

Monday Daylight
18 hours 56 minutes
Sunrise 3:36 a.m.
Sunset 10:32 p.m.

ALASKA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

Anchorage Sunday Times



Volume 61 No. 155 108 Pages

Anchorage Sunday Times, July 6, 1975

Single Copy Price 50 Cents

Freight Train Rams Tourists

RAIL CRASH INJURES MANY

Rescue Center Airlifts Victims

By SUZAN NIGHTINGALE
Times Staff Writer

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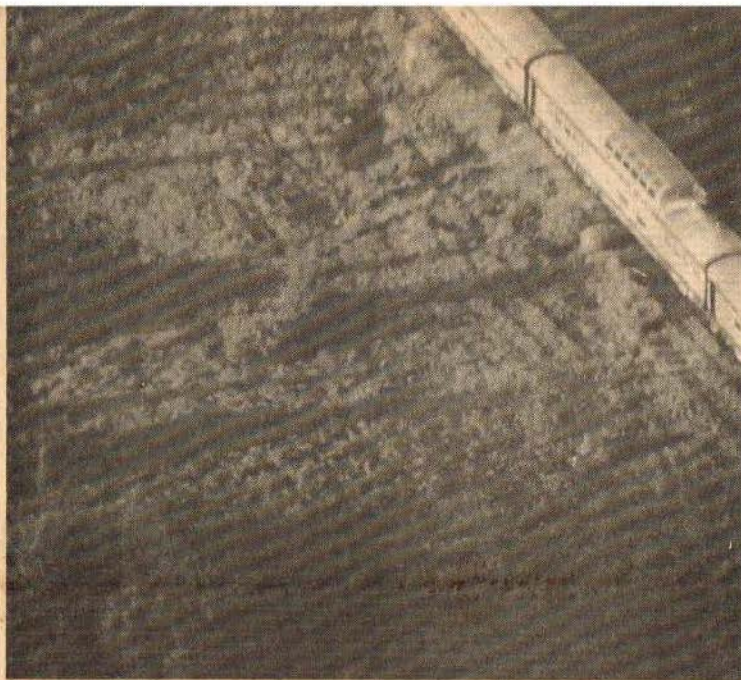
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(More Pictures, Story Page, F8)

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CRASH CRUMPLES PASSENGER CAR

A vista-dome passenger car, second from left, shows damage after an Alaska Railroad passenger train was hit yesterday afternoon by a freight train near Hurricane Gulch, 170 miles north of Anchorage. The accident injured many of the

passengers who were traveling to Anchorage from Fairbanks and Mt. McKinley Park. Helicopters dispatched by the Rescue Coordination Center ferried the injured to local hospitals.

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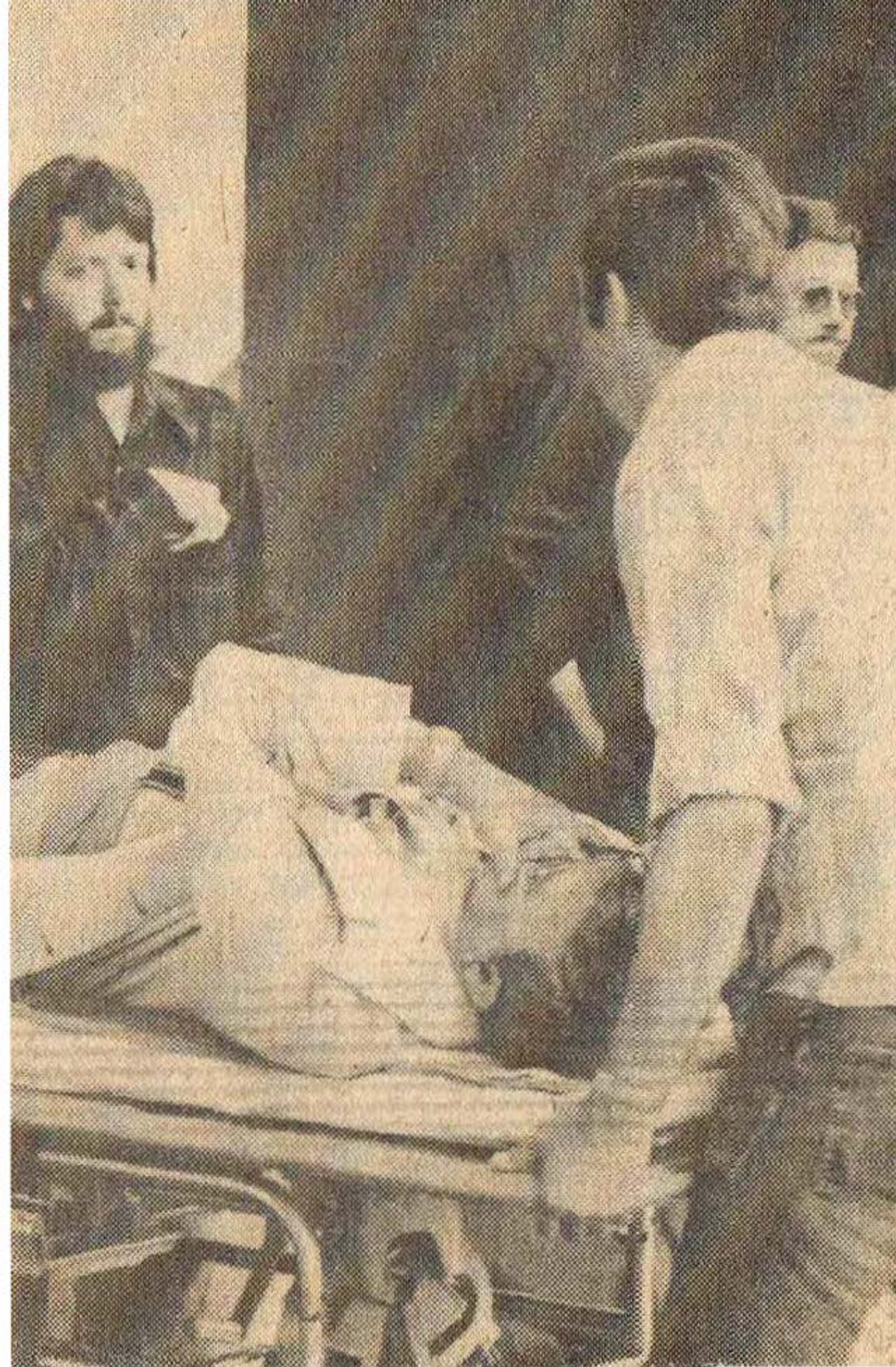
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5Jul75 LaPointe Summary

This would be my first 4th of July holiday in Alaska since I was assigned to the 71st ARRS. Most of the Alaska veteran PJs wanted the weekend off to spend with their families. Because I was single; and the high likelihood of a mission or two during this holiday, I volunteered for the HC-130 alert duty. Two PJs pulled alert on this four engine fixed wing aircraft. The primary reason for having PJs on this plane was to conduct parachute insertion of medics to sites that would take a helo too long to get to. Up to this point in my pararescue career, I had had many helicopter missions; but I had never had a jump mission.

