



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Office of the Chairman

DEC 1 2001

Mr. Charlie B. Romstad
401 S.W. Watrous Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50315-3536

Dear Mr. Romstad:

Thank you for your September 27, 2001, letter regarding the tragic accident in which your mother lost her life. Let me express on behalf of the National Transportation Board our deepest sympathy to YOU and your family.

Your letter addresses the circumstances, probable cause, and issues of safety relating to the *California Zephyr* accident in Nodaway, Iowa, on March 17, 2001, and asks that a public hearing be held so that passengers can learn about railroad track conditions. It is the mission of the Board to investigate significant accidents in rail transportation and to issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. Factual material developed as a result of the accident investigation will be placed into a docket and will be available to the public. The Safety Board will use this information to develop an accident investigation report that will include the Board's findings, probable cause, and safety recommendations.

The Members of the National Transportation Safety Board will meet in a public session to discuss the circumstances of the accident and the safety issues, and to consider the accident investigation report. Notices of dates and agendas for Board Meetings are published in the *Federal Register* and on the NTSB's website (www.nts.gov) at least 1 week before the meeting date. I have asked our staff to invite you once the Board date for the Nodaway accident is scheduled so that you may have an opportunity to attend.

Your letter mentions 5 Amtrak accidents that were attributed to defective track conditions during the past 10 years. One key part of each NTSB railroad accident investigation, including the accident at Nodaway, is the review of prior accidents to determine trends.

I hope we have addressed your concerns. Once again, the Safety Board offers its condolences to you and your family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Marion C. Blakey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Marion C. Blakey
Chairman



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Office of the Chairman

FEB - 12 2007

Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Governor
State of Iowa
State Capitol
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Dear Governor Vilsack:

Thank you for your October 5, 2001, letter regarding the National Transportation Safety Board's investigation of the derailment of Amtrak's California Zephyr in Nodaway, Iowa, on March 17, 2001. I regret the delay in responding to you. There has been a substantial delay because of the anthrax decontamination at the Brentwood mail facility in Washington, DC

Although the Safety Board will not hold a public hearing on this accident, the Board has taken extensive testimony, and this testimony, in addition to pertinent factual investigation material developed as a result of the accident investigation, will be placed into a docket that will be made available to the public. The Safety Board will use this information to develop an accident investigation report that will include the Board's finding of fact as well as a determination of probable cause and any safety recommendations the Board determines may prevent a similar accident in the future.

Once the investigation and the draft of the accident report are completed, the Safety Board will meet in a public session to discuss the circumstances of the accident and the safety issues, and to consider the accident investigation report. Notices of dates and agendas for the Board meetings are published in the Federal Register and on the Safety Board's website (www.nts.gov) at least 1 week before the meeting date.

As information, the Board has been in contact with members of the victim's family, and we intend to invite family members to the Board meeting for the Nodaway accident as soon as a meeting date has been set.

I hope we have addressed your concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marion C. Blakey".

Marion C. Blakey
Chairman



01 DEC 26 AM 11:00
National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

December 20, 2001

Office of the Chairman

Honorable Tom Harkin
United States Senate
210 Walnut Street
733 Federal Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

Dear Senator Harkin:

This is in response to your letter on behalf of Mr. Charlie Romstad. Mr. Romstad expressed concern that the circumstances, probable cause, and safety issues relating to the March 17, 2001, railroad accident that occurred in Nodaway, Iowa, involving Amtrak's **California** Zephyr would not be presented in a public forum unless a hearing was held.

It is the mission of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to investigate significant accidents in railroad transportation and to issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing their recurrence. All factual material developed as a result of our accident investigation will be placed in a docket and made available to the public. The Safety Board will use this information to develop an accident investigation report that will include the Board's findings, probable cause, and safety recommendations. It is at times necessary to hold a public hearing to complete the investigative record.

Although the NTSB's investigative staff do not believe a hearing is necessary to complete their investigation of the California Zephyr accident, a public meeting of our Board will be held to discuss the circumstances and safety issues of the accident, and to consider the accident report. Notices of dates and agendas for Board Meetings are published in the Federal Register and on the NTSB's website (www.nts.gov) at least 1 week before the meeting date. I have asked that Mr. Romstad be notified when the date for the Board meeting involving the Nodaway, Iowa, accident is scheduled so that he may have an opportunity to attend.

If you have questions, or if I can be helpful to you at any time in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marion C. Blakey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marion C. Blakey
Chairman



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

January 15, 2002

Mr. Frank J. (Name withheld)
422 (withheld) Street
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80911

Dear Mr. (Name withheld):

Thank you for your October 1, 2001, letter regarding the National Transportation Safety Board's investigation of the dcrainhnt of Amtrak's *California Zephyr* in Nodaway, Iowa, on March 17, 2001.

Although no public hearing will be held on this accident, the Safety Board has taken extensive testimony that along with pertinent factual investigation material developed as a result of the accident investigation will be placed into a docket and will be available to the public. The Safety Board will use this information to develop an accident investigation report that will include the Board's findings, probable cause, and safety recommendations. This report will be considered by the Safety Board during a public meeting at which all the circumstances of the accident will be discussed. Notices of dates and agendas for Board Meetings arc published in the *Federal Register* and on the Safety Board's website (www.nts.gov) at least 1 week before the meeting date.

Your letter mentions 5 major Amtrak accidents during the past 10 years that were attributed to defective track conditions. One key part of each NTSB railroad accident investigation, including the *California Zephyr* investigation, is a review of prior accidents to determine whether a pattern may exist that may need to be addresscd by one or more recommendations for safety improvements.

I hope we have addressed your concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert J. Chipkevich". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name.

Robert J. Chipkevich, Director
Office of Railroad, Pipeline, and
Materials Investigations