

## Train derailment victim identified



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The man killed in a train derailment south of Washburn has been identified as Jeff Heitzmann of Mandan.

Heitzmann, 46, was killed in the derailment of five Dakota, Missouri Valley and Western Railroad engines on Thursday, according to an obituary.

Five DMVW Railroad engines derailed about 2½ miles south of Washburn Thursday onto the bank of Turtle Creek. One man escaped from one of the engines and made it to a house to call 911.

He was treated and released at a Bismarck hospital. He has not been identified. Jeff Wood, DMVW executive vice president, said the company cannot identify him until given a release from federal investigators. He said the man had minor injuries.

Crews continued working to clean up the derailment on Friday. The two lead locomotives, weighing 175 tons each, were removed by cranes, booms and Caterpillar equipment. R.J. Corman Derailment Services, a Kentucky-based company that offers derailment clean up services, was working at the scene.

Dave Glatt, the environmental health chief for the North Dakota Health Department, said the health department, railroad and a contractor will be getting equipment in to clean up soil contaminated by diesel fuel carried on the locomotives.

"We're providing oversight, along with the railroad and the contractor, to make sure the area is stabilized and the soil is cleaned up," Glatt said.

Turtle Creek empties into the Missouri River immediately after the site of the derailment, so there were some concerns about fuel getting into the water. A skirted contaminant boom was placed in the mouth of the creek to catch any fuel. Glatt said that has been contained.

Wood said clean-up efforts were on schedule Friday. Soil clean-up should be completed over the weekend, he said.

The Federal Railroad Administration will investigate the derailment, as it does in any derailment that leads to fatalities or serious injuries. Such investigations typically involve inspecting and testing track, signal systems, infrastructure and equipment; interviewing train crews, railroad employees and other witnesses; reviewing railroad records on inspections, testing, maintenance and employee training and hours of service; and retrieving and reviewing locomotive event recorder data and other information about railroad communications.

According to the FRA, the administration tries to complete all major accident investigations within 270 days. A formal written report is produced describing the accident in detail upon investigation completion.

Marquese Lewis, public affairs specialist for FRA, said the administration does not provide preliminary investigation information.

Wood said employees are being interviewed as part of the investigation.

Employees at DMVW, which employs 56 people out of its Bismarck office and about 100 overall, are having a hard time coping with the loss of Heitzmann, Wood said. The company is a "pretty big bunch of family," including some relatives of Heitzmann's, he said.

"We're all pretty close knit," Wood said.

He said Heitzmann worked for the company in two stints: once for six or seven months about seven years ago, then started again recently. In between working for DMVW, he had taken a job in California.

"His dream job was to be here," Wood said.