Collision of St. Louis/San Francisco Railway Trains 3210 and 3211

Executive Summary
On September 1, 1974, at 1:44 to 1:46 p.m., the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway Company's eastbound freight train 3210 and westbound train 3211 collided head-on 1.7 miles west of Mustang, Oklahoma. The trains were scheduled to meet in Mustang. However, train 3211 passed Mustang ahead of schedule. As a result of the collision, 4 locomotive units were destroyed, 23 cars derailed, and hazardous materials caught fire in the wreckage. As a result of the fire, eight families were evacuated from their homes. A brakeman on train 3211 was killed, and the three other crewmembers of that train were injured seriously.

Probable Cause
The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of this accident was the failure of the crew of train 3211 to take preventive action after the train passed Mustang ahead of schedule. Contributing to the passing of the meeting point ahead of schedule were the engineer's and the conductor's erroneous assumptions based on radio transmissions from train 3210 that it was at a more distant point.

Recommendation: THE NTSB RECOMMENDS THAT THE ST. LOUIS-SAN FRANCISCO RAILWAY COMPANY: ENFORCE THE EXACT REQUIREMENTS OF THE OPERATING RULES AND ESTABLISH A MORE EFFECTIVE SYSTEM TO INSURE THAT EMPLOYEES UNDERSTAND THEM. PARTICULAR EMPHASIS SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE PROBLEMS DEMONSTRATED IN THE APPLICATION OF RULES G, 3, 3(B), 14(N), 34, S-87, S-89, S-90, 92, 106, AND 801 IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS ACCIDENT.

Recommendation: THE NTSB RECOMMENDS THAT THE ST. LOUIS-SAN FRANCISCO RAILWAY COMPANY: PROMULGATE OPERATING RULES THAT PROVIDE SPECIFIC GUIDANCE FOR THE USE OF RADIO IN RAILROAD OPERATIONS.

Recommendation: THE NTSB RECOMMENDS THAT THE ST. LOUIS-SAN FRANCISCO RAILWAY COMPANY: REVISE ITS OPERATING RULES THAT PERTAIN TO TRAIN MEETING PROCEDURES SO THAT THE RULES ARE CONSISTENT WITH CURRENT OPERATING CONDITIONS AS TO THE MEETING OF SCHEDULES AND SO THAT THEY PROVIDE SAFEGUARDS FOR THE CREWS OF BOTH TRAINS.