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## Knott's Berry Railroad Ride Operator Killed

October 21, 1996 | RENE LYNCH | TIMES STAFF WRITER

BUENA PARK — A Knott's Berry Farm worker who operates the popular Calico Railroad ride was killed Sunday evening, crushed between two passenger cars in what officials said was the first employee death in the theme park's 76-year history.

The fatality took place at about 6 p.m., just as the park was closing for an hour before reopening for the evening as "Knott's Scary Farm," a Halloween-themed attraction. The ride was out of service and in an area of the park off-limits to guests, said Tom Mehrmann, vice president of park operations and entertainment. A handful of park employees were in the area at the time, he said.

"We really don't know if it's mechanical failure or human error but he was crushed between two passenger cars on the railroad," said Mehrmann. "This is the first employee fatality in our park's history. Needless to say, the Knott family and Knott management is shaken."

The Calico Railroad is an authentic steam locomotive dating to before the turn of the century; it has been in operation in the park since 1952. The ride travels a looping course and runs through the center of the park, picking up passengers along the way.

It will be out of service while park officials investigate what went wrong, Mehrmann said. State officials also will investigate the accident, officials said.

"We will keep it down until we determine the cause of the accident," he said.

The park reopened at 7 p.m. for its evening session, Mehrmann said. The railroad ride is not normally used during evening operations, he said.

The name of the employee was not being released until his wife and daughter were notified. The employee had worked for the park for the last three years, and spent all of that time working on the Calico Railroad ride, Mehrmann said.

The death is the second this year involving amusement park workers in Southern California.

In May, a part-time roller coaster attendant at Six Flags Magic Mountain died after being hit by a train of cars filled with visitors.