

Weather Forecast
High: Low Near 15. Sunday:
Mostly Fair, High
25 To 30.
Detailed Report on Page 6)

STAMFORD ADVOCATE

FOUNDED 1829

Sun and Tide
Tomorrow

(Eastern Standard Time)

Sun Rises 7:19 — Sun Sets 4:46
High Water 12:34 p.m.
Low Water 7:02 p.m.

STAMFORD, CONN., SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 1959.

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Freight Jumps Track, Crashes Mail Train

Fire Follows Spectacular Pile Up Of Railroad Cars



The wreckage of a sideswiped mail train, intermingled with freight cars, is shown in the top photograph taken from the Connecticut Turnpike looking west over the New Haven Railroad tracks. A ladder truck, being used by firefighters to battle smoke and flames, is parked on Atlantic St. under the overpass. No

one was injured in the derailment, which blocked tracks in both directions. Railroad cars strewn over all four tracks of the railroad is shown in the bottom photograph, taken from South Frontage Road. (Walter)

Four Cars Plunge Into Road After Wreck At Bridge

All Tracks Tied-Up In Wreckage-Strewn Area; Fire Results

Eighteen cars of a west-bound freight train jumped the express track at the Atlantic St. Bridge, 200 yards east of the Stamford Railroad Station this morning at 5:30, slammed against two cars of an empty mail train on another track, and burst into flame.

No one was injured in the wreck, despite the fact that the cars were strewn across the four tracks, and four landed on South Frontage Rd., 30 feet off the embankment.

Tracks Ripped-Up.

The collision between the 20 cars ripped up tracks within a 100-yard area. Freight cars were piled up — one on the other. High power wires were ripped away by the impact, and two towers ripped down.

Cars on both trains burned fiercely, and even though Fire Chief Thomas F. Richardson declared the blaze under control at 7:30, flames were still shooting from some of the cars.

Burning fiercely during the early morning hours were cars that contained shipments of new tires. Other freight cars carried toys, canned goods, newsprint and general goods.

Car Demolished.

The mail train's rear car—the only passenger coach—was completely demolished, and hung partially down the embankment leading to South Frontage Rd., being held in place by freight trains on top of it.

Conductor Michael Halcheck of Hempstead, Long Island, and Flagman Harry Moffatt of Newark, N. J., who normally ride in the coach, escaped almost certain death by riding in the engine because of a defective heater in the coach.

With no heat in the coach, and the temperature at 13 degrees, the two railroad men decided a cold car was no place to be in, and went up to the engine—shortly before the mail train reached Stamford.

Halted At Station.

Railroad Superintendent Keith Young of the main office informed the Advocate that the mail train, "No. 95," making a Boston to New York run, had come to a halt at the station, when the freight cars at the rear on the next track—Track One—whipped into it.

The freight, known as "M-7 "Bullet," was heading toward New York from Worcester, Mass., at a rate of about 50 miles per hour, when the derailment occurred, according to Young.

In his early estimate, Young voiced the opinion that it would be 24 hours before the rails could be cleared for traffic.

Track Clearing.

Later, Stamford Stationmaster Frank Moran, said that possibly the first tracks that could be cleared, would be "Tracks Two" and "Four." At 9:10, he said that tool trains were on the way from the Oak Point Yards, Bronx, N. Y., and New Haven.

As flames were still billowing from the freight cars, Moran stated he would be unable to estimate how long it would take to clear "at least one track."

Passenger Shuttle.

By 9 a.m., arrangements had been made to shuttle railroad passengers by bus from the South Norwalk station to the Greenwich station. Buses were also engaged to pick up commuters along the stations of the New Canaan line, take them to Stamford, and shuttle them and passengers at the Stamford station to Greenwich.

Locals from Greenwich to New York and New York to Greenwich, were transporting passengers shortly after 9:15.

Three freight cars fell 30 feet into South Frontage Rd. with an empty oil car, and burst into flame. Luckily there was no vehicular traffic on this busy roadway at that hour.

Tracks Blocked.

Other cars were piled crazy-quilt fashion across the right-of-way, blocking off all four main-line tracks, and the New Canaan line rails.

