A Union Pacific employee sitting in a maintenance truck on a railway crossing east of El Monte was struck and killed by a Metrolink train Saturday morning. Three passengers on the train received injuries that were not life threatening.

Officials could not immediately explain why the truck was in the path of the train, or whether the truck was moving or parked, Metrolink spokeswoman Angie Starr said. There was no evidence that the Union Pacific employee wanted to be hit by the train, she said.

The Metrolink tracks at the accident site run parallel to Union Pacific's freight tracks.

"There is quite a lot of Union Pacific work going along throughout this area. It's not unusual to see a Union Pacific maintenance crew," Starr said.

The deceased person was responsible for maintaining Union Pacific's tracks, said Union Pacific spokesman Aaron Hunt. His name was not released.

"There are a number of reasons why he would have been in that area," such as inspecting track, Hunt said.

"Safety is a focus for us. Clearly, we're shocked and saddened by this," he said.

The truck was destroyed in the crash. There was minor damage to the front engine of Metrolink train No. 354, which had been headed to San Bernardino from downtown Los Angeles.

Metrolink, Union Pacific and Federal Railroad Administration officials were at the scene investigating the crash and interviewing witnesses. By 3:30 p.m., the coroner had departed, and the destroyed truck was being lifted off the tracks with a crane.

The crash occurred about 9:20 a.m. Train traffic has been halted for much of Saturday on the San Bernardino line, and officials have set up a bus bridge to detour Metrolink passengers around the crash site.
The track crossing is located at Temple Avenue, near Valley Boulevard and the 605 Freeway. It straddles the City of Industry and the unincorporated community of Bassett, east of the San Gabriel River.

--- Rong-Gong Lin II

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*Photo: An investigator examines the site of the crash that killed a Union Pacific employee and injured three train passengers. Credit: Anne Casack / Los Angeles Times*

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