BEFORE THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD—NTSB
Accident: DCA23HR001—Final Submission

Accident summary and safety recommendations in connection with the derailment of the eastbound Norfolk Southern, Freight Train 32N, in East Palestine, Ohio, on February 3, 2023, at approximately 8:54 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

Accident Synopsis

On February 3, 2023, at approximately 8:54 pm, EST, eastbound Norfolk Southern (NS) general merchandise freight train 32N (Train 32N), derailed on Main Track 1 of the NS Fort Wayne Line of the Keystone Division in East Palestine, Ohio. As a result of the derailment, 38 rail cars derailed and a fire ensued, which damaged an additional 12 cars. There were no reported fatalities or injuries. A one-mile evacuation zone surrounding the derailment was implemented by first responders due to the release of hazardous materials. The evacuation affected approximately 2,000 residents. The weather at the time of the accident was 10°F and clear with no precipitation.

Proposed Contributing Factors and Recommendations

The Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS) propose implementing regulations that require Hot Bearing Detectors at intervals of 7 to 15 miles along rail networks, including integrating Hot Bearing Detectors that detect the presence of faulty or damaged equipment into existing Positive Train Control (PTC) systems. Additionally, Hot Bearing Detectors should be regulated to include proper testing procedures at regular intervals to ensure the equipment is functioning as designed. If integrating into PTC systems is not feasible, there should be a minimum staffing requirement for the Wayside Help Desk and should include an adequate ATC Analyst to ensure no alerts are missed. This proposal aims to enhance safety and efficiency by ensuring the train crew receives critical information concerning the condition of their train. By implementing this measure, it would allow advance notice of trending defects and provide real time updates on defective equipment so the train crew has the necessary knowledge to operate the train appropriately.

The integration of Hot Bearing Detectors into PTC systems would eliminate potential human errors associated with relying on a single ATC Analyst at the trouble desk to detect issues with a train enroute and provide more time for the train crew to take corrective action. PTC integration would further allow train crews to observe trending conditions within the train consist. By implementing the BRS recommendations, it ensures equipment is properly maintained and all personnel have a higher probability of time reduction from defect detection to crew notification, allowing the train crew critical time to bring the train to a stop. This not only enhances efficiency but provides critical information which could potentially prevent a derailment.

These comments constitute the BRS's proposed factors and recommendations. The BRS appreciates the opportunity to participate as a party in the investigation.

Respectfully Submitted,

PII [redacted]

R. Quinn Norman
Vice President Headquarters
December 15, 2023