Power lines were strewn across the tracks in all directions, tracks ripped up and broken lines were scattered along South Frontage Rd., from the bridge to the rail-
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Firemen Fight Rail Fire From Air



Crumpled freight and mail cars are strewn over New Haven railroad tracks in this photograph taken from Atlantic St. this morning. Amid the wreckage was a tank car, and also a passenger car, but no injury from the crash nor from fire had been reported since the derailment occurred at 5:30 a.m. However, one man, a conductor, was hurt as he hurried to reach the scene.

(Roberts)

Freight Derailed, Hits Mail Train

(Continued from Page One)

road station, and along a portion of Manhattan St., on the other side of the railroad embankment.

Fire Alarms.

Deputy Chief Harold J. Fisher, who responded to the call with Central, South End and West Side crews, ordered a second alarm shortly after arriving at the scene. When Chief Thomas F. Richardson responded with East Side firemen and apparatus, it was determined that the extra company was not needed, and they were sent back to their station.

Using aerial truck ladders to work hose down on the blazing cars, firemen also worked hose from South Frontage Rd., Manhattan St., and the tracks proper.

Power was cut off on all main line tracks immediately after the wreck. Most of the broken wires on the adjacent streets were "alive" until the electricity was turned off.

Grandstand View.

The embankment of the adjacent Turnpike, some 30 yards from the Atlantic St. Bridge, afforded spectators a natural grandstand above the fire trucks.

Travelers and truckers halted along the Turnpike, leaving several hundred cars lined up on both sides of the road.

When the freight train snapped off from the rear of the Diesel, it gave the Diesel such a push it continued on for several hundred yards before coming to a halt, according to Young.

Fighting the blaze in 13-degree temperature, firemen, for a time, were worried about two tank cars—not knowing whether they contained explosive fluids.

Tank Cars Empty.

Able to get close to the tank cars by 7:30, Chief Richardson found that both were empty. Neither bore red labels, which signify flammable or explosive materials, the chief said.

Early on the scene, Police Chief Joseph W. Kinsella ordered traffic cut off in the South Frontage Rd., Atlantic St., Manhattan St. areas, and rerouted. He also called on Capt. Harold J. Herbert to order out 30-off duty policemen, to handle the rerouting, and keep the curious "a good distance away" from the burning wreckage.

Move Saved Lives.

Questioned by a reporter at the scene, Conductor Halchek of the empty mail train stated that he and Moffatt had received permission to ride up front.

If it hadn't been for the change, he said, "I wouldn't be here now."

The area under the Atlantic St. bridge resembled an ice skating rink, due to the thousands of gallons of water being poured out in the sub-zero temperature.

Signals Affected.

Railroad crossing signals on the New Haven line went completely askew when the power lines were knocked down. Not only were the crossings unmanned, but cars were backed up for considerable distances—motorists being confused by the unusual situation.

The only injury reported in connection with the wreck occurred when Stamford conductor Frank J. Larkin, 50, of 140 Hoyt St., received a leg fracture when he tripped over a fallen wire as he was running to the scene of the wreck.

He was taken to St. Joseph's Hospital for treatment.

At 10 this morning, Robert

McKernan, assistant chief of the New Haven Railroad's information office, predicted that no tracks would be cleared until "early Sunday morning."

He stated that "Tracks Two" and "Four" would be the first to be cleared of wreckage and repaired. At least 25 yards of track need repair, McKernan estimated.

Crew Arrives.

The wrecker train dispatched from New York arrived in Greenwich at 10. The crew will get to work as soon as the fire is out.

Chief Richardson pointed out that a fire in burning tires takes some time to extinguish. "Even if we think its out, the blaze may flare up again," he told the Advocate.

The last train wreck of such disastrous proportions occurred Aug. 26, 1956, at the Canal St. Bridge. The derailment of several freight cars, on that date, was blamed by railroad men on a broken journal on a Pittsburgh and Lake Erie freight.

The railroad, at that time, estimated the cost of the derailment—14 cars of a 70-car train—at \$70,000.

Probe Of Cause.

McKernan informed the Advocate at 10:25 that "the accident would have to be investigated before exact cause of the wreck would be determined."

He said that personnel on both trains would have to be questioned, and a check made on the cars and tracks. "This could take day or weeks" he said.