Upon my arrival to the 71st ARRS, I was assigned the additional duty of NCOIC Pararescue Medical Section. After the merging of the 5040th Helicopter Squadron with the 71st, one of my tasks was to standardize the medical kits used by both units. My first task was to make the helicopter medical kit comply with HQ ARRS regulations. My second was to assemble backup medical supply kits. Most of these were oriented toward being dropped by parachute to a PJ team deployed on a mission. The last project I completed before the 4th of July holiday was to design and pack a triage medical kit. This kit was intended to be used in a mass casualty situation and could be either parachuted, carried by helicopter, or in a truck. It was fortunate that we had this kit when the train wreck occurred. During the afternoon of July 5th I was in my barracks room when the hallway phone began to ring. Simultaneously, my beeper alerted me to phone the RCC. I ran to the phone suspecting that it had something to do with my beeper activation.

I was correct. The Rescue Coordination Center was on the phone and told me that the alert helicopter and HC-130 were being scrambled to a train wreck located 100 miles north of Anchorage with dozens of injured. Alert crews were to report ASAP to their aircraft. Instead of my teammate and I heading to the HC-130, we were to go to the helicopter ramp and get on the first helicopter we found ready to take off. The HC-130 would take off without PJs and provide a communications relay link to the RCC. I was also told to find any other PJs who were in the barracks and alert them to report to the PJ section, get medical kits, and go to the helicopter ramp for transport to the crash site. This was going to be a maximum effort with all available helicopter crews and PJs heading to the rescue.

In 1975, the PJ Section at Elmendorf was located in the basement of the PJ barracks. This made for very rapid response by PJs being scrambled. I found a couple of more PJs in the barracks and all of us ran to the PJ section where we collected additional medical kits, litters, and our newly constructed Triage Mass Casualty kit. Next, we opened the safe that held our narcotics (Morphine, Demerol, and Codeine) and we signed out the controlled medications. Everything was put in the alert pickup truck and with lights and sirens blaring we headed to the helicopter ramp.

The alert HH-3 and a second HH-3 already had their rotors turning and were waiting for PJs before takeoff. We divided the medical gear and PJs putting half on each bird. It took about 45 minutes to reach the crash site and the helicopters landed about 75-yards away from the wreckage. All of us bolted from the aircraft and headed to the train. Once there, we were met by some of the passengers who pointed us towards the most injured personnel. All of the train cars were still upright but a few of them were off the tracks and some of them were compressed smaller due to impact with another train. Getting on the train cars was surprisingly difficult because access required climbing up to a small ramp, walking a few feet to the center of the rear of the car, doing a 90° right turn to enter through a door that was about a yard wide. It was obvious that we were not going to be able to move any litter patients out that way. Most of the critically injured were in two cars and we provided emergency medical care to stabilize them. At

this time, I was the ranking PJ on scene so I directed the other PJs to care for the patients while I radioed the helicopters with an initial status report and figured out how we were going to get the patients out of the train and over to the helicopters for medevac to Anchorage. I spoke to one of the employees working on the train and asked if there was any way to open or remove one of the large windows on the train. These windows were huge and we could easily move litters through them. Unfortunately, at this time in history, the windows were never intended to be removed, even in an emergency.

Once I learned this, I told everyone who was ambulatory to move out of my way because I was going to break the glass out of the window. The train conductor informed me that each of those windows cost over \$10,000.00

I considered that fact only as long as it took me to find a fire axe and broke out all of the glass. Now we had a means to extricate injured off the train. By now three more helicopters arrived on scene and discharged several more PJs, a flight surgeon (doctor), and a couple of hospital medics. The flight surgeon set up a triage area near the most seriously injured patients. Other PJs and the medics treated the injured. Most of the train passengers were not injured and they volunteered to help out. I handed my axe to one of these men and told him to break out one of the windows on the next train car. Other passengers carried folded litters into the train cars where we placed the injured for initial transport to the triage point. Outside the broken window, several men waited and assisted in removing the litters through the windows. Then four men carried the litter to triage.

At triage, the flight surgeon checked the adequacy of initial medical treatment and prioritized each patient for medevac. Soon patients were on the helicopters and on the way to hospitals in Anchorage. Each helicopter had one PJ who monitored the patients enroute. I stayed at the wreck to coordinate radio communication between the train and the helicopters waiting for patients to be loaded. After each helo landed, the crew shut down the rotors to make loading safer. As soon as a helo was loaded, the crew started engines again, engaged rotors, and took off. Most of the departing helicopters carried 4 or 5 litter patients. Amazing, the helicopter squadron managed to find five crews to man choppers to fly on the mission. This is really unusual because it was a holiday and everyone, including alert crews were home or at their barracks. One of the reasons that they were able to get so many crews so fast was that almost all of the crewmembers lived in on base housing or barracks. The usual crew rest requirements and a few other regulations were ignored to permit a response to this emergency.

From the time I arrived on scene to the last patient being loaded on a helicopter was about one hour. When I was not coordinating patient movement, I treated some patients. On my annual performance report, LtCol Larry Nitz wrote: *"I am particular aware of SSgt LaPointe's outstanding performance. He received the Air Force Commendation Medal for meritorious service for his performance during the worst train wreck in Alaskan history. His medical expertise aided in saving 10 lives and assisting 52 other personnel in distress."*

All in all, it was an exciting July 5th and I began to think that this assignment to Alaska was likely to be one of the most exciting in my pararescue career.

AFCM AK train wreck



Staff Sergeant Robert L. LaPointe distinguished himself by outstanding achievement at Hurricane Gulch, Alaska, on 5 July 1975. On that date, Sergeant LaPointe, a pararescueman assigned to the 71st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Elmendorf Air Force Base, rendered emergency assistance to the injured in the worst train wreck in Alaska's history. By his prompt action and humanitarian regard for his fellowman, Sergeant LaPointe reflected credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



Hectic holiday

Base people rush to aid victims of train wreck

By Capt. Matt Waldron
Information officer
21st Composite Wing

It had been a rather lazy Fourth of July weekend. I had watched the city of Anchorage's Fourth of July fireworks display Friday night after enjoying the festivities on the Delaney Park strip that afternoon. Saturday was warm and sunny and I was heeding my wife's urgings to mow the lawn.

As on-call duty officer for the wing Information Office, I was monitoring the weekend search and rescue activities of Elmendorf's Rescue Coordination Center [RCC]. Most of the RCC's summer weekends are eventful.

On July 3, a helicopter crew from the 5040th Helicopter Squadron had talked down a disoriented light aircraft pilot for a landing near the Little Susitna River. And on the Fourth of July, four pararescuemen from the 5040th and 71st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron were airlifted by 5040th HH-3E helicopter to Matanuska Glacier, northeast of Anchorage, to rescue a 14-year-old boy who had fallen into a 40-foot deep crevasse. Two "snaves" were credited for these missions. The same helicopter crew evacuated an injured hang-glider flyer from Hatcher Pass to Providence Hospital

in Anchorage Saturday morning.

