

Railroads with hazardous materials represent potential Texas time bomb

Texas railroads are running more trains carrying increasing amounts of hazardous materials. Last year, there were 8,000 derailments in the United States. Unless steps are taken, more life and property endangering accidents will occur, warns a Texas Transportation Institute specialist. The pattern is statistically visible, said Hoy Richards, a TTI research economist at Texas A&M University and an authority on rail transportation. Most grain exports funneled from the nation's midsection through Houston in 1972-73, Richards said. He said Texas led the nation in mileage in 1974 with 13,306 train-derailments, the largest class of main accidents other than grade crossings, which rose dramatically those years, peaked in 1974 and dropped some in 1975. "This is due to railway deterioration, coincident with heavy movement of grain exports," Richards said.

The United States' massive oil imports, directed mainly to the Houston petrochemical complex for refining and processing, will continue to burden track systems, he said. "The same things that are being done to highways are happening to tracks," Richards said. "They are being subjected to heavier wheel loads, more and longer trains, and the lines would like to run the trains faster, too." "I feel about the railroads like I do about automobile accidents. We are fortunate — considering the number of cars on the highway, the types of drivers in them and road conditions — that we have no more fatal accidents than we do." Nationally, in 1977, there were 8,000 derailments, he said. "Of these, 500 involved hazardous materials. Only 140 (less than two percent) ruptured," he said. "But we're sitting on a time bomb." "I would hope this administration will come up with a National Transportation Policy, something we do

not have. Perhaps it would allow integration of the private railroad system with the public highways and waterways to form a national transportation system." Citing a 1977 TTI prepared report to Gov. Dolph Briscoe and the Legislature on state railway safety, he said that Texas in 1972 shipped 46 percent of the United States' tonnage of chemicals and allied products. Texas' share of petroleum and coal products was 20 percent. Texas ranks in the top five percent nationally in every accident category. Possible solutions, Richards said, should not place economic pressure on railroads that would force more cargo to highway carriers. Richards and Patrick Collins, TTI research associate, said the tradeoff would be four to six truck equivalents for each railroad tank car. "Let's assume," Richards said, "that public sentiment demands a fail-safe railway system. This allows no derailments, gravel, empties or anything else. With the cost borne

by the private carrier, the price of railroad service would have to double, at a minimum. "If that happens, it would drain a very large portion of hazardous material cargo from the railroads to larger and larger trucks." Other TTI specialists agree that the highway vehicle spectrum is growing at the ends. Autos are getting smaller and tank trucks larger, hardly a life-prolonging traffic mix. Collins estimated truck movements would increase by a factor of four to six. Highway safety would be compromised, unless more public funds were put into highways for truck lanes. "However, the dollar comparison for that versus railroad track improvement is out of balance," Richards said. "We're talking about improving 75,000 miles of track." Another approach, he said, "is to tell the chemical industry to design a container to handle and move hazardous materials safely, with the same derailment factor we now have. Cost would be significant. Still another alternative he advanced — admittedly unpopular — is public ownership of roadbeds, with railways just like highways and waterways, constructed and maintained by the government.

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Twin chimps survive in Tanzania despite hardships of wilderness

WASHINGTON — Although a chimpanzee mother with twin babies has hands full, a chimpanzee in the same position has even more to handle. Dr. Jane Goodall, one of the world's leading authorities on chimpanzees, has been watching in Tanzania the only known chimp twins in the wild. She is amazed the infants have survived.

Park fed the mother a few bananas laced with antibiotics, which go to the infants through the milk. The foot finally healed and now both twins are healthy, although they are still small for their age. "They're backward in the development of their behavior," she said. "A normal 6-month-old infant is starting to walk and the twins are quite content to sit with the mother. But they're alert, they're look-

ing around and they're interested in things. They're just unbelievable. Every time I see them I can't believe they're real." Dr. Goodall is director of the Gombe Stream Research Center and a visiting professor of zoology at the University of Dar es Salaam. Her appearance at the National Geographic Society opened a three-week lecture tour in the United States.

I gave them a week and they're now six months old," Dr. Goodall said Wednesday at a briefing at the National Geographic Society which helps finance her work. "This mother has to face the most terrific problems in handling two babies." Unlike human babies, chimpanzees depend almost exclusively on mother's milk for three years. This means wherever the mother goes so do the children. With one infant, a chimp mother manages easily with the baby either on her back or clinging to her stomach, but "for a mother to climb through the trees, to jump from one tree to another, to keep up with big pups moving fast from one food source to another with two babies to carry is a terrific problem," Dr. Goodall said.

The tiny chimps' survival also was threatened by a cannibalistic pair of chimps — mother and daughter — who killed several newborn chimps in recent years. The older of the two was pregnant and no longer attacks the young. Once, as Dr. Goodall watched, the daughter chimp tried to snatch the twins from their mother high in a palm tree. But the twins and their mother escaped when she made a leaping leap to another tree. The twins, named Gyre and Gable, were unusually small at birth. Dr. Goodall said they didn't cling to their mother very well and she would tend to hold on to the mother. Both would fall off and start crying. "Melissa, the mother, would gather them up then they'd start crying again. She would sit down and look at them and she was clearly puzzled and bewildered and she didn't know what to do. "And then to make matters worse one of the babies hurt its foot badly. We don't know how. Every time the mother moved, the baby hurt and screamed. The screaming of one twin set off the other twin. Melissa got so confused, all she could think of to do was to climb a tree and make a nest, a platform to lie on hanging in the branches." Dr. Goodall and her assistants at Tanzania's Gombe Stream National

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