

On January 30, 2001, at the West Havre yard in Havre, Montana, the same series of Type C-114 covered hoppers were involved in the derailment of BNSF train GSPLTAC 9-26. A total of 19 cars derailed as the train was leaving the yard, traveling approximately 8 miles per hour. Five (5) of the cars overturned onto their sides and experienced failures of the cast steel draft sills. Furthermore, an attempt was made to re-rail one of the derailed loaded cars using a mobile crane with a sling passing under the draft sill. The car had no damage other than having one pair of wheels derailed. The draft sill on the car was inspected prior to lifting the car, and it was found to be free of any cracks or damage from the derailment. While the car was being lifted with the sling, the draft sill failed catastrophically, which caused the car to fall to the ground. The draft sill fractured on both sides just outboard of the rear draft lugs, but remained attached by a severely bent section on the top portion of the sill. No injuries or fatalities resulted from this incident, nor were the broken draft sills the cause of the derailment.

On January 31, 2001, BNSF transferred two of the broken draft sills involved in the above incident to its testing facility at Topeka, Kansas for a metallurgical analysis. The draft sills were then forwarded to the manufacturer for further inspection. The initial report from BNSF and the manufacturer stated that the material used in the draft sills met the Association of American Railroads' (AAR) requirement for a Grade "B" steel casting. A subsequent design review between BNSF, the car builder, and the draft sill manufacturer found the design acceptable, and at this time did not recommend any subsequent changes. However, fatigue and impact testing of the fractured draft sills is still being conducted by both BNSF and the manufacturer. The AAR is also investigating nationwide if any of the cast draft sills of this same design have been installed on car owners equipment other than BNSF.

The cars currently in question are Type C-114 covered hopper cars, with a capacity of 5,161 cubic-feet, series BNSF 471500 through 477012 and series BNSF 450000 through 450649, a total of 5,999 cars. The cars were built by Trinity Industries from 1998 through 2000, and the draft sills were manufactured by American Steel Foundries (ASF). Examples of the casting nomenclature on the draft sills that have failed are: ASF 6/98 3952 A-2 and ASF 6/99 3952 B-2. BNSF has initiated a systemwide inspection of the

draft sills on these two car series, looking especially for cracks in the area of the inspection ports ahead of the rear draft lugs. BNSF is inspecting both sides and both ends of each of these cars. The inspection instructions issued by the BNSF to their inspectors regarding these cars, loaded or empty, provides for the following:

Initial Terminal, 1000-Mile, Terminating Inspection Points, and All Repair Tracks

1. Inspect cars paying particular attention to the cast draft sill. Inspect for cracks propagating from the bottom flange or the side inspection holes of the cast draft sill, see attached photographs.
2. Determine if car is defective per 49 CFR § 215.121(b)(2), if crack is 6" or less and car is safe to move to destination, if loaded forward for unloading. If empty "BH" car home for repair.
3. If crack is greater than 6" and car is safe to move, then car must be "BH" home and moved under 49 CFR § 215.9.
4. Report defect code "DS" when bad ordering these cars.
5. Place a white dot, using spray paint, on both sides of the draft sill on both ends of the car once inspection is completed.

A cast draft sill is considered a component of a car's center sill structure. FRA's Freight Car Safety Standards prescribe that a car may not be placed or remain in service if the car center sill is broken; cracked more than 6 inches; or permanently bent or buckled more than 2½ inches in any six foot length. Car inspections required by FRA safety regulations will normally detect this type of defect.

Action Recommended by FRA

When in normal condition and used in normal train operations, these cast draft sills appear not to pose a safety hazard to railroad employees or the general public. However, if any of the cars listed above is involved in a derailment, regardless of how minor, it should be considered to be a significant safety risk to all personnel and the following steps taken:

- Exercise caution if the car is positioned such that it applies a torsional load to the draft sill;
- Avoid lifting the car by the draft sill with a crane to re-rail; or
- If the car's draft sill has a crack of 6 inches or more, request home shop disposition, complying with 49 CFR 215.9.

For additional information concerning car series BNSF 471500 through BNSF 477012 and BNSF 450000 through BNSF 450649, and to obtain a copy of System Mechanical Alert BNSF MA-01/

01, FRA recommends that the railroad contact Mr. Rick Stauffer, System Mechanical Department, Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company, P.O. Box 961056, Fort Worth, TX 76131-2830, telephone (817) 352-1465.

FRA may modify Safety Advisory 01-01, issue additional safety advisories, or take other appropriate action to ensure the highest level of safety on the Nation's railroads.

Issued in Washington, DC on March 8, 2001.

George Gavalla,

Associate Administrator for Safety.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[Docket No. NHTSA-01-8978; Notice 1]

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe; World Forum for the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations: Meetings for Calendar Year 2001

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of schedule of meetings.

