Summary

DATE: September 26, 1969
RAILROAD: Illinois Central
LOCATION: Riverdale, Ill.
ACCIDENT TYPE: Rear-end collision
TRAINS: Freight (Transfer)
TRAIN NUMBERS: Extra 1214 North
LOCOMOTIVES: Diesel-electric unit 1214
CONSISTS: 13 cars, caboose
SPEEDS: Standing
OPERATION: Signal indications
TRACKS: Multiple-track; level; tangent
WEATHER: Clear
TIME: 4:34 a.m.
CASUALTIES: 3 killed; 3 injured
CAUSE: Engineer and front brakeman of the following train falling asleep due to fatigue and the effects of alcohol, resulting in the train passing stop-signals and colliding with the preceding train.
THREE KILLED
IN RIVERDALE
TRAIN CRASH

Service Resumed
by Evening

(Picture on back page)

Illinois Central suburban commuter train service was ex-
pected to operate on a limited basis this morning after crews
worked thru the night clearing the wreckage of the freight
train which crashed in River-
daile yesterday killing three and
injuring one.

Officials warned that service
would not return to normal
till of 1563 street until Mon-
day morning.

Darkness Slows Work

Repair crews, hampered by
tree and darkness, worked thru
the night to clear the twisted
wreckage of the 13-car coal
train. It derailed into the rear
of another train which was
switching cars carrying auto-
mobiles.

W. H. Thompson, I. C. vice
president and general manager,
said the accident apparently
was caused by failure of the
engineer to observe proper
signals.

William Heston, 44, of 1421
Evergreen st., Homewood,
engineer of the coal train, was
killed. Officials said that the
locomotive he was running
derailed into the caboose of the
switching train. Officials
said Heston apparently did not
apply the brakes.

Gears Were Signals

"For some unexplainable
reason, the train did not stop
and went thru several signals
that were set against the coal
train," said Robert W. O'Brien,
director of public relations for
the I. C.

The bodies of two crew men
were recovered and identified
as Alex H. Wilson, 22, of 942
Oakwood av., a switchman
in the caboose of the train
carrying the auto, and Charles
Kitcher of Loeve street. Hori-
ton, head brakeman on the
coal train.

Willie D. Ellis, 31, of 531 E.
41st st., who was also riding
in the caboose with Wilson,
was partially buried by tons of
coal. He was listed in critical
condition in St. Francis hospital,
Blue Island.

Riversdale Scene

Screams and pass-
er-by's used their hands to dig
Ellis out of the coal which
spilled onto the train from
60 of the cars in the coal train.

The crash, which blocked six
sets of tracks, occurred shortly
after 3:30 a.m. and shook
houses several blocks away,
according to Walter Krowger,
21, one of the first firemen
on the scene.

Cars Spill on Tracks

Automobiles from the 12-car
switching train spilled onto
the tracks and one caught fire.
The blaze was quickly extin-
guished.

Officials said that commuter
service would be run today and
tomorrow without the use of
shuttle buses from the Ken-
sington station at 115th street
to Harvey. Two trains will be
given priority for use of the
single set of tracks that will be
available over the weekend.

A spokesman said that two
sets of tracks should be open
by the Monday noon rush
hour and service will be re-
stored to normal. All freight
trains are either being rerouted
or canceled until Monday.