Around 4 p.m. Saturday, I received a short call from TSgt. Jack Lewis at the RCC who said there had been a train accident north of Anchorage. Details were sketchy but I noted the urgency in his voice. A few minutes later, he called back and told me there were more than 30 injuries as a result of the accident and the RCC duty officer, Maj. Thomas L. Spangler, was leaving Elmendorf aboard a helicopter to act as on-scene commander. When I arrived at the RCC communications center in building 5-800, phones were jangling and radios crackling.

Sergeant Lewis was talking to the Alaska Railroad dispatch office in Anchorage. A south-bound freight train had struck the rear of a south-bound passenger train carrying 225 passengers just south of Hurricane Gulch, some 100 air miles north of Anchorage. Some of the passengers were seriously injured and the railroad was requesting immediate evacuation assistance.

Maj. Alfred R. Meyer and TSgt. William E. Turley, RCC coordinators called to duty, had now arrived and were coolly alerting the helicopter squadron to recall aircrews and prepare to launch. They also alerted the Elmendorf hospital which began assembling medical supplies

Continued on page 6

SOURDOUGH SENTINAL (Elmendorf AFB Newspaper)
Friday, July 11, 1975

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Lt. Col. (Dr.) William Brant, flight surgeon, two nurses and two medical technicians were readying medical supplies for the flight to the wreck. These medical people and nine Air Force pararescuemen from the 5040th and 71st provided emergency medical care at the scene of the accident and during the return flights to Anchorage.

The Army was asked to assist and they responded with two UH-1 Huey helicopters from Ft. Richardson and a twin-roter CH-47 Chinook from Ft. Wainwright, at Fairbanks.

The first Air Force helicopter took off 39 minutes after the RCC was notified. Two other HM-3s and the three Army helicopters followed.

Second Lt. Dennis Gavin, pilot of the first HH-3 and the first aircraft to reach the disaster scene, arrived about 5:20 p.m. He said four or five passenger cars were ajar and many of the train's passengers were outside. A civilian doctor on the train was administering first aid and many passengers were assisting. According to Lieutenant Gavin, there was no hysteria and relative calm prevailed.

Major Spangler, on-scene coordinator for RCC, monitored the arrival of the helicopters and relayed information to the RCC at Elmendorf. He said, "There was phenomenal cooperation from all concerned. The recovery effort went like clock work. Air Force medical people waded right in to take care of the injured. Train passengers helped us carry and load litter patients and the helicopters whisked 'em right out."

The first helicopter to return to Anchorage landed at the Air Force hospital helipad. Hospital personnel offloaded seven injured from the HH-3 and moved the injured to waiting ambulances for the short trip to the hospital proper.

Doctors, nurses, medics and other hospital personnel provided immediate attention and care to the passengers as they were brought in. The second Air Force helicopter returned injured to Providence Hospital. In all, seven helicopter-loads of injured passengers were flown to the Air Force and Providence hospitals.

Approximately 35 injured were admitted to the hospital while the remainder of the 63 evacuated were examined and released. As of press time, only 2 remained hospitalized, both in satisfactory condition.

Fate wasn't done yet for that hectic Saturday. While helicopters were still shuttling injured from the train wreck, the RCC received a call for help to rescue a man from the Eklutna Glacier. Air Force SSgt. Dennis C. Williamson was injured while climbing the glacier with friends and his condition was serious. The sergeant was loaded on a Stokes litter and hoisted aboard an HH-3 helicopter sent by the RCC and he was flown to the Elmendorf hospital. Another save to the 5040th — Sergeant Williamson was in good condition at the Elmendorf hospital at press time.

Sunday was busy for the RCC and 5040th too. Two more saves were credited to the squadron for evacuating two seriously injured automobile accident victims to Fairbanks Memorial Hospital. The alert HH-3-3 at Eielson AFB did the shuttle.

And finally, an Elmendorf HH-3 returned two men to Anchorage after their helicopter crashed 110 miles north of here. They were uninjured.

The RCC directed 11 missions over the holiday weekend that resulted in 15 lives being saved and 81 assists being rendered. The 5040th Helicopter Squadron received credit for 11 of the saves and 22 of the assists.

Among those who helped:

It is said being in the military is a 24-hour-a-day job. This was proven over the July Fourth holiday as numerous Elmendorf people went into action to assist the victims of Saturday's train wreck as well as several other mishaps during the period July 3 through Sunday night.

Although it would be impossible to list the 250 hospital personnel who cared for the victims of the train wreck and the maintenance and supply people who kept the aircraft flying by name in this limited space, the Sourdough Sentinel would like to mention the others who were directly involved in the holiday rescues.

Helicopter crews - 5040th Helicopter Squadron

2nd Lt. Dennis W. Gavin, pilot
1st Lt. Douglas C. Shoop, copilot
TSgt. Francis M. Fischer, flight mechanic
AIC Ward J. Warren, pararescueman

Maj. William A. Devries, pilot
1st Lt. James C. Woolworth, copilot
TSgt. Frank R. Deck, flight mechanic
TSgt. Harrel Quillian, pararescueman

Lt. Col. Joe C. Fouts, pilot
Capt. John W. Mueller, copilot
TSgt. Thomas D. Blakney, flight mechanic

1st Lt. Edward LaFontane, pilot
2nd Lt. Ronald G. Hahn, copilot
TSgt. John B. Patterson, flight mechanic
TSgt. Donald P. Mulhall, rescue specialist

1st Lt. Lawrence Palmgren, pilot
1st Lt. Guy K. Barrett, copilot
SSgt. Robert L. Delay, flight mechanic
AIC Robert A. Gillham, pararescueman

71st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron Pararescuemen

AIC Dave Bolz
SSgt. Robert LaPointe
AIC Eric Libke
TSgt. Howard J. Holloway
Sgt. Keith V. Underwood
AIC Michael P. Buonaugurie
SSgt. William A. Werber Jr.

Rescue Coordination Center People on duty

Maj. Thomas L. Spangler
Maj. Alfred Meyer
Capt. William Dorman
MSgt. Bob Grit
MSgt. Bill Turley
TSgt. Jack Lewis
TSgt. Ed Gonzales



Rush to Aid – Elmendorf pararescuemen head for the disabled train as an injured passenger is carried to an awaiting helicopter. (USAF photo by 2nd Lt. Dennis Gavin)



