

## L.A. Now

California: This just in

# A week after Metrolink train crashes into truck, engineer dies

By **VERONICA ROCHA AND JOSEPH SERNA**

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**O**ne week after being gravely injured in a collision between a Metrolink train and a pickup truck in Oxnard, the train's engineer has died.

Glenn Steele, 62, died early Tuesday at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles of injuries suffered in the Feb. 24 crash, said Ed Winter, spokesman for the Los Angeles County coroner's office.

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"The entire Metrolink family is deeply saddened by the loss of this dedicated and hardworking railroader," said Sam Joublat, Metrolink's interim chief executive officer. "Everyone associated with Metrolink extends our most heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and coworkers. Our thoughts and prayers are with them all."

Steele's son, Shawn, said the family gathered together just hours after his father was pronounced dead.

"He is the hardest-working engineer and the best at what he did," he said.

Doctors said his father's heart stopped twice after the crash. He was transferred to Cedars-Sinai for more specialized care.

Fellow engineers that "love him" established a [GoFundMe account](#), his son said. As of Tuesday morning, more than \$16,000 had been raised, he said.

They had hoped to use the money to help Glenn Steele in his recovery.

Shawn Steele said his father was a loving grandfather who was excited after finding out that his son's wife was pregnant with another child.

The five-car Metrolink train was bound for downtown Los Angeles when it derailed at 5:42 a.m. Feb. 24. Initially there were no fatalities, but 28 of the 50 people involved were taken to hospitals with minor to critical injuries.

The impact of the crash sent the truck across the grade crossing, pushing it a total of about 300 feet.

The train was traveling at 56 mph when the engineer saw the truck on the tracks at 5th Street and Rice Avenue, authorities said. Seconds before colliding with the truck, he pulled the emergency brake.

Steele, of Homeland in Riverside County, had 42 years of experience and was ranked No. 1 on the Metrolink seniority list, said Robert Sumwalt, a National Transportation Safety Board member. He was an employee of Amtrak.

Last week, Ventura County Dist. Atty. Gregory Totten announced that no charges would be filed against the driver of the truck, Jose Sanchez-Ramirez, 54, at least until an investigation was completed. He added that prosecutors could still file charges in the future.

On Tuesday, prosecutor Scott Hendrickson said Totten would not comment on the case and the latest development because it was still under investigation by the Oxnard Police Department.

Prosecutors were also waiting for the NTSB to conclude its investigation before deciding whether to file charges, said Oxnard police spokesman Miguel Lopez.

Multiple agencies were working on the investigation, he said.

"I think everyone is going to proceed with the utmost caution," Lopez said.

Sanchez-Ramirez's attorney, Ron Bamieh, said his client was "upset" and "shaken" over Steele's death. He said he and Sanchez-Ramirez expressed their condolences and said, "Our prayers and thoughts are with the family of Mr. Steele."

"It is our hope that this will be the last loss of life the city of Oxnard will allow at this intersection," Bamieh said. "It's unfortunate that it took this accident to bring attention to this dangerous condition that has existed for far too long."

The derailment occurred after Sanchez-Ramirez, who was hauling a trailer with a Ford F-450 pickup, mistakenly turned onto the tracks and became stuck, Bamieh said. Sanchez-Ramirez, of Yuma, Ariz., was in the area for work and thought he was turning onto 5th Street, the attorney said.

Sanchez-Ramirez was arrested on suspicion of felony hit-and-run involving multiple injuries after police said they found him walking and apparently disoriented more than a mile from the scene of the derailment. He was released after prosecutors declined to file charges pending the conclusion of investigations.

A 31-year-old student engineer was operating the train at the time of the crash, federal investigators said. Both the student engineer and Steele were inside the control cab as the train went down the track.

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## UPDATE

**12:16 p.m.:** This post was updated with comments from Glenn Steele's son Shawn.

**10:50 a.m.:** This post was updated with statements from Metrolink, the truck driver's attorney, the Ventura County district attorney and Oxnard police.

This story was originally posted at 9:36 a.m.

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