

3 people dead, dozens injured after Amtrak train derails in rural Missouri

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Three people were killed and up to 100 or more injured after Amtrak's Southwest Chief train No. 4 derailed early Monday afternoon after striking a dump truck at a rural intersection outside of Mendon, Missouri, 100 miles northeast of Kansas City.

In a harrowing Facebook video posted by passenger Rob Nightingale, the entire train is seen tipped over while dozens of passengers and crew attempt to gather their bearings and extricate themselves from the twisted wreckage. Other images show passengers attempting to exit the train through windows while avoiding broken glass and jagged pieces of metal.

The Amtrak passenger train offers service between Los Angeles and Chicago and had picked up passengers at approximately 11:00 a.m. Monday morning at Union Station in Kansas City, Missouri.

While Amtrak officials claimed that there were 243 passengers and 12 crew members on the train, Missouri State Highway Patrol (MSHP) Troop B spokesperson Corporal Justin Dunn said in an early evening press conference that the train was carrying 207 passengers and had 14 crew members at the time of the collision.

Police have confirmed that multiple helicopters from surrounding counties were requested by emergency services in order to airlift critically injured passengers from the scene. In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Matt Daugherty, director of business development at Lifeflight Eagle Air Ambulance, said helicopters were bringing in patients to trauma centers in Kansas City and Columbia, Missouri.

"They've instituted a mass casualty response plan," Daugherty told the paper.

Speaking to the *Post*, passenger Dax McDonald said that after the initial impact, the train lurched forward and then began to tip over. After the train rolled over, McDonald said he and others helped a woman who started having a seizure after hitting her head.

"It turns into a giant trap. You have to be able to climb, like rock climbing," he said. Prior to the collision, McDonald recalled looking out the window and seeing two trucks attempting to cross the intersection and thinking to himself: "This guy better slow down."

While police have not confirmed exactly who the fatalities are, it is known that two of the deceased were on the train while the third death was the driver of the dump truck that was on the tracks when the train struck it. NBC News reported that a 15-year-old Wisconsin boy, who was on the train, located the driver of the dump truck in a ditch after the collision and attempted to render first aid before the driver passed away.

In the only press conference given by the MSHP as of this writing, police were unable to confirm if the truck had stopped on the tracks or was in motion when it was struck by the train. MSHP officials confirmed that the train had eight cars and two locomotives when it derailed. Passengers were on seven of the cars while one car was reserved for luggage.

In an interview with NBC-affiliated KSHB 41 out of Kansas City, volunteer firefighter Katelyn Ames said that passengers who were not injured were being taken to the one and only school in Mendon. She told the network that she had never seen "something like that before."

"There were a lot of people down there," Ames recalled. She said that there were "a lot of people hurt and some stuff that I didn't want to see." In her interview, taken roughly an hour after the collision, Ames said that there were more than 100 people injured with some still stuck in the train.

"It was just a mess," Ames said. "Amtrak's tipped over, the person that got hit—it's a disaster. The truck's flipped over; there's nothing left of that. Rocks were thrown everywhere from the truck that he hit." She described some of the injured suffering from "head trauma," while "some people ... had something wrong with their legs."

This is the second deadly train accident to occur in the United

States in the last 24 hours. On Sunday, an Amtrak passenger train carrying 90 people struck a car crossing an intersection in a rural area near Stockton, in Central California. At least three people died in that collision, and two more, including a child, were seriously injured according to local emergency services.

According to the Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), in 2019, trespassing on railroad rights-of-way "remains the leading cause of rail-related fatalities, growing from 505 in 2017 to 577 in 2019 or 64% of total US rail-related fatalities that year."

While both train crashes are in the preliminary stages of investigations, there is no question that both were entirely preventable. In each case the collision occurred at a rural intersection that, due to a lack of funding, had no lights or electronic communication devices to warn drivers that a train was incoming.

Each intersection also had no physical barriers to prevent drivers from coming onto the tracks as a train approached. The FRA estimates that 80 percent of rail crossings in the United States do not have proper warning signals.

Speaking on the California crash in an interview with the *New York Times*, Steve Aubert, a fire marshal with the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District, said that the crossing is "highly potentially dangerous" and that emergency services respond to accidents involving trains and smaller vehicles at the crossing at least once year. Last year, there were two separate train-vs.-vehicle accidents at the same intersection.

Aubert told the *Times* that despite the fact that there are no guardrails or signals at the crossing, trains are allowed to go 80 miles an hour.

These two accidents come less than nine months after three people were killed and 42 injured in an Amtrak train derailment in northern Montana.

After decades of neglect due to the profit-driven interests of both big businesses parties, the state of American infrastructure remains deplorable even after the passage of President Joe Biden's \$1 trillion infrastructure bill last year. While Biden has touted the massive funding, the fact is the legislation only provides about half a trillion dollars in new funding with the total amount spread out over 10 years, or \$100 billion a year.

Included in the bill is \$66 billion allocated for funding rail infrastructure in the country over the next eight years, or just over \$8 billion a year. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, the backlog of investment needed for passenger rail in 2021 was already over \$45 billion.

Furthermore, of the money earmarked for rail infrastructure, only \$22 billion will be going directly to Amtrak, with about \$6 billion of those funds already slated for improvement projects along the Northeast Corridor which runs from Boston, Massachusetts, to Washington D.C. Last year, the Northeast Corridor Commission identified 150 improvement projects along the corridor that would cost an estimated \$117 billion over 15 years to repair.

The fact is there is more than enough money to install electronic warning devices and build overpasses and/or underpasses at every railroad intersection in the United States to prevent any and all train-vs.-car accidents from occurring.

However, instead of those funds being appropriated for the benefit of all, they are siphoned off by a tiny few. For example, the fifth richest person in the world, Warren Buffett of Berkshire Hathaway, who owns the freight railroad BNSF, has seen his wealth increase from \$35 billion in 2007 to over \$125 billion today. While Buffett's wealth has skyrocketed, rail workers, with the acceptance of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), have been forced to labor on his railroads without a contract for over three years.

However, within the last week, in the face of rising anger among BNSF rail workers, the BLET was forced to announce that they would hold a strike vote.

Likewise in the United Kingdom last week, thousands of rail workers forced the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union to call a strike for three days after workers rejected a contract that offered a sub-inflation 3 percent pay raise and included 1,800 immediate job cuts.

To prevent future accidents and improve not only rail but all of the world's infrastructure to prevent needless accidents, the wealth of society must be expropriated by the working class from social parasites like Buffett and the rest of the billionaires, and directed towards the betterment of all. Only through the socialist reorganization of society can this historical necessity become a reality.



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