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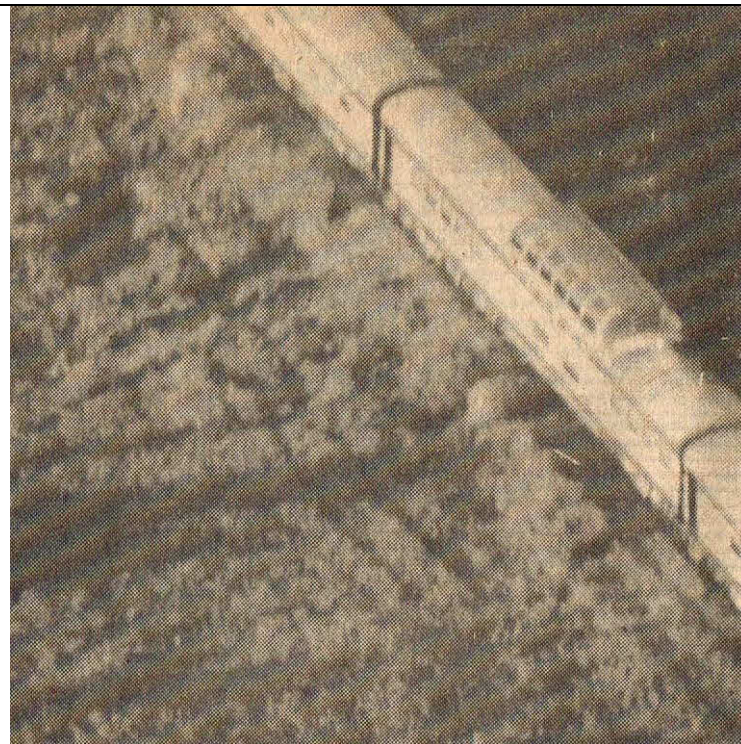
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TRAIN WRECK VICTIM AIDED

One of the first injured passengers to be brought to Anchorage from yesterdays train wreck is wheeled into the Elmendorf Air Force Base hospital after being helicoptered from the crash scene.



Enroute – Injured train passengers are ready for the flight back to Anchorage on an HH-3E helicopter. In addition to the six military helicopter crews, 17 Air Force personnel — including a doctor, nurses, pararescuemen medical technicians and a Rescue Coordination Center onscene commander - assisted in the evacuation and treatment of the injured at the scene and on the flights to Anchorage. (U.S. Air Force Photo by 2nd Lt. Dennis Gavin)



Transfer – Air Force personnel transfer an injured train passenger from an HH-3E helicopter to an ambulance on the helipad at the USAF hospital at Elmendorf. More than 40 injured train passengers were flown to the Elmendorf Hospital. (U.S. Air Force Photo by 2nd Lt. Dennis Gavin)

Hurricane, AK Train Collision, July 1975

ELEVEN PASSENGERS STILL IN ANCHORAGE HOSPITALS.

Anchorage, Alaska (AP) -- Eleven persons remained hospitalized in Anchorage today, three of them in serious condition, following the worst train wreck in Alaska history Saturday. None of the hospitalized persons was from the Fairbanks area.

Sixty-three of the 230 passengers aboard the Alaska Railroad passenger train from Fairbanks to Anchorage were injured when a nine-car freight train slammed into the rear of the passenger train.

The collision occurred near Hurricane Gulch south of McKinley Park at about 4 p.m. The passenger train had halted for a routine stop to allow passengers to photograph Mt. McKinley. The passenger train was starting to roll again when it was hit, railroad spokesman D. L. Allen, assistant general manager, said.

Allen said the cause of the accident has not been determined. He said Alaska Railroad trains are equipped with radios to enable crews to talk between cars, between trains and with dispatch offices up and down the Anchorage-Fairbanks rail belt.

Allen declined comment today on whether the engineer or brakeman aboard the freight train had been suspended following the accident. "I can't comment on that," he told the News-Miner. "We've got these union rules and civil service."

Passenger service between Fairbanks and Anchorage resumed today after huge cranes completed clearing the single tracks Sunday night that link Alaska's two largest cities.

Two investigators from the National Safety Transportation Board in Washington, D.C. were at the crash scene today. Railroad investigators also were probing the accident. Allen said the railroad may have to scrap the vista-dome rail car which was severely damaged in the crash. He said the car "folded like an accordion." The car is worth about \$270,000, he said. He added that the federally-owned railroad believes the other cars can be repaired.

Some of the cars on the freight train originated in Fairbanks. The train was made up in Healy and left Healy on Saturday before the passenger train. Allen said the freight train pulled off at a siding at Colorado Station to allow the passenger train to pass. The collision occurred about 18 miles later.

The accident scrambled nearly 400 medical personnel into a disaster plan. The 63 injured persons were airlifted by six military helicopters to Anchorage from the crash site about 100 air miles north of the city. Most of the injured were treated and released by noon Sunday.

One traveler, who asked that he not be identified, told the Associated Press, he first believed that the freight train was on a side track when it approached the passenger train. But the passenger said he quickly realized he was wrong. "I said to myself, 'that son of a gun is going to plow right into the train' there was no whistle and I saw the gap closing, ducked back and wham."

A railroad spokesman said the speeds of the two trains at the time of the collision is unknown, but he estimated that the freight train was traveling at less than 30 miles an hour.

A doctor who happened to be riding the train administered first-aid while train employees cut the backs off seats and removed windows in preparation for the arrival of para-medics and doctors. Some of the injured were lifted out of the train aboard litters gently lowered through windows.

The three passengers listed in serious condition today were being treated at Elmendorf AFB. ARTHUR K. WILLIAMSON, of Hemet, Calif., was listed in serious condition. PISCILLA ALFELD of Renmar, Pa, listed as serious but improving condition. ANN ANCEVINO, of Pine Brook, N.J., listed as serious but improving condition.

Listed in good condition at Elmendorf were:

MARION L. LACH, of Buffalo, N.Y.
LILLIAN J. SWED, of La Mesa, Calif.
OTTO B. LIERSCH, of Paradise, Calif.
ROBERT SMALL, of Anchorage.
ADELINE SULLIVAN, of Richmond, Calif.

Listed in satisfactory condition at Providence Hospital were:

VIRGINIA HEADLEY, of San Jose, Calif.
LOLA GASTON, of Southaven, Mich.
CHARLES CURTIS, of Wasilla, Ak.

Two other patients at Providence, ROCCO GIOVANO of Foxboro, Mass., and WILBUR RANDALL of Post Falls, Idaho, were discharged this morning. Marjorie Lach of Buffalo, whose husband is hospitalized, told newsmen Saturday that aboard the train "things were handled beautifully ... everybody helped out and there was no panic anywhere." She added with a grin, "The first thing you should know, though, is that Mt. McKinley was out in all her glory."

Passengers who weren't injured in Saturday's crash were taken to Anchorage in buses. Railroad spokesman Allen said the train crash was the worst in Alaska history.

NTSB SAFETY BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS ISSUED April 7, 1976

On July 5, 1975, an Alaska Railroad freight train, Extra 1502 South, collided with the rear of passenger train No. 5, which had stopped just south of Hurricane, Alaska, to permit the passengers to view Mt. McKinley. All cars of the passenger train and the first four locomotive units of the freight train were derailed. Sixty-two persons were injured and one of the injured subsequently died.

No. 5 had stopped at Hurricane, 2.2 miles north of the point of the collision, and had departed at 3:41 pm., 6 minutes later than its scheduled departure time of 3:35 p.m. The crew did not throw off lighted fuses to protect the rear of the train as it departed from Hurricane and moved southward to the mountain-viewing stop. The train had stopped for about 1 minute at the mountain stop and had just started to move southward when the collision occurred at 3:46 p.m.

