

# The Bradford Era

07/07/2006

## Railroad Administration completes probe of Gardeau derailment

By: FRAN De LANCEY , Era Correspondent

The Federal Railroad Administration has completed its on-site probe of the Norfolk Southern train derailment in Gardeau on June 30, but it may be weeks before the final report is released.

Steven W. Kulm, director of public affairs for the FRA, said Friday the agency sent four investigators, who are specialists in tracks, operating practices, motive power and equipment, and hazardous materials, to the site in Norwich Township in southern McKean County.

"During that time, the FRA officials interviewed the train crew, took information from the train's event recorder, inspected track conditions, and reviewed hazardous materials paperwork in order to determine what led to the accident and spilling of the product," Kulm said. "It will take a while to sift through the information and arrive at a determination. We don't speculate on the aspects of the causes of an accident. There is no determination yet on this one."

Those investigators, who can be assigned to any of the FRA's eight regional offices, will prepare a written accident report that will then be sent to the agency's headquarters in Washington for review before it is OK'd as a final document.

Since each investigation is different, and the FRA investigators are working on other cases simultaneously, it could be several months as opposed to a few weeks before the agency's final report is made public, Kulm said.

In cases like this one, Kulm said, where hazardous materials are spilled or leaked, the carrier must immediately notify the National Resource Center, the federal government's only center for reporting oil and chemical spills. The Center, staffed by Coast Guard officers and experts in marine science, in turn, then contacts the FRA and National Transportation Safety Board. The NTSB, with jurisdiction over accidents involving railroads, aviation, shipping, and trucking, chose not to investigate the Gardeau derailment.

When both groups conduct a probe of an incident, then the NTSB is the lead agency.

Kulm said that when an incident is considered minor, such as a wheel breaking but there is no derailment, the FRA may decide not to enter the investigation. This would not be a productive use of the investigators' time," he said.

The FRA is now part of the Department of Transportation. Before Congress established the DOT in 1966, the Interstate Commerce Commission had the jurisdiction over railroad and crossing accidents, but these duties have been reassigned to the FRA.

Advertisement

The advertisement features a blue background with a koi fish and green foliage. It displays a mortgage calculator interface with the following text and elements:

- Headline: "\$145,000 Mortgage for Under \$484/Month!"
- Text: "Think You Pay Too Much For Your Mortgage? Find Out!"
- Form fields:
  - "CLICK YOUR STATE" dropdown menu with "Alabama" selected.
  - "CLICK YOUR RATE" dropdown menu with "3.00% - 3.99%" selected.
  - "CLICK CREDIT TYPE" dropdown menu with "Good" selected.
- Bottom left: "LowerMyBills.com"
- Bottom right: "BAD CREDIT OK"
- Small vertical text on the right edge: "© 2006 LowerMyBills.com"