

highlights

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TRAIN VISIBILITY RULE PROPOSED...A proposed regulation designed to enhance the visibility of passenger trains has been sent to the Federal Register and was published June 16. The new rules would require markings on the rear end of passenger trains to protect against rear end collisions. The train marking system being proposed is not intended as a substitute for existing signal systems and operating rules. Rather, the markings would serve as a back-up or secondary aid to warn the crew of an approaching train of the presence of a stopped or slow moving passenger train ahead on the same track. Under the proposal, fluorescent panels, retroreflectors and flashing lamps would be required on all trains engaged in intercity rail passenger service as well as rapid transit, commuter, or other short haul rail passenger service. A public hearing will be held August 30 in Washington to hear comments of interested parties.

...AND AMENDMENT TO TRACK STANDARDS...In response to a petition filed by AMTRAK requesting higher speed limits for passenger trains, FRA has initiated a rule-making proceeding to amend the Track Safety Standards. The proposed amendment would permit maximum operating speeds of more than 110 only after prior approval by the FRA. AMTRAK's request for an increase of speed to 120 m.p.h. on class 6 track was denied for failure to show a relationship between high speed specialized equipment and class 6 track which would support a safe increase in the maximum allowable speed. A public hearing will be held August 16 to hear comments.

FIRST HAND...The Field Inspectors Working Manual contains specific instructions on the investigation of an accident as we all know. But the procedures are somewhat different when you are part of the accident as two OS representatives learned June 20. Ken Batcheller, Acting Chief of the Motive Power and Equipment Branch, and Locomotive Officer Phil Brannigan were on an acceptance run test for one of the two Canadian Turbo Trains being considered for purchase by AMTRAK. About 15 minutes out of Montreal en route for Toronto, the Turbo collided with a freight train which was entering a yard track. Sitting in the trailing Power Dome Car, Ken and Phil watched the leading Power Dome Car and the two trailing coaches derail and a ball of flame shoot into the air. They rushed to the exit door which they found jammed. Attempts to kick out a window proved futile so the door was tried again and they finally managed to open it. True to form, a telephone was found in a private home and the accident reported to Washington. Both men suffered from smoke inhalation, 14 other people were treated at a local hospital and released, and the Turbo was almost destroyed. According to Ken a couple of days later, "I just didn't believe it was happening." According to passengers in the leading PDC, all of whom were railroad men, a probable contributing cause of the accident was failure to operate the train in accordance with restrictive signal indications.

RAILROAD REVENUE UP...The ICC reports that Class I railroads improved their operating revenues by more than 5 percent, their total net railway operating income by 15 percent and their ordinary income by 31 percent last year. Of the 69 Class I carriers, 19 suffered ordinary losses in 1972; these included 12 of the 30 Eastern, five of the 25 Western and one of the Southern roads.

RADIOS TO BE INSTALLED...Arrangements have been made with GSA to install radios in all field automobiles for use of inspectors. The program has begun but will take some time to complete.