The crew of Extra 1502 South had been instructed by the train dispatcher to copy a train order by radio at Hurricane. Even though the operating rules required the train to be stopped when a crew member copied a train order, Extra 1502 South was not stopped at Hurricane.

The engineer of Extra 1502 South was copying the train order when No. 5 first became visible to the crew members on the locomotive, about 3,000 feet north of No. 5. The speed of Extra 1502 South at this time was 40 mph, which was in excess of the maximum permitted speed of 35 mph. The engineer applied the brakes slightly but the speed was not reduced. The train continued to move southward to about 1,500 feet north of No. 5, where the engineer applied the brakes in emergency. Then he immediately placed the independent brake valve in the full-application position and depressed the release bail. This action released the emergency application of the brakes on the five locomotive units.

The lead locomotive unit of Extra 1502 South had a 24 RL braking system which permits an automatic brake application on the locomotive to be released by depressing the independent brake valve handle in any position.

This accident appears to be the culmination of a series of rule violations and poor practices. There is no doubt that the engineer and front brakeman of 1502 South saw No. 5 in sufficient time to have stopped their train by regular means, despite its improper speed, but the preoccupation of the engineer with copying the train order permitted the train to move to a point where an emergency application was required to stop the train short of the collision. The emergency application still should have stopped the train short of the collision, but the improper release of the locomotive emergency brake negated this possibility.

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Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Railroad Administration;

1. Institute procedures on the Alaska Railroad to insure consistent compliance with operating rules
2. Revise the Alaska Railroad operating rules so that they explicitly state the actions required to provide safe operation.
3. Require all railroads to modify the 24 RL independent release of locomotive brake valves to eliminate future unwanted release of locomotive brakes

SIGNED

Webster B. Todd

Chairman



SOURDOUGH *Sentinel*

Volume 17, Number 28

Anchorage, Alaska

Friday, July 11, 1975

Hectic holiday

Base people rush to aid victims of train wreck

By Capt. Matt Waldron
Information officer
21st Composite Wing

It had been a rather lazy Fourth of July weekend. I had watched the city of Anchorage's Fourth of July fireworks display Friday night after enjoying the festivities on the Delaney Park strip that afternoon. Saturday was warm and sunny and I was heeding my wife's urgings to mow the lawn.

As on-call duty officer for the wing Information Office, I was monitoring the weekend search and rescue activities of Elmendorf's Rescue Coordination Center [RCC]. Most of the RCC's summer weekends are eventful.

On July 3, a helicopter crew from the 5040th Helicopter Squadron had talked down a disoriented light aircraft pilot for a landing near the Little Susitna River. And on the Fourth of July, four pararescuemen from the 5040th and 71st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron were airlifted by 5040th HH-3E helicopter to Matanuska Glacier, northeast of Anchorage, to rescue a 14-year-old boy who had fallen into a 40-foot deep crevasse. Two "saves" were credited for these missions. The same helicopter crew evacuated an injured hang-glider flyer from Hatcher Pass to Providence Hospital

in Anchorage Saturday morning.

Around 4 p.m. Saturday, I received a short call from TSgt. Jack Lewis at the RCC who said there had been a train accident north of Anchorage. Details were sketchy but I noted the urgency in his voice. A few minutes later, he called back and told me there were more than 30 injuries as a result of the accident and the RCC duty officer, Maj. Thomas L. Spangler, was leaving Elmendorf aboard a helicopter to act as on-scene commander. When I arrived at the RCC communications center in building 5-800, phones were jangling and radios crackling.

Sergeant Lewis was talking to the Alaska Railroad dispatch office in Anchorage. A south-bound freight train had struck the rear of a south-bound passenger train carrying 225 passengers just south of Hurricane Gulch, some 100 air miles north of Anchorage. Some of the passengers were seriously injured and the railroad was requesting immediate evacuation assistance.

Maj. Alfred R. Meyer and TSgt. William E. Turley, RCC coordinators called to duty, had now arrived and were coolly alerting the helicopter squadron to recall aircrews and prepare to launch. They also alerted the Elmendorf hospital which began assembling medical supplies

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 1

and recalling hospital personnel. Eventually, some 250 hospital personnel manned their stations to care for the injured as they were flown in.

Lt. Col. (Dr.) William Brant, flight surgeon, two nurses and two medical technicians were readying medical supplies for the flight to the wreck. These medical people and nine Air Force parascuers from the 5040th and 71st provided emergency medical care at the scene of the accident and during the return flights to Anchorage.

The Army was asked to assist and they responded with two UH-1 Huey helicopters from Ft. Richardson and a twin-roter CH-47 Chinook from Ft. Wainwright, at Fairbanks.

The first Air Force helicopter took off

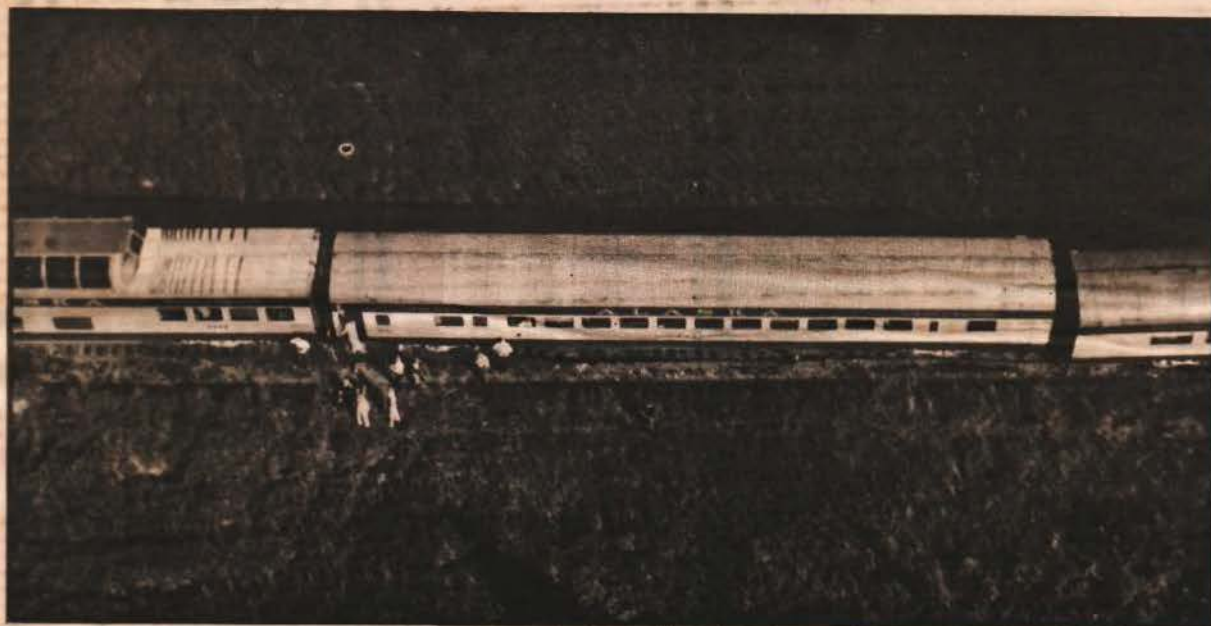
39 minutes after the RCC was notified. Two other HH-3s and the three Army helicopters followed.

