2015 Oxnard train derailment

The 2015 Oxnard train derailment occurred on February 24, 2015 when a Metrolink passenger train collided with a truck on a grade crossing and derailed at Oxnard, California, United States. The train engineer died from his injuries a week later and 29 others were injured.

1 Background

An overpass has been planned for the Rice Avenue crossing where the accident occurred for almost two decades. Funding has not been available in Ventura County for the estimated $35 million grade separation project.[1]

2 Accident

The accident occurred at 5:44 a.m. local time (13:44 UTC) when a passenger train collided with a 2005 Ford F-450 pick-up truck and trailer on the Rice Avenue grade crossing in Oxnard, California. The train derailed, with three carriages falling onto their sides and a fourth remaining upright, as did the locomotive which was pushing the train from the rear.[2][3] The train was traveling from East Ventura to Los Angeles and was accelerating after leaving the Oxnard station 2 miles (3.2 km) away from the crash site.[4] It was traveling at 64 miles per hour (103 km/h) when the emergency brakes were applied[5] and had slowed to 56 miles per hour (90 km/h) when it hit the truck.[6] The train's usual cruising speed is 79 miles per hour (127 km/h);[6] it was traveling under that speed.[7][8]

The truck was seen by the train crew to be on fire before the collision.[6] The train was being operated by a student engineer with the train engineer in the control cab with him.[9] The truck driver is reported to have driven along the tracks having turned too early before the intersection at Fifth Street. The truck was 80 feet west of the intersection. Facing the train when the accident occurred.[2][10][11]

There were 48 passengers and three crew on board the train.[12] Of those, 30 were injured.[11] Initially 28 of the injured were taken to hospital; 20 were released and eight were admitted, four of them said to be in a critical condition.[6][14] Later two more passengers were transported to hospital and released.[14] Victims were treated at the Community Memorial Hospital, Los Robles Hospital & Medical Center, St. John’s Regional Medical Center, St. John’s Pleasant Valley Hospital and Ventura County Medical Center.[15]

The truck driver was Jose Alejandro Sanchez-Ramirez, 54, who does not speak English, and who had a previous DUI conviction in his home state of Arizona.[16][17] Sanchez-Ramirez left the scene on foot following the accident, but was later apprehended about a mile away.[18] He was booked on suspicion of hit and run.[19] Sanchez-Ramirez was held in custody needing to post $150,000 bail to be released.[20] On February 26, Sanchez-Ramirez was released from jail.[21]

3 Aftermath

Metrolink trains between East Ventura and Moorpark were canceled. A bus service was laid on for passengers traveling to these stations.[3] Local roads around the scene of the accident were closed.[4] Amtrak Pacific Surfliner service between Los Angeles and Goleta, that uses the same Union Pacific coast line, was also cancelled.[14]

The train engineer, Glenn Steele, 62, was one of the critically injured and died one week later.[22] After the accident, Steele experienced two cardiac arrests on Wednesday February 25th, but lived after those events.[23] At the time of his death, Steele was the most senior engineer with Metrolink,[24] having spent half of his 42-year long Amtrak career with Metrolink.[25][9] Steele died at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center early on March 3rd.[26] A resident of Homeland, California, Steele was a grandfather.[9]

4 Investigations

The National Transportation Safety Board has launched an investigation into the accident.[18][13] A Go-team was dispatched to the scene.[27] The train was fitted with a forward-facing camera in the cab car.[2] The NTSB has verified that the forward-facing camera was recording data and the collision itself was recorded by the camera.[11] Although it was initially stated that the truck became stuck on the tracks, NTSB later clarified that it is unclear if the vehicle was stuck and that it was not a typical grade crossing incident where a vehicle is crossing the tracks and is stopped or struck before completing the crossing. The vehicle was not in the crossing nor between the crossing arms.[11]

The Federal Railroad Administration opened an investi-
gation into the accident, the twelfth at the crossing in ten years. An average of eight passenger and 24 freight trains use the line in each direction each day.[3][20]

5 See also

- List of grade crossing accidents

6 References


[8] Rocha, Veronica; Serna, Joseph; Mejia, Brittny (February 26, 2015). “Metrolink derailment: No charges filed against truck driver for now”. Los Angeles Times. Retrieved February 26, 2015. The Metrolink train was traveling 56 mph when it hit the truck, well below the 79-mph speed limit, Sumwalt said.


[19] Ashley Sole-Cerro; Lynette Romero; Melissa Pamer; Kareen Wynter; Christina Pasucci; Courtney Friel; Kimberly Cheng; Steve Kunj; Kirk Hawkins (February 25, 2015). “Truck Driver Taken Into Custody on Suspicion of Felony Hit-and-Run in Metrolink Crash”. KTLA. Retrieved February 26, 2015.


[27] “NTSB Launches Go-Team to Grade Crossing Accident in Oxnard, CA”. National Transportation Safety Board. Retrieved February 24, 2015.

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