

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Railroad Accident Brief Report

ATL 96 FR 019
EMPLOYEE FATALITY
CONSOLIDATED RAIL CORPORATION
LYONS, NEW YORK
JUNE 29, 1996

About 7:30 a.m., eastern daylight time, on Saturday, June 29, 1996, westbound Consolidated Rail Corporation (CR) freight train TV-77 struck a Loram Badger ditch digger near Lyons, New York. The accident occurred on CR's River Line at milepost (MP) 332.2. There are two main tracks; one is designated main track 1 and the other, main track 2. The Ditch Digger was working on track 2 and obstructing track 1. The left-front side of train TV-77's lead locomotive unit, CR 5016, struck the Ditch Digger's conveyor belt which was extending across track 1. The impact crushed the nose and the south side of the locomotive cab. Train TV-77 had an engineer and a conductor. The conductor was fatally injured as a result of the impact. There were no reported injuries to the engineer or to the crew of the Ditch Digger. The collision occurred with the train moving 20 mph and in emergency braking. The weather conditions at the time of the accident were overcast skies, with an ambient temperature reported at 65° F.

The crew of TV-77 had received a Bulletin Order in Selkirk, New York, indicating that a work area was established at Lyons, New York, between MP 332 and control point (CP) 334 from 6:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., on Saturday, June 29, 1996. The Bulletin Order stated that a track foreman was in charge of the work area.

The train departed Selkirk, New York, at 2:13 a.m. and stopped at Dewitt, New York, where the crew set off 19 cars and picked up 29. The train departed Dewitt at 6:15 a.m. with 48 cars and weighing 3,741 tons.

The engineer stated that all the equipment on the train was functioning properly, and the trip was uneventful up to the time of the accident. The train passed the approach sign, permitting the engineer to proceed and prepare to stop his train at the stop sign. The event recorder data indicated that the train was reducing speed from 60 to 53 mph by throttle reduction and at 50 mph, the automatic air brake was applied and at 40 mph, the train brakes went to emergency. The engineer stated to investigators that he forgot about the work area.

The engineer said he first observed the stop sign about ¼ to ½ mile prior to the accident. At that point, he said he made a minimum reduction of the automatic brake. According to his statement, when he observed the ditch digger he placed his train into emergency braking but was unable to stop short of it. He said he attempted to warn the conductor of the impending collision by yelling “hit the deck,” but the conductor did not react in time and was killed in the collision.

Carrier Operating Rules require employees located on the leading locomotive to be on the lookout for signals affecting the movement of their train. Additionally, employees located on the leading locomotive must stop the train if it is not being operated in compliance with the requirements of a signal indication or restriction. The crew for some unknown reason failed to see the approach sign and the engineer failed to control the train to comply with the approach sign and did not take timely action to stop at the stop sign. The conductor failed to take action to stop the train or inform the engineer of the situation as required by the Operating Rules.

The Loram Badger ditch digger was under the supervision of a CR Maintenance of Way foreman. The foreman stated that at 6:41 a.m. he received permission from the train dispatcher to work between MP 332 and CP 334. He said once he had the permission and the approach and stop signs were in place, the ditch digger began working.

He said at approximately 7:29 a.m., he noticed a train coming toward them. He said “We had permission to be across the tracks, our stop signs were in place. We never received a call from the train.” He said he sounded the alarm, and the ditch digger crew attempted to move the waste boom out of the way. The crew realizing that they did not have enough time attempted to get off of the equipment. The train struck the ditch digger with the operator still in the cab, and the equipment was moved approximately 200 feet. The operator was not injured as a result of the collision.

Both crewmembers of train TV-77 were given postaccident toxicological tests. All test results were negative for the presence of drugs and alcohol.

PROBABLE CAUSE

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of this accident was the failure of the crewmembers of train TV-77 to comply with the Bulletin Order because they were inattentive to their duties.

Adopted: August 18, 1998