Conductor leaps to death from train

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BUENA PARK, Calif., June 10 (UPI) -- Investigators Tuesday were trying to determine why an experienced conductor leaped to his death from his locomotive in Buena Park, Calif.

The Los Angeles Times said he apparently thought his train was going to hit another.

Regulatory research coordinator for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Workers Bob Harvey said, "I'm flabbergasted."

In the past, Harvey said, when crews had jumped, trains collided.

Company spokesman Lena Kent said the 6,000-foot-long train, with 65 cars and three engines, was running on one of Burlington Northern Santa Fe's main lines.

Conductor Kevin Osher jumped from the westbound train about 2 a.m. Sunday because he thought it was going to crash into another train. The engineer, whose name was not released, also thought the train was heading toward them. He started braking.

Osher pulled the emergency brake, ran to the back of the engine and jumped from the train. The locomotive stopped about 850 feet in front of the other train, which was on an adjacent track.

Conductor, Fearing Crash, Jumps Off Train to His Death

June 09, 2003 | Dave McKibben | Times Staff Writer

A conductor died early Sunday morning in Buena Park after jumping from a freight train he apparently thought was about to collide with an oncoming train, police and train officials said.

The train he was aboard was going about 40 mph; the other train turned out to be on an adjacent track and was at a complete stop, said Lena Kent, a Burlington Northern Santa Fe spokeswoman.

Kent said she had never heard of a similar incident involving a Burlington Northern conductor.
"There have been conductor fatalities, but not where they thought they saw another train coming and there wasn't one," Kent said.

She said there appeared to be nothing unusual about the situation the train's two-man crew encountered.

"The other freight train was stopped on the other side of the tracks," she said. "That's an area where there's eastbound and westbound traffic flowing at all times."

Kevin Osher, 33, of Canoga Park, who had worked at least five years as a conductor with Burlington Northern, died from injuries suffered in the jump west of Dale Street. Paramedics pronounced him dead at the scene.

Police said the engineer told them that he and the conductor both thought the other train was heading toward them. The engineer, whose name was not released by Burlington Northern or the police, began braking. The conductor placed the train into "full emergency braking," police said.

The engineer said Osher told him he was going to jump. Then he ran toward the rear ladder and leaped, police said. The incident occurred at 1:45 a.m.

"It sounds like they both saw the same thing, but the conductor got more paranoid and scared as to their safety concerns," said Buena Park Police Lt. Corey Sianez. "He thought it was worse than it really was."

The train originated in Kansas City, Kan., and was bound for Los Angeles. Osher and the engineer boarded in Barstow at 7 p.m. Saturday and were within an hour of reaching their destination when the accident occurred, Kent said.

It has not been determined if drugs or alcohol were involved.