

## Engineer, conductor die in early morning Bettendorf train crash



JULY 14, 2009 6:00 PM • [ED TIBBETTS](#)

Two men were killed Tuesday when a Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad freight train ran into a group of stationary cars, railroad and federal officials said Tuesday.

About a dozen cars, including two locomotives, derailed at 29th and State streets, Bettendorf, at 2:10 a.m., authorities said.

The train had 83 cars in all, railroad officials said.

Andrew Reed, 27, of Savanna, Ill., the conductor of the train, was killed, along with the engineer, railroad officials said. They declined to identify the engineer, though, saying they were honoring the wishes of his family. The railroad said he was based in Savanna, too. Bettendorf officials also did not release the name pending final identification by the Scott County medical examiner.

The conductor and engineer were the only crew on board.

The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the accident, and in an advisory, the agency said the train "struck a group of cars in a rail yard after crossing through a switch that was not lined for the main line."

"It was switched to the siding, but it was not switched back. Therefore, there was a collision," said Keith Holloway, an NTSB spokesman. "Now why that happened, we don't know yet."

Holloway said a siding is a sort of holding area for rail cars.

Fire and rescue crews were busy all day working at the scene, as emergency response vehicles filled a large lot at Hampton Cranes at 29th and State streets.

A large blue tarp covered a locomotive for part of the day, while men scrambled on top.

In the late morning, heavy equipment was deployed to move parts of the derailed train.

"The obvious question is why the train impacted the stationary cars on the siding," said Mike LoVecchio, senior manager for media relations at DM&E.

At an afternoon news conference, other company officials declined to get into details, saying they are focusing on the needs of the family and friends of the men who were killed.

"The DM&E and the men and women who make up our company want to express our sincere and heartfelt sorrow to the families and friends for their loss," said an emotional Ed Terbell, executive vice president for operations of the railroad. "Our crew and their families are in our thoughts and prayers."

Terbell said Reed had worked for the railroad since August 2004.

Company officials declined to say how long the engineer had been employed.

Savanna Mayor Larry Stebbins said Tuesday he didn't know the victims personally but that an accident like this cuts deep in what was a thriving railroad town until 20-25 years ago.

It still has many second- and third-generation railroad employees residing there, he said.

"Just looking down the street toward (Reed's) house, there are a lot of cars parked there," Stebbins said.

Reed was a 2000 graduate of Savanna High School and attended Hamilton Technical School in Davenport and Highland Community College in Freeport, Ill. Reed, who was known by his friends as Reed-o" and "Sweet-Meat," enjoyed playing sports

and boating on the Mississippi River, according to his obituary. He is survived by his fiancée, Jamie Diercks, their daughter, Brynn, and her daughter, Delaney Holmes of Savanna. His mother is Ramona Coffey of Argyle, Wis., and his father, Richard "Dick" Reed of Moline.

Funeral services for Reed are scheduled for 10:30 a.m. Saturday at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Savanna.

The accident occurred in a mostly industrial area of Bettendorf. Railroad crossings at 31st, 33rd and 35th streets were closed after the accident, but they were reopened Tuesday afternoon.

A woman who lives in a house next door to the crash site said she didn't hear anything, but her husband noticed a rumbling about 2 a.m. He initially thought it might be a storm, she said.

Later, they walked to the back of the house and saw one car on top of another. "It smelled funny," said Barbara Voigt, comparing the odor to an insecticide. She said she was told it was a mixture of diesel and corn.

Terbell said there was a small diesel spill, which was contained, but that most of the cars were empty. None contained hazardous materials, he said.

Holloway said it can take between 12 and 18 months for an investigation to be completed.

The last fatal train accident in Iowa was a derailment by Amtrak's California Zephyr on March 17, 2001, near Nodaway, Iowa, according to the NTSB Web site. One person was killed.

UPDATE (2:05 p.m.): Two people ---- an engineer and a conductor ---- were killed early this morning when a Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad train struck stationary rail cars in Bettendorf, a railroad official said this afternoon.

The conductor was identified as Andrew Reed, 27, of Savanna, Ill. The railroad would not identify the engineer, based on a request from the person's family. The engineer also lived in Savanna.

Jeff Johnson, a spokesman for DM&E who appeared at a news conference in Bettendorf this afternoon, said the train struck stationary cars, but he refused to answer questions about how accident occurred. He said this was a day that they were focusing on needs of family and friends of dead.

"We are a family, and any loss is definitely felt ... from top to bottom," Johnson said.

He said the railroad is conducting its own investigation into the crash. The National Transportation Safety Board also is investigating.

UPDATE (12:15 p.m.): A news conference to discuss the train collision in Bettendorf is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. today.

Ed Terbell, executive vice president for operations for Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad, will make a statement about the derailment at that time in the City Council chambers at Bettendorf City Hall, 1609 State St.

A news release issued late this morning by DM&E said emergency crews contained a small diesel leak from one of the engines but most of the cars involved were empty, which meant there was no hazardous spill. Fewer than a dozen cars were involved in the derailment.

UPDATE (10:55 a.m.): A spokesperson for the National Transportation Safety Board said Tuesday morning that he was told that there were two fatalities involved in the 2 a.m. train crash in the 2900 block of State Street in Bettendorf.

Keith Holloway, of the NTSB, said it was too early to tell what may have caused the crash, but said that officials from the agency are en route to the scene.

A spokesman for the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad wouldn't confirm the fatalities, but said a statement from the company would be made this afternoon. He also said little information regarding the crash and the investigation would be available at that time.

"The obvious question is why the train impacted the stationary cars on the siding," spokesman Mike LoVecchio said.

A neighbor at the site of a train derailment early today said it looked like one car was on top of another after the accident.

Barbara Voigt, who lives next door to the crash site in Bettendorf in the 2900 block of State Street, said her husband heard a rumbling around 2 a.m. and thought it was a thunderstorm. She said she didn't hear anything but noted that trains make noises

all the time.

Later, the couple walked to the back of their house and she took a picture of the trains. Voigt she said it looked like one car was on top of another.

"It smelled funny," she said.

The couple was told it was a mixture of diesel and corn. She said it smelled a little like insecticide.

Fire and rescue personnel are continuing to work at this time at the site of the train accident on the Bettendorf riverfront.

The incident occurred about 2 a.m. at 2903 State St. It involved a southbound Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern, or DM&E train.

Several fire and rescue vehicles have filled a large lot at Hampton Cranes at 29th and State. A large blue tarp is covering what looks to be the engine and rescue personnel are working on top of it.

Most of the cars were empty and there was no hazardous spills, although crews did contain a small diesel leak from one of the engines, according to Bettendorf public information officer Lauran Haldeman. About a dozen cars were involved in the derailment and at no time did spillage from the accident pose a threat to the public, said Mike LoVecchio of DM&E.

Railroad crossings at 31st, 33rd, and 35th streets are currently closed, but should be reopened in the next couple of hours, Haldeman said.