Second Lt. Dennis Gavin, pilot of the first HH-3 and the first aircraft to reach the disaster scene, arrived about 5:20 p.m. He said four or five passenger cars were ajar and many of the train's passengers were outside. A civilian doctor on the train was administering first aid and many passengers were assisting. According to Lieutenant Gavin, there was no hysteria and relative calm prevailed.

Major Spangler, on-scene coordinator for RCC, monitored the arrival of the helicopters and relayed information to the RCC at Elmendorf. He said, "There was phenomenal cooperation from all concerned. The recovery effort went like

clock work. Air Force medical people waded right in to take care of the injured. Train passengers helped us carry and load litter patients and the helicopters whisked 'em right out."

The first helicopter to return to Anchorage landed at the Air Force hospital helipad. Hospital personnel off-loaded seven injured from the HH-3 and moved the injured to waiting ambulances for the short trip to the hospital proper. Doctors, nurses, medics and other hospital personnel provided immediate attention and care to the passengers as they were brought in. The second Air Force helicopter returned injured to Providence Hospital. In all, seven helicopter-loads of injured passengers were flown to the Air Force and Providence hospitals.



Awaiting help

This aerial shot of the passenger train was taken from an Air Force HH-3E helicopter from Elmendorf, the first rescue helicopter to arrive at the accident scene. [U.S. Air Force Photo by 2nd Lt. Dennis Gavin]

Approximately 35 injured were admitted to the hospital while the remainder of the 63 evacuated were examined and released. As of press time, only 2 remained hospitalized, both in satisfactory condition.

Fate wasn't done yet for that hectic Saturday. While helicopters were still shuttling injured from the train wreck, the RCC received a call for help to rescue a man from the Eklutna Glacier. Air Force SSgt. Dennis C. Williamson was injured while climbing the glacier with friends and his condition was serious. The sergeant was loaded and on a Stokes litter and hoisted aboard an HH-3 helicopter sent by the RCC and he was flown to the Elmendorf hospital. Another save to the 5040th--Sergeant Williamson was in good

condition at the Elmendorf hospital at press time.

Sunday was busy for the RCC and 5040th too. Two more saves were credited to the squadron for evacuating two seriously injured automobile accident victims to Fairbanks Memorial Hospital. The alert HH-3 at Eielson AFB did the shuttle. And finally, an Elmendorf HH-3 returned two men to Anchorage after their helicopter crashed 110 miles north of here. They were uninjured.

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Rush to aid

Elmendorf pararescuemen head for the disabled train as an injured passenger is carried to an awaiting helicopter. [U.S. Air Force Photo by 2nd Lt. Dennis Gavin]

Among those who helped:

It is said being in the military is a 24-hour-a-day job. This was proven over the July Fourth holiday as numerous Elmendorf people went into action to assist the victims of Saturday's train wreck as well as several other mishaps during the period July 3 through Sunday night.

Although it would be impossible to list the 250 hospital personnel who cared for the victims of the train wreck and the maintenance and supply people who kept the aircraft flying by name in this limited space, the Sourdough Sentinel would like to mention the others who were directly involved in the holiday rescues.

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1st Lt. Douglas C. Shoop, copilot
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SSgt. Robert Lapointe
A1C Eric Libke
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Sgt. Keith V. Underwood
A1C Michael P. Buonaugurio
SSgt. William A. Werber Jr.



Robert LaPointe



Enroute

Injured train passengers are ready for the flight back to Anchorage on an HH-3E helicopter. In addition to the six military helicopter crews, 17 Air Force personnel — including a doctor, nurses, pararescuemen, medical technicians and a Rescue Coordination Center on-scene commander — assisted in the evacuation and treatment of the injured at the scene and on the flights to Anchorage. [U.S. Air Force

Transfer

Air Force personnel transfer an injured train passenger from an HH-3E helicopter to an ambulance on the helipad at the USAF Hospital Elmendorf. More than 40 passengers were flown to the Elmendorf hospital. [U.S. Air Force Photo by 2nd Lt. Dennis Gavin]





5Jul75

This would be my first 4th of July holiday in Alaska since I was assigned to the 71st ARRS.



Hectic holiday

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Information officer
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Rush to Aid – Elmendorf pararescuemen head for the disabled train as an injured passenger is carried to an awaiting helicopter. (USAF photo by 2nd Lt. Dennis Gavin)



Freight Train Rams Tourists

RAIL CRASH INJURES MANY

Rescue Center Airlifts Victims

By SUZAN NIGHTINGALE – Anchorage Times Staff Writer

The worst train wreck in Alaska's history left at least 67 people injured, some of them critically, at 4 p.m. yesterday when an Alaska Railroad freight train collided with a passenger train full of holiday travelers. The number of injured climbed as rescue operations continued into the night.

Both trains were traveling south from Fairbanks when the freight train rammed the rear end of the passenger train 170 miles north of Anchorage.

Cause of the accident is still under investigation. "The only thing we know is that the freight train hit the rear of the passenger train," said Alaska Railroad Assistant Manager D.L. Allen. "They were on a clear expanse of track and we don't have any idea of what went wrong."

An elderly passenger who was being treated at Providence Hospital said the accident occurred after the passenger train stopped to take pictures of Mt. McKinley. "Where the drivers in that other train were looking, I'll never know. I can't figure out what they thought they were up to."

According to railroad traffic representative Ray Fenheim, the stop to photograph McKinley is standard procedure. Fenheim said the McKinley photographing stop was allowed for in the railroad's time schedule and should not have caused any difficulty.

Military helicopters, summoned by the Rescue Coordination Center headquartered at Elmendorf Air Force Base, immediately converged on the accident scene to initiate rescue operations. The injured were flown to Elmendorf and Providence hospitals for emergency treatment.

At the hospitals, the injured passengers were carried from the choppers on stretchers. Most of them suffered from lacerations, chest injuries and broken bones. Some were carried directly into operating rooms. All 17 of the passengers taken to Elmendorf hospital were admitted. The final rescue helicopters were expected to deliver their injured to Providence.

Both hospitals recalled personnel, off duty for the July 4th weekend, to handle the emergency overflow. In less than half an hour, Providence drew together more than 100 additional staff members. Elmendorf's hospital put out a recall resulting in more than 250 extra staffers on duty to treat the injured there.

