



Fatal Accident Involving a Train and Worker on Foot

A train of only two engines was heading eastbound at approximately 35 MPH in heavy rain. A worker was walking from the north side of the public crossing to the south side to get to his car when he was struck around 11:30 pm. The engineer did not see the worker on foot, but believed something had happened and brought the train to a stop.

The employee parking lot is on the southwest side of the crossing; the plant is on the northeast side. Workers must walk across a double set of tracks going to and from work. The tracks carry a high volume of trains, making it difficult to cross.

Before the worker attempted to walk across the railroad crossing, a separate train had passed westbound on a parallel track. It appears the worker waited for the westbound train to clear before walking across the first set of tracks and never saw the two engine train traveling eastbound at the same time the westbound train was clearing the crossing. The crossing was equipped with active warning devices, but the heavy rain and noise from the passing train appears to have created additional hazards and a blind spot. In addition, swing-down barrier gates were only provided in the lanes for oncoming vehicles, even though pedestrians can and do cross the tracks on both sides of the street.



Recommendations to Prevent Recurrence:

- Where possible, relocate the employee parking lot to the same side of the tracks as their workplace and explore adding parking spaces around the perimeter of the workplace. This eliminates the hazard.
- Where parking lots cannot be relocated to the same side of the tracks, all involved parties should strive to provide an adequate elevated walkway over the tracks (or tunnels) for persons on foot. The elevated walkway and/or tunnels should be protected from inclement weather and maintained.
- All involved parties should strive to protect pedestrians by installing warning lights, bells and swing-down sidewalk barrier gates on both sides of the street and both sides of the tracks. The sidewalk gates should block the sidewalk on the sides of the street and the opposite side of the existing crossing gates. This should prevent pedestrians from crossing when a train is approaching, but still leave the exit lanes open to prevent vehicles from becoming trapped on the tracks.
- All involved parties should strive to protect pedestrians by installing lighted signs that warn of the approach of a second train. The signs' lights should only light up when a second train is actually approaching and they show which direction the train is approaching from with lighted arrows.
- All involved parties should determine the appropriate rail speed limits at the crossing, including when inclement weather is involved.
- Update training and education programs to include: "Research has shown that the larger an object is, the slower it appears to be moving. When humans see a train approach a crossing, the train appears to be moving more slowly and appears to be further away than it actually is."
- Provide high visibility clothing at no cost to employees.
- Use the safety committee to address hazards, not just inside the workplace, but also in external areas like parking lots and walkways.
- Where possible, provide police presence at crossings during high foot traffic times.



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This hazard alert is based on an actual incident, and reflects our best understanding of the incident at the time it was written. However, many incidents have multiple causes; this alert may not cover all of them. The purpose of the alert is to illustrate workplace hazards; it is not intended to be a comprehensive report on the incident.