train, James Whitcomb Riley, No. 50 (eastbound) and 51 (westbound) has derailed three times on the rails of the Chesapeake and Ohio Company's New River Subdivision.

On June 8, the two locomotive units and eight cars of train 50 derailed at Hinton, West Virginia; two persons were injured. On September 29, the two locomotive units and six cars of train 50 derailed at East Sewell, West Virginia; four persons were injured. On November 29, five cars of train 51 derailed at Sewell, West Virginia. In addition, three freight trains have derailed recently on the New River Subdivision, and in one accident some of the derailed cars toppled into New River.

The major part of this subdivision traverses the New River Gorge which has extremely rugged topography. In many locations the track is constructed on a side hill cut, which varies between approximately 60 to 90 feet above New River in the area of the derailments. In the last Amtrak derailment, the passenger cars came to rest at the outer edge of this side hill cut. If these cars had dropped into New River, rescue efforts would have been extremely difficult because of the topography and the limited access to New River Gorge.

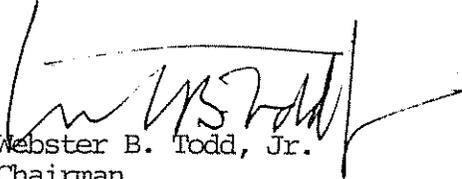
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Preliminary investigations of the three Amtrak derailments on this subdivision by the National Transportation Safety Board indicate that individual deviations from the Track Safety Standards of the Federal Railroad Administration, while not violations, do in combination constitute safety hazards. The Safety Board believes that trains should not be operated over this subdivision at speeds above 30 mph until the track is thoroughly inspected and appropriate corrections made.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Railroad Administration:

Restrict train speeds over New River subdivision to a maximum of 30 mph until the track is safe for higher operating speeds. (Class I, Urgent Followup) (R-76-58)

TODD, Chairman, BAILEY, Vice Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.

  
Webster B. Todd, Jr.  
Chairman

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