Tragic consequences resulted following a June 29th CN train derailment that occurred approximately 40 kms north of Lillooet, B.C. (an hour west of the City of Kamloops) where two crew members died and a third was left hospitalized.

Crew members Don Faulkner (59) and Tommy Dodd (55) were killed, while Locomotive Engineer Gordon Rhodes (49) miraculously managed to jump free of the 350-tonne locomotive unit as it derailed and plunged down a steep cliff in the Fraser Canyon, along with a lumber flat car.

The locomotive that was used in hauling the heavy train did not have a dynamic braking system, only air brakes. Dynamic brakes use the power of the locomotive itself to help slow the train as well as control its speed when running downhill, as opposed to air pressure. The derailment is still under investigation.

On July 5th, CN was ordered by Federal Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon to use dynamic brakes on all its locomotives that operate in a section of the Fraser Canyon, including the area where the June 29, 2006 derailment occurred. Cannon explained that he wants CN to use the extra braking system (dynamics) as an added safety precaution on steep downhill slopes until the cause of the June 29th derailment is determined. Initial reports after the derailment suggested the locomotive's brakes had failed.

The families of the deceased crew members are angry with how CN has handled the matter, according to a Canadian Press report. Melony Faulkner, the daughter of Don Faulkner, reportedly said: “It's not enough they send out their piece of crap train to kill my dad, they didn't have the compassion to even tell us word one about it. We got their condolences over the TV and it is still all we've gotten from them. Nobody from CN called us.”

Mr. Faulkner's son, Shane, who does contract work for CN at its Prince George rail yard, said he found out about the derailment from family members just before going to work in the early hours of Friday, June 30th: "I had to be on-site at 2 a.m. If I'd found out about my father over coffee talk, things would not have been pleasant."

Engineer Gord Rhodes, the only surviving crew member, is reportedly having a difficult time right now with what has happened. Ms. Faulkner explained to the media that Mr. Rhodes is also “angry” because “CN workers had been warning the railway about mechanical problems and technical dangers in the way trains were being run through the Fraser Canyon.” She hopes federal authorities will now investigate those claims.

CN has been under constant scrutiny from the public, the media and governmental agencies following a series of derailments – more than 20 last year in 2005. Figures from the Transportation Safety Board show railway accidents have been climbing steadily for all of Canada's railways, particularly CN.

Last December, CN pleaded guilty to failing to properly keep records of maintenance and inspection work it did on a bridge where a fatal derailment occurred in 2003. Two employees were killed in that accident.

Source: From Canadian Press reports

http://www.cawcouncil4000.com/archives/2006/06july12_cn_lillooet_de...