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Updated: 9:14 p.m. Tuesday, March 16, 2010 | Posted: 6:59 a.m. Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Friends, Employer Mourn Plum Railroad Worker Killed In Train Collision

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EAST PITTSBURGH, Pa. — A Union Railroad worker from Plum was killed in a train collision and derailment in North Versailles early Tuesday, authorities said. Initially, crews were unable to locate Andrew Monheim, 54, of Plum, after the two Union Railroad trains collided near U.S. Steel's Edgar Thompson Works near East Pittsburgh. The medical examiner's office later confirmed that Monheim was found dead.

Monheim was a 35-year Union Railroad employee who served as a locomotive engineer, the company said in a statement. Union Railroad officials personally informed his family of the incident, the company said.

In a statement, the company also said, "United States Steel Corporation, Transtar, Inc. and Union Railroad would like to express sincerest condolences" to Monheim's family and friends.

Monheim's friend and neighbor, Erda Gordon, said Monheim was the glue that held his family together.

"He was a good family man and just a very caring person," Gordon said. "All the neighbors thought a lot of him, and we are very, very saddened to hear that he has been in this accident."

VIDEO: Friends, Employer Mourn Plum Railroad Worker Killed In Train Collision RAW VIDEO: Train Derails In North Versailles

The loud collision when the train derailed startled neighbors.

The sound was "like we hear when the mill blasts off," Donna Koran said.

"It woke me up," her husband, John Koran, said. "I got up and checked everything and looked down the hill and saw the red lights."

"We got binoculars," Donna Koran added. "A car leaning half way over, that's what I could see."

Authorities said a hazardous-materials crew was called to a report of 1,200 gallons of fuel leaking, some of it into Turtle Creek. Union Railroad said an environmental contractor is at the scene helping to contain the leak.

Initially, it was believed that a conductor was missing, but he and other crew members were found uninjured in the train's caboose.

An investigation into the collision and derailment is under way. The Federal Railroad Administration said it has recovered the video and data recorders from both trains.

"The Union Railroad is fully cooperating with all agencies involved in the investigation, including the Federal Railroad Administration," Union Railroad said in its statement.

Union Railroad said it had no additional information. Union Railroad is part of Transtar, Inc., which is a transportation subsidiary of U.S. Steel Corporation.

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