

# Woodville man found guilty on all charges in death, injury of CSX workers

BLADE STAFF

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BOWLING GREEN – A Woodville, Ohio man charged with driving through a barricade and crashing into a CSX Transportation work crew, killing one worker and injuring two others, was found guilty today on all charges.

Cody Rickard, 26, was convicted by a jury in Wood County Common Pleas Court of murder and two counts each of aggravated vehicular homicide, vehicular assault, and felonious assault for the Oct. 28 crash near Bradner that killed Paul Castle, 34, of Paintsville, Ky., and injured Jim Conley, 58, of Findlay, and Luis Knott III, 58, of Banner, Ky.

The jury deliberated approximately three hours before returning the guilty verdicts.

After hearing from victims' representatives, judge Alan Mayberry sentenced Rickard to 29 years to life in prison and suspended his driver's license for life.

The three victims were part of a CSX crew working on the tracks near the railroad crossing on Bradner Road about 11:20 a.m. when Rickard's car drove around the "Road Closed" barricades, sheared off a road sign, struck a utility pole, and hit the three men as they were standing at the rear of a CSX mechanic's truck parked on the road.

"One thing is for sure, Oct. 28, 2013 was a horrific day for the ... CSX gang and the Paul Castle family," Gwen Howe-Gebers, chief assistant Wood County prosecutor, told the jury in her closing argument. "What is surprising is that only one person lost his life."

An accident reconstructionist testified that the "black box" in Rickard's vehicle showed his car had accelerated from 41 mph to 61 mph in the moments before it struck the utility pole and Mr. Castle. Rickard had not applied the brakes, Ms. Howe-Gebers said, and witnesses said he got out of his car and raised his arms as if celebrating after his car came to rest in a ditch.

Some of the witnesses testified that when Rickard was told he may have killed someone, he replied that he "should've killed them all," Ms. Howe-Gebers said.

Defense attorney Edward Rhode III told the jury that prosecutors had "over-indicted" his client, that while he had made some mistakes that day, Rickard was not driving recklessly, and the crash

was “an accident.” He pointed out that toxicology testing performed after the crash was negative for alcohol or drugs.

“It looks like he was negligent – drifting off to the left side of road with his car -- and that in the process of correcting it, he clipped the telephone pole in such a way that the car bounced off the phone pole and hit Mr. Castle,” Mr. Rhode told the jury.