

Metro-North employee killed by train in upper Manhattan identified

James Romansoff, 58, of Yonkers, was killed about 12:54 a.m. Monday after a northbound train struck him on an elevated stretch of track at 106th St. and Park Ave. — reportedly outside the approved work zone.

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A Metro-North track worker who apparently strayed beyond a protected work zone was struck and killed by a northbound train in upper Manhattan early Monday.

James Romansoff, 58, of Yonkers, was hit on an elevated stretch of track at 106th St. and Park Ave., the latest in a spate of serious accidents on the commuter railroad, officials said.

One source said that Romansoff was part of a crew that wrongly believed train traffic was suspended in the area they entered.

“There was some sort of miscommunication,” the source said.

Romansoff, an eight-year employee in Metro-North's Power Department, was part of a crew restoring power to tracks that had been closed for weekend maintenance work, the MTA said in a statement.

Two other sources said a safe work zone had been created by dispatchers remotely blocking trains from entering the area. The zone, however, was established south of where Romansoff was hit, the two sources said.

The northbound train left Grand Central at 12:47 a.m. en route to Poughkeepsie and struck Romansoff at 12:54 a.m., officials said. He was taken to Mount Sinai Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

A team of National Transportation Safety Board experts is investigating the accident along with the Federal Railway Administration.

In addition to Romansoff, the crew was made up of two other electrical workers and a supervisor. The train's engineer sounded his horn and hit the emergency brakes when he unexpectedly came upon the crew but couldn't stop in time, sources said.

Romansoff, who was divorced, is survived by a 26-year-old daughter and a sister, a source said.

The fatality was particularly shocking because it comes as Metro-North is under increased federal scrutiny after accidents that left four passengers and a railroad foreman dead. The FRA has had staffers on the railroad poring over safety practices and procedures for nearly two months. Metro-North has conducted refresher training for thousands of workers and has installed new equipment to ensure engineers don't exceed speed limits on curves.

Robert Luden, 52, a Metro-North track foreman in Connecticut, was killed by a train on the New Haven line in May. A trainee in a rail control tower opened up a track segment for train service without alerting the foreman or other workers doing a construction project in West Haven.

Also in May, a New Haven line train derailed after going over a piece of faulty rail and was struck by another train on the adjacent track.

Then in December, an out-of-control speeding train derailed near the Spuyten Duyvil station in the Bronx after the engineer reportedly nodded off. Four passengers were killed and more than 70 were injured.

"The entire Metro-North family mourns the loss of a colleague and a friend and we offer our deepest condolences to Jim Romansoff's family," said Metro-North President Joseph Giulietti. "Keeping our customers and employees safe is the most important job we have on the railroad. With our partners at the Federal Railroad Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board, we will re-examine our procedures and protocols to ensure we are performing our jobs with safety as the paramount concern."

The last Metro-North worker killed on the job before Luden was Kenneth McGrath, who was hit by a Metro-North train near Rye in 2009, the authority said.