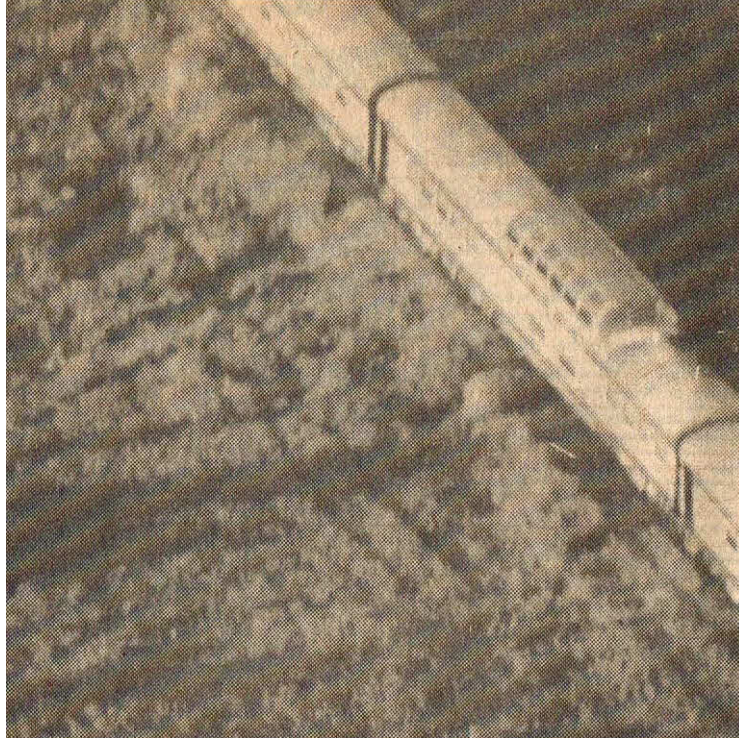
One patient said she thought she was experiencing an earthquake when the trains collided. Another said the accident knocked her "out cold."

No one panicked, another passenger noted. "There was some shock but no panic. I guess we were all lucky to get around after that. I'm disgusted that this has happened," he continued, "but I suppose I'll live."

One rescue pilot termed the wreckage "a mess" as he picked up an additional 15 stretchers for transport to the collision scene.

The tangled wreckage blocked all railroad transportation between Anchorage and Fairbanks.

The freight train left Fairbanks ahead of the passenger train yesterday but stopped at Healy where the passenger train passed it to pick up riders at Mt. McKinley National Park. The passenger train, carrying 226 riders, was filled to capacity at the time of the accident.



CRASH CRUMPLES PASSENGER CAR

A vista-dome passenger car shows damage after an Alaska Railroad passenger train was hit yesterday afternoon by a freight train near Hurricane Gulch, 170 miles north of Anchorage. The accident injured many of the passengers who were traveling to Anchorage from Fairbanks and Mt. McKinley Park. Helicopters dispatched by the Rescue Coordination Center ferried the injured to local hospitals



TRAIN WRECK VICTIM AIDED

One of the first injured passengers to be brought to Anchorage from yesterdays train wreck is wheeled into the Elmendorf Air Force Base hospital after being helicoptered from the crash scene.



Enroute – Injured train passengers are ready for the flight back to Anchorage on an HH-3E helicopter. In addition to the six military helicopter crews, 17 Air Force personnel — including a doctor, nurses, pararescuemen medical technicians and a Rescue Coordination Center onscene commander - assisted in the evacuation and treatment of the injured at the scene and on the flights to Anchorage. (U.S. Air Force Photo by 2nd Lt. Dennis Gavin)



Transfer – Air Force personnel transfer an injured train passenger from an HH-3E helicopter to an ambulance on the helipad at the USAF hospital at Elmendorf. More than 40 injured train passengers were flown to the Elmendorf Hospital. (U.S. Air Force Photo by 2nd Lt. Dennis Gavin)

Hurricane, AK Train Collision, July 1975

ELEVEN PASSENGERS STILL IN ANCHORAGE HOSPITALS.

Anchorage, Alaska (AP) -- Eleven persons remained hospitalized in Anchorage today, three of them in serious condition, following the worst train wreck in Alaska history Saturday. None of the hospitalized persons was from the Fairbanks area.

Sixty-three of the 230 passengers aboard the Alaska Railroad passenger train from Fairbanks to Anchorage were injured when a nine-car freight train slammed into the rear of the passenger train.

The collision occurred near Hurricane Gulch south of McKinley Park at about 4 p.m. The passenger train had halted for a routine stop to allow passengers to photograph Mt. McKinley. The passenger train was starting to roll again when it was hit, railroad spokesman D. L. Allen, assistant general manager, said.

Allen said the cause of the accident has not been determined. He said Alaska Railroad trains are equipped with radios to enable crews to talk between cars, between trains and with dispatch offices up and down the Anchorage-Fairbanks rail belt.

Allen declined comment today on whether the engineer or brakeman aboard the freight train had been suspended following the accident. "I can't comment on that," he told the News-Miner. "We've got these union rules and civil service."

Passenger service between Fairbanks and Anchorage resumed today after huge cranes completed clearing the single tracks Sunday night that link Alaska's two largest cities.

Two investigators from the National Safety Transportation Board in Washington, D.C. were at the crash scene today. Railroad investigators also were probing the accident. Allen said the railroad may have to scrap the vista-dome rail car which was severely damaged in the crash. He said the car "folded like an accordion." The car is worth about \$270,000, he said. He added that the federally-owned railroad believes the other cars can be repaired.

Some of the cars on the freight train originated in Fairbanks. The train was made up in Healy and left Healy on Saturday before the passenger train. Allen said the freight train pulled off at a siding at Colorado Station to allow the passenger train to pass. The collision occurred about 18 miles later.

The accident scrambled nearly 400 medical personnel into a disaster plan. The 63 injured persons were airlifted by six military helicopters to Anchorage from the crash site about 100 air miles north of the city. Most of the injured were treated and released by noon Sunday.

One traveler, who asked that he not be identified, told the Associated Press, he first believed that the freight train was on a side track when it approached the passenger train. But the passenger said he quickly realized he was wrong. "I said to myself, 'that son of a gun is going to plow right into the train' there was no whistle and I saw the gap closing, ducked back and wham."

A railroad spokesman said the speeds of the two trains at the time of the collision is unknown, but he estimated that the freight train was traveling at less than 30 miles an hour.

A doctor who happened to be riding the train administered first-aid while train employees cut the backs off seats and removed windows in preparation for the arrival of para-medics and doctors. Some of the injured were lifted out of the train aboard litters gently lowered through windows.

The three passengers listed in serious condition today were being treated at Elmendorf AFB. ARTHUR K. WILLIAMSON, of Hemet, Calif., was listed in serious condition. PISCILLA ALFELD of Renmar, Pa, listed as serious but improving condition. ANN ANCEVINO, of Pine Brook, N.J., listed as serious but improving condition.

Listed in good condition at Elmendorf were:

MARION L. LACH, of Buffalo, N.Y.
LILLIAN J. SWED, of La Mesa, Calif.
OTTO B. LIERSCH, of Paradise, Calif.
ROBERT SMALL, of Anchorage.
ADELINE SULLIVAN, of Richmond, Calif.

Listed in satisfactory condition at Providence Hospital were:

VIRGINIA HEADLEY, of San Jose, Calif.
LOLA GASTON, of Southaven, Mich.
CHARLES CURTIS, of Wasilla, Ak.

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Passengers who weren't injured in Saturday's crash were taken to Anchorage in buses. Railroad spokesman Allen said the train crash was the worst in Alaska history.

