

Waynesville man dies in mudslide

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Joe Drewnoski

WAYNESVILLE — The railroad worker who was killed early Monday in a mudslide was the father of three children and always had a smile on his face, his wife said.

Joe Drewnoski, 33, of Waynesville, died on Old Fort Mountain early Monday morning while inspecting track with another Norfolk Southern worker after a mudslide.

A second mudslide knocked their special truck with rail wheels off the track, said railroad spokesman Robin Chapman. The accident happened near Mill Creek Road.

Drewnoski, an assistant foreman, was outside the truck and was buried and killed. The employee who was still in the truck called for help and was rescued.

Drewnoski was the father of Tyler, Alexander and Emily, and husband to Ashley Drewnoski.

“He was a family man, always with a smile on his face,” Ashley Drewnoski said. “Forever remembered and sorrowfully missed, he was one of a kind and truly irreplaceable. Joe was loved by everyone that met him.”

She said that love was “surpassed only by how much love he carried in his heart and the joy he brought out in every moment.”

It took five hours to recover his body, Chapman said.

Heavy rain spawned nearly a dozen landslides across Western North Carolina, closing roads and trapping people in their homes.

The Federal Railroad Administration is investigating the accident, the agency said Monday. The investigation will include inspecting equipment and interviewing witnesses. The goal is to develop corrective action that might prevent a similar accident.

The agency investigates each railroad worker fatality and about 100 nonfatal accidents a year.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.