A 46-year-old U.S. Steel employee was killed last Thursday at the company's Granite City, Ill., plant when a slow-moving cargo train crushed him against the wall of a loading dock, according to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

David M. Prengel, of Granite City, had worked at the plant for 26 years and been a switchman for four years, according to union authorities.

Prengel was aboard a cargo train headed for a loading area when he disembarked to activate signals alerting other workers of the train’s approach, police said. The train struck him as he crossed the track and dragged him about 70 feet against a concrete wall, a witness told union investigators. A gap of only inches separated the train from the wall, authorities said.

The accident was the second in eight days at the plant and came amid workers' concerns over safety issues. Employees represented by United Steelworkers of America locals 1899 and 68 have been picketing company offices in Granite City on and off since November, citing concerns over workplace training, safety and seniority.

On Jan. 26, an employee was badly injured when a 20-ton truck that moves steel coils backed over the motor-scooter he was driving. The man suffered skull fractures and five fractures of the pelvis, among other injuries. The worker was driving the scooter in a restricted area at the request of a supervisor, while the operator of the coil truck was inexperienced with the vehicle and is actually a crane operator, according to Local 1899 President Russ Saltsgaver.

"There's a lot of cross-training and people being asked to do several different jobs," he said.