NTSB SAFETY BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS ISSUED April 7, 1976

On July 5, 1975, an Alaska Railroad freight train, Extra 1502 South, collided with the rear of passenger train No. 5, which had stopped just south of Hurricane, Alaska, to permit the passengers to view Mt. McKinley. All cars of the passenger train and the first four locomotive units of the freight train were derailed. Sixty-two persons were injured and one of the injured subsequently died.

No. 5 had stopped at Hurricane, 2.2 miles north of the point of the collision, and had departed at 3:41 pm., 6 minutes later than its scheduled departure time of 3:35 p.m. The crew did not throw off lighted fuses to protect the rear of the train as it departed from Hurricane and moved southward to the mountain-viewing stop. The train had stopped for about 1 minute at the mountain stop and had just started to move southward when the collision occurred at 3:46 p.m.

The crew of Extra 1502 South had been instructed by the train dispatcher to copy a train order by radio at Hurricane. Even though the operating rules required the train to be stopped when a crew member copied a train order, Extra 1502 South was not stopped at Hurricane.

The engineer of Extra 1502 South was copying the train order when No. 5 first became visible to the crew members on the locomotive, about 3,000 feet north of No. 5. The speed of Extra 1502 South at this time was 40 mph, which was in excess of the maximum permitted speed of 35 mph. The engineer applied the brakes slightly but the speed was not reduced. The train continued to move southward to about 1,500 feet north of No. 5, where the engineer applied the brakes in emergency. Then he immediately placed the independent brake valve in the full-application position and depressed the release bail. This action released the emergency application of the brakes on the five locomotive units.

The lead locomotive unit of Extra 1502 South had a 24 RL braking system which permits an automatic brake application on the locomotive to be released by depressing the independent brake valve handle in any position.

This accident appears to be the culmination of a series of rule violations and poor practices. There is no doubt that the engineer and front brakeman of 1502 South saw No. 5 in sufficient time to have stopped their train by regular means, despite its improper speed, but the preoccupation of the engineer with copying the train order permitted the train to move to a point where an emergency application was required to stop the train short of the collision. The emergency application still should have stopped the train short of the collision, but the improper release of the locomotive emergency brake negated this possibility.

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Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Railroad Administration;

1. Institute procedures on the Alaska Railroad to insure consistent compliance with operating rules
2. Revise the Alaska Railroad operating rules so that they explicitly state the actions required to provide safe operation.
3. Require all railroads to modify the 24 RL independent release of locomotive brake valves to eliminate future unwanted release of locomotive brakes

SIGNED

Webster B. Todd

Chairman

Railroad Accident Report

<http://www.nts.gov/investigations/reports.html>

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Title	Event Date	Report Date	City	State	NTSB #	NTIS #
Rear End Collision of an Alaska Railroad Freight Train with a Passenger Train, near Hurricane, Alaska, July 5, 1975	7/5/1975	2/19/1976	Hurricane Gulch	AK	RAR-76-03	PB-251489/AS

NTSB # RAR-76-03

Hurricane, AK Train Collision, July 1975

ELEVEN PASSENGERS STILL IN ANCHORAGE HOSPITALS.

Anchorage, Alaska (AP) -- Eleven persons remained hospitalized in Anchorage today, three of them in serious condition, following the worst train wreck in Alaska history Saturday.

None of the hospitalized persons was from the Fairbanks area.

Sixty-three of the 230 passengers aboard the Alaska Railroad passenger train from Fairbanks to Anchorage were injured when a nine-car freight train slammed into the rear of the passenger train.

The collision occurred near Hurricane Gulch south of McKinley Park at about 4 p.m. The passenger train had halted for a routine stop to allow passengers to photograph Mt. McKinley. The passenger train was starting to roll again when it was hit, railroad spokesman D. L. Allen, assistant general manager, said.

Allen said the cause of the accident has not been determined. He said Alaska Railroad trains are equipped with radios to enable crews to talk between cars, between trains and with dispatch offices up and down the Anchorage-Fairbanks railbelt.

Allen declined comment today on whether the engineer or brakeman aboard the freight train had been suspended following the accident.

"I can't comment on that," he told the News-Miner. "We've got these union rules and civil service."

Passenger service between Fairbanks and Anchorage resumed today after huge cranes completed clearing the single tracks Sunday night that link Alaska's two largest cities.

Two investigators from the National Safety Transportation Board in Washington, D.C. were at

the crash scene today. Railroad investigators also were probing the accident.

Allen said the railroad may have to scrap the vista-domac which was severely damaged in the crash. He said the car "folded like an accordion." The car is worth about \$270,000, he said. He added that the federally-owned railroad believes the othr cars can be repaired.

Some of the cars on the freight train originated in Fairbanks. The train was made up in Healy and left Healy on Saturday before the passenger train. Allen said the freight train pulled off at a siding at Colorado Station to allow the passenger train to pass. The collision occurred about 18 miles later.

The accident scrambled nearly 400 medical personnel into a disaster plan. The 63 injured persons were airlifted by six military helicopters to Anchorage from the crash site about 100 air miles north of the city. Most of the injured were treated and released by noon Sunday.

One traveler, who asked that he not be identified, told the Associated Press, he first believed that the freight train was on a side track when it approached the passenger train.

But the passenger said he quickly realized he was wrong.

"I said to myself, 'that son of a gun is going to plow right into the train' there was no whistle and I saw the gap closing, ducked back and wham."

A railroad spokesman said the speeds of the two trains at the tim of the collision is unknown, but he estimated that the freight train was traveling at less than 30 miles an hour.

A doctor who happened to be riding the train administered first-aid while train employes cut the backs off seats and removed windows in preparation for the arrival of para-medics and doctors.

Some of the injured were lifted out of the train aboard litters gently lowered through windows.

The three passengers listed in serious condition today were being treated at Elmendorf AFB.

ARTHUR K. WILLIAMSON, of Hemet, Calif., was listed in serious condition.

PISCILLA ALFELD of Renmar, Pa, listed as serious but improving condition.

ANN ANCEVINO, of Pine Brook, N.J., listed as serious but improving condition.

Listed in good condition at Elmendorf were:

MARION L. LACH, of Buffalo, N.Y.

LILLIAN J. SWED, of La Mesa, Calif.

OTTO B. LIERSCH, of Paradise, Calif.

ROBERT SMALL, of Anchorage.

ADELINE SULLIVAN, of Richmond, Calif.

Listed in satisfactory condition at Providence Hospital were:

VIRGINIA HEADLEY, of San Jose, Calif.

LOLA GASTON, of Southaven, Mich.

CHARLES CURTIS, of Wasilla, Ak.

Two other patients at Providence, ROCCO GIOVANO of Foxboro, Mass., and WILBUR

RANDALL of Post Falls, Idaho, were discharged this morning.

Marjorie Lach of Buffalo, whose husband is hospitalized, told newsmen Saturday that aboard the train "things were handled beautifully ... everybody helped out and there was no panic anywhere."

She added with a grin, "The first thing you should know, though, is that Mt. McKinley was out in all her glory."

Passengers who weren't injured in Saturday's crash were taken to Anchorage in buses.

Railroad spokesman Allen said the train crash was the worst in Alaska history.