

Railroad contractor dies after being struck by train

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An Amarillo man died Wednesday night after a Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway train hit him.

Gene Blackburn Harrison, 42, was pronounced dead at the scene, said Scott Sutton, chief deputy for the Carson County Sheriff's Office.

Harrison managed Centergas Inc.'s Amarillo facility, said Mark Allsup, president of the company. Centergas supplies propane gas to BNSF.

"It is devastating. Everyone was close to Gene," Allsup said. "He was a very responsible person and an integral part of our company. It was a tragic situation."

About 7 p.m., Harrison was with another Centergas employee and a tow-truck driver just west of Farm-to-Market Road 2373 and U.S. Highway 60, where they were trying to free a truck that was hung up on the north side of the tracks, Sutton said.

Allsup said Thursday he was waiting on more details about the accident, but he said Harrison may have been walking along the tracks in search of the tow truck.

"Gene crossed the tracks without looking and the train was there," Allsup said. "It is a really amazing incident. Gene was always careful. He was the most careful, safety-conscious guy."

Sutton said deputies who responded to the scene reported Harrison may have slipped or stepped back onto the tracks accidentally.

"It is very unfortunate," Sutton said.

Joe Faust, a spokesman for BSNF Railway, said the Federal Railroad Administration will take charge of the investigation and has requested that Harrison's body be sent to Lubbock for an autopsy.

"This type of incident is extremely uncommon," Faust said. "This is a rare occurrence and we are extremely sad for his family and his co-workers, who will all miss a very good employee and a good friend."