SUMMARY: NHTSA is publishing this notice to inform the public of the schedule of meetings of the World Forum for the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29) and its working parties of experts for the current calendar year. Publication of this information is consistent with NHTSA's Statement of Policy regarding Agency Policy Goals and Public Participation in the Implementation of the 1998 Agreement on Global Technical Regulations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Martin Koubek, International Policy Advisor, Office of International Policy and Harmonization (NPP-01), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590; phone number (202) 366-2114, fax number (202) 366-2559.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On August 23, 2000, NHTSA published (65 FR 51236) a policy statement that it will publish each year a calendar of scheduled meetings of WP.29 participants and working parties of experts, as well as meetings of the Executive Committee of the 1998 Global Agreement. This document announces the meeting dates and places for 2001. They were approved by the Inland

Transport Committee at its meeting February 13–15, 2001.

List of Meetings of the World Forum for the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations and Its Working Parties of Experts in 2001

January

- 8–13 Working Party on Lighting (GRE) Informal Working Group on Lighting Installation
- 16–19 Working Party on Pollution and Energy (GRPE) (forty-first session)
- 29–2 Feb. Working Party on Brakes and Running Gear (GRRF) (forty-ninth session)

February

- 20–23 Working Party on Noise (GRB) (thirty-fourth session)

March

- 6 Administrative Committee for the Coordination of Work (WP.29/AC.2) (seventy-fifth session)
- 6–9 World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29) (one-hundred-and-twenty-third session), Executive Committee to the 1998 Global Agreement (first session), and Administrative Committee to the 1958 Agreement (AC.1) (seventeenth session)
- 27–30 Working Party on Lighting and Light-Signalling (GRE) (forty-sixth session)

April

- 2–6 Working Party on General Safety Provisions (GRSG) (eightieth session), including Informal Meeting on Vehicle Classification

May

- 7–11 Working Party on Passive Safety (GRSP) (twenty-ninth session)
- 29–1 June Working Party on Pollution and Energy (GRPE) (forty second session)

June

- 25–27 Working Party on Brakes and Running Gear (GRRF) Informal Meeting on Tires
- 25 Administrative Committee for the Coordination of Work (WP.29/AC.2) (seventy-sixth session)
- 26–29 World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29) (one-hundred-and-twenty-fourth session), Executive Committee of the 1998 Global Agreement (second session), and Administrative Committee to the 1958 Agreement (AC.1) (eighteenth session)

September

- 10–12 Working Party on Brakes and Running Gear (GRRF) (fiftieth session)

- 13–14 Working Party on Noise (GRB) (thirty-fifth session)

October

- 1–5 Working Party on Lighting and Light-Signalling (GRE) (forty-seventh session)
- 6–13 Working Party on General Safety Provisions (GRSG) (eighty-first session), including Informal Meeting on Vehicle Classification

November

- 5 Administrative Committee for the Coordination of Work (WP.29/AC.2) (seventy-seventh session)
- 6–9 World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29) (one-hundred-and-twenty-fifth session), Executive Committee of the 1998 Global Agreement (third session) and Administrative Committee to the 1958 Agreement (AC.1) (nineteenth session)

December

- 3–6 Working Party on Passive Safety (GRSP) (thirtieth session)

Issued on February 26, 2001.

Julie Abraham,

Director, Office of International Policy and Harmonization.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB–478 (Sub-No. 2X)]

Charles City Area Development Corporation d/b/a Charles City Railway—Abandonment Exemption—in Floyd County, IA

Charles City Area Development Corporation d/b/a Charles City Railway (Applicant) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F—*Exempt Abandonments* to abandon a 3.6-mile line of railroad extending from milepost 0.0 to milepost 3.6 within Charles City, Floyd County, IA. The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Code 50616.

Applicant has certified that: (1) No local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) no overhead traffic has been handled over the line for at least 2 years; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) or with any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within

the 2-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

As a condition to this exemption, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment shall be protected under *Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen*, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). To address whether this condition adequately protects affected employees, a petition for partial revocation under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) must be filed. Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received, this exemption will be effective on April 11, 2001, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues,¹ formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2),² and trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29 must be filed by March 22, 2001. Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by April 2, 2001, with: Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20423.

A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to applicant's representative: T. Scott Bannister, 1300 Des Moines Building, 405—Sixth Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50309.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*.

Applicant has filed an environmental report which addresses the abandonment's effects, if any, on the environment and historic resources. The Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) will issue an environmental assessment (EA) by March 16, 2001. Interested persons may obtain a copy of the EA by writing to SEA (Room 500, Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC 20423) or by calling SEA, at (202) 565–1545. Comments on environmental and historic preservation

¹ The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. See *Exemption of Out-of-Service Rail Lines*, 5 I.C.C.2d 377 (1989). Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

² Each offer of financial assistance must be accompanied by the filing fee, which currently is set at \$1000. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).