

Traffic 

Worker killed by SEPTA train identified

Thursday, November 05, 2009

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EAST OAK LANE - November 5, 2009 (WPVI) -- A packed commuter train struck and killed a rail worker during the morning rush Thursday, disrupting service for three hours and stranding hundreds of riders on a system already crippled by a transit strike.

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The man has been identified as Kevin Sparks, 34, of Sharon Hill, Pa.

The train was inbound from the city's northern suburbs when it hit Sparks around 8:35 a.m., Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority spokesman Richard Maloney said. More than 625 people on the train were stranded at the Melrose Park station as three of 13 regional lines have had to be shut down.

Sparks, a rail inspector, was walking with a flagman on the northbound tracks when he was hit from behind by a southbound train, Maloney said. The train was running on different tracks than normal because of equipment problems with another train.

Normally, when regional rail lines are shut down due to an accident, SEPTA buses arrive to take passengers to their destinations, officials said. But that wasn't possible because the more than 5,000 bus, subway and trolley drivers are in the third day of a strike. Regional rail operators are members of a different union and are not on strike.

The shutdown of three regional rail lines cut off much of the service to the northern suburbs and forced hundreds of commuters to either wait until service was restored or find rides to their destinations.

The accident had nothing to do with the increased volume of riders on regional rail due to the transit strike, Maloney said. Service was expected to be completely back to normal for the afternoon rush.

The accident is the second in two days on regional rail, which has seen a surge in ridership due to the strike.

On Wednesday, a regional rail car caught fire as it headed downtown around 7 a.m., causing delays and confusion. There were no serious injuries; SEPTA said neither accident was believed to be strike related.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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