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This information is preliminary and subject to change.

BNSF Railway Derailment with Bridge Strike

Pueblo West, Colorado
October 15, 2023

On October 15, 2023, about 3:24 p.m. southbound BNSF Railway (BNSF) coal train CNAMCRD0-31D derailed 30 railcars at milepost 109.654 on the Pikes Peak Subdivision in Pueblo West, Colorado.[1] The derailment occurred near a track switch east of a railroad bridge that crossed over Interstate 25.[2] Derailed railcars struck the bridge, six dropping to the interstate below and one or more striking a northbound truck-tractor in combination with a utility trailer (combination vehicle).[3] The eastern span of the bridge partially collapsed over the interstate's northbound lanes. The combination vehicle came to rest beneath the collapsed bridge span, derailed railcars, and lading. (See figure.) The truck driver was killed; no members of the train crew were injured. At the time of the derailment, visibility conditions were daylight and clear; the weather was 71°F with no precipitation.

[1] All times in this report are local times.

[2] A *track switch* (usually called a switch) allows trains or railcars to be diverted to other tracks.

[3] The combination vehicle consisted of a 2019 Freightliner Cascadia and a 2020 utility trailer carrying general grocery items. The vehicle was operated by Coastline Trucking.

Figure. The derailment site. (Courtesy of BNSF.)

Train CNAMCRD0-31D departed Denver, Colorado, at 9:41 a.m. on the day of the derailment, bound for La Junta, Colorado. The train consisted of 2 locomotives at the head end, 3 distributed power units, and 124 hopper cars loaded with coal.[4] Its crew consisted of a conductor and an engineer.

The track near the derailment site was single main track with an adjacent siding. Train movements near the derailment site are authorized by cab signals and wayside signal indications with an overlaid positive train control system and are coordinated by the BNSF Network Operations Center in Ft. Worth, Texas.[5] The maximum authorized speed in the area is 45 mph.[6] At the time of the derailment, the accident train was traveling about 32 mph.

While on scene, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigators completed interviews; reviewed data from locomotive event recorders, forward-facing image recorders, and radio logs; inspected locomotives and railcars; tested

[4] A *distributed power unit* is a locomotive that can be operated by remote in conjunction with locomotives at the train's head end. Distributed power units are generally added to the middle or end of heavier trains.

[5] A *positive train control system* enforces speed limits and prevents a train from passing through a signal that requires it to stop.

[6] Maximum authorized speed was set by Powder Division Timetable No. 4, effective October 26, 2022.

and downloaded data from positive train control and signal systems; examined track near the derailment site; reviewed BNSF track maintenance and welding procedures; and recovered a section of rail for analysis at the NTSB Materials Laboratory.

The NTSB's investigation is ongoing. Future investigative activity will focus on BNSF's track maintenance and inspection procedures.

Parties to the investigation include the Federal Railroad Administration; BNSF; the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen division of the Transportation Communications Union/IAM; the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen; the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes; and the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers.[7]

[7] The Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes spells its name with one final *e* for historical reasons.