Illinois Central Railroad Company, Train No. 1, Collision with Gasoline Tank Truck at South Second Street Grade Crossing

Executive Summary
About 9:55 a.m., on January 24, 1970, Illinois Central Railroad southbound passenger train No. 1, moving at a speed of 79 miles per hour on track No. 1, struck a motor truck loaded with gasoline on the South Second street crossing in Loda, Illinois. The tank of the truck was split open, spilling the gasoline which exploded and caught fire. The burning gasoline covered the exterior of the locomotive unit and entered the control compartment through the nose door, damaged nose, and other openings.

Three employees of the railroad, who were occupying the control compartment of the lead locomotive unit at the time of the accident, and the driver of the motor truck received fatal injuries from the burning gasoline.

Probable Cause
The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of this accident was that the operator drove the gasoline-laden truck, without stopping, onto the tracks immediately in front of the approaching train, while the crossing warning device was indicating the train's approach.

The cause of the fatalities to engine crew members and the official was the entrance of burning gasoline into the control compartment and engine compartments which burned the occupants of the control compartment, made escape into the engine compartment useless, and forced the occupants to jump from the control compartment while the train was still moving at a speed too high to insure survival.


Recommendation: THE NTSB RECOMMENDS THAT LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS OF LODA AND THE STATE OF ILLINOIS: ENFORCE MORE VIGOROUSLY THE REQUIREMENT THAT TRUCKS CARRYING HAZARDOUS MATERIALS STOP AT RAILROAD CROSSINGS AND NOT PROCEED UNTIL THEY CAN DO SO SAFELY AS REQUIRED BY "STATE OF ILLINOIS LAWS RELATING TO MOTOR VEHICLES - 1967, SECTION 84."

Recommendation: THE NTSB RECOMMENDS THAT THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD AND THE TOWN OF LODA, ILLINOIS: IMPROVE THE GRADE CROSSING INVOLVED IN THIS ACCIDENT. IMPROVEMENTS SHOULD INCLUDE AN EFFECTIVE WARNING DEVICE CAPABLE OF DRAWING THE ATTENTION OF HIGHWAY DRIVERS AND CONVEYING A WARNING OF THE APPROACHING TRAIN, IMPROVED CONDITION OF CROSSING SURFACE, AND IMPROVED VISION OF TRACK TO APPROACHING DRIVERS.