

# The ADVOCATE

## Railroad: Failed test won't derail new cars

### Railroad: M-8 on track after failure

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The shell of one of the state's new M-8 rail cars recently failed a safety design test, which will not delay a plan to deliver the first of the cars to replace aged M-2 and M-4 cars later this year, Metro-North Railroad officials said.

During the test last month, Kawasaki Rail Car Inc., the car's manufacturer, compressed the empty shell of one of the manufactured cars with 800,000 pounds of force, buckling the metal skin of the car slightly, according to Metro-North spokeswoman Marjorie Anders.

The car is required to withstand 800,000 pounds of compression to comply with regulations set by the Federal Railroad Administration, Anders said. The test has been rescheduled.

"This is part of the development process and nothing to worry about," Anders said. "We're going to get it right and have the first of the cars there this year."

Anders emphasized that a delay in track testing of the cars from summer to later this year is because of the normal manufacturing process and not safety testing problems.

Regular delivery of the new cars will begin in early 2010, Anders said.

"The M-8 is an extraordinarily complex car, and we have confidence that it will be a marvel of efficiency and comfort for our New Haven Line customers," Anders said. "We intend to get it right from the start."

Members of the state's Rail Commuter Council said they were rankled not to be informed about the test and the altered schedule and will press Metro-North Railroad officials for answers.

Jim Cameron, chairman of the council, said he learned of the test after inquiring about it following an anonymous e-mail tip from a commuter.

"We want an explanation about what happened and why we were not told about it," Cameron said. "What will this mean in terms of a delay and for the cars that will be tested?"

Jeffrey Maron, a Stamford commuter who sits on the council, said he didn't mind the delay but thought the information should have been given to the council, which is empowered by the state to represent the interests of commuters.

"I know they will handle it and handle it well," Maron said. "What concerns me is the lack of communication between Metro-North, Connecticut DOT and the council, which represents their clients and could assist in reaching out and providing this information in a positive way."

State Department of Transportation spokesman Judd Everhart said the test was part of a battery of tests required during the manufacture of rail cars to root out safety issues, and not a cause for public concern about the M-8 design.

"We have every expectation that the car will pass next time," Everhart said. "This test is one of hundreds of safety tests and measurements done when cars like this are being built so that when they

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are put into service, they are safe."

Anders said that in overseeing the manufacture of the cars to be used for many years, additional time should be allowed to vet the equipment.

"Given a choice of slippage in time or quality, we'll take time," Anders said. "But we recognize and appreciate the patience that customers continue to show."

Cameron said he hopes that officials will keep the council informed about setbacks that will delay the manufacture and delivery of the cars.

"Metro-North needs to be more transparent on this," Cameron said. "The timeline seems to be slipping, but is it slipping by weeks or months? I can't imagine this wouldn't cause a delay, and we should know about it as the representatives of commuters."

The contract with Kawasaki Rail Car Inc. is worth \$713 million and requires the company to provide 300 M-8 rail cars for the state, Anders said. The contract calls for the delivery of 10 cars a month.

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