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# Expert: Amtrak still safe in spite of Philadelphia crash

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Amtrak Train 188

Photo: Jarrett Renshaw

Tuesday's fatal Amtrak derailment in Philadelphia has stranded commuters up and down the northeast corridor, and left travelers on their toes in the wake of the fatal crash.

The crash left seven dead and 200 injured. A preliminary investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board found that the train was traveling more than 100 miles an hour - over twice the speed limit - when it derailed.

Even with an SUV crash in Valhalla in February that [killed six people \(http://www.metro.us/new-york/suv-mom-ellen-brody-s-daughters-recall-night-of-tragic-metro-north-collision/zsJocD---Trj5xjmCqk9ys/\)](#) and December 2013's Metro-North derailment in the Bronx that [killed four \(http://www.metro.us/local/ntsb-launches-investigation-into-fatal-metro-north-train-derailment/tmVmla---1eVZk1PgSqvpA/\)](#), Robert Paaswell ([http://www.cuny.cuny.edu/profiles/Robert-E-Paaswell.cfm](#)), distinguished professor and director emeritus at City College's University Transportation Research Center, said derailments make the news because they almost never happen.

Bad weather and electrical failures are the usual culprits that shut down northeastern travel, Paaswell said, not devastating crashes.

"Being a passenger and going by rail is extremely safe," Paaswell said, adding that a greater number of people take the train instead of flying for regional travel. "What passengers should be doing is asking Congress to give Amtrak more money to improve infrastructure and have positive train control."

**Positive train control** (<https://www.aar.org/policy/positive-train-control>) is a technology upgrade designed to stop or slow down trains before they crash or derail, and federal law requires the system to be on all passenger and freight trains by the Dec. 31 deadline.

Democrats and Republicans clashed in a hearing on Wednesday morning, with Republicans continuing to advocate for a \$260 million cut from Amtrak's budget.

"I think the point is I wouldn't hesitate to go to Penn Station and get on the train today," Paaswell said. "It's a safe way to travel and a quick way to travel."

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