

SUMMARY FOR FE-23-02
SELECTED AND POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

SELECTED FACTORS

Railroad: Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation
Location: Yutan, Nebraska (near Fremont, Nebraska)
Region: 6

Month: September
Date: Sept. 18, 2002
Time: 7:50 a.m., CST

Data for All Fatally Injured Employee(s)

Conductor
52 years old
33 years of service
Last rules training: March 2, 2001
Last safety training: Unknown
Last physical: Unknown

Data for All Employees (Craft, Positions, Activity)

Craft: Transportation and Engine

Positions:

Train R-NEB 4251-18A

Engineer
Conductor
Brakeman

Dispatcher

Activity: Switching in Fremont, then traveling in two lite locomotives to Yutan

EVENT

A Conductor fell from the front of the locomotive he was riding
and was fatally injured as the locomotive ran over him.

SUMMARY FOR FE-23-02 CONTINUED

POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

PCF No. 1

The Conductor, *out of the Engineer's line of sight and without first informing him*, proceeded from the Fireman's side of the lead locomotive, through the front door, to scare a dog away from the train. He then fell from the Fireman's side of the front platform of the locomotive, suffering massive head trauma as both lite locomotives ran over him.

REPORT: FE-23-2002

RAILROAD: Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation (BNSF)

LOCATION: Yutan, Nebraska (near Fremont, Nebraska)

DATE & TIME: Sept. 18, 2002; 7:50 a.m., CST

EVENT¹: The Conductor fell from the front of the locomotive he was riding and was fatally injured as the locomotive ran over him.

EMPLOYEE:

Craft:	Transportation and Engine (T&E)
Activity:	Switching in Fremont, then traveling in two lite locomotives to Yutan.
Occupation:	Conductor
Age:	52 years
Length of Service:	33 years
Last Rules Training:	March 2, 2001
Last Safety Training:	Unknown
Last Physical:	Unknown

CIRCUMSTANCES PRIOR TO THE ACCIDENT

On September 18, 2002, after having had 12 hours off-duty, a train crew comprising an Engineer, Conductor, and Brakeman reported for duty at 6 a.m., CST at Fremont, Nebraska, to operate Train R-NEB 4251-18A, a local train working out of Fremont.

The crew received a job briefing prior to beginning any work. They were to be working with Locomotives Nos. BNSF 2106 and BNSF 2722. The crew picked up three cars and a weigh car off the storage track in Fremont and performed the air test on the cars. The crew then proceeded to the north end of town where a train had left some cars the night before, cut off the cars they had been pulling, and went into the siding and coupled to the cars to be picked up. They then

¹ “Event” is defined as “occurrence that immediately precedes and directly results in the fatality.” Possible contributing factors are identified in the following report and attached summary.

performed the required air brake test and proceeded back to the cars on the main line. The Brakeman then got on the rear car, and the train shoved back into Fremont. They went across Main Street and cut off the weigh car; the Conductor was at the switch.

The crew kicked a cut of cars which included the weigh car onto the Freezer Track and went back to the other cars. The Conductor then went into the Yard Office to get the necessary track warrant so their train could proceed to Yuton, approximately 15 miles timetable direction eastward from Fremont. While the Conductor was in the yard office, the Engineer and Brakeman took the remaining cars and shoved them onto the House Track. As the Conductor returned from the yard office, the Brakeman lined the switch and the Conductor got into the lead locomotive. The Brakeman then got into the cab of the second locomotive, and the crew members proceeded with their two locomotives lite toward Yuton. They were operating with the BNSF 2106 in the lead with it's short hood forward.

The train crew members had a non-eventful trip the nearly 15 miles to Yuton. As they neared Yuton, at about milepost 16, the Engineer started to blow the horn because he noticed a dog running beside the train on the right side of the track. He stopped the train momentarily and then proceeded on eastward slowly, gaining up to a speed of 17 mph.

The sky was cloudy, and the temperature was 65° F.

THE ACCIDENT

At approximately 7:50 a.m., the Conductor proceeded from the Fireman's side of the lead locomotive, through the front door, to scare the dog away from the train. The Engineer could not see the Conductor, who apparently fell from the Fireman's side of the front platform of the locomotive, while attempting to scare the dog away. Subsequently, both locomotives ran over him.

The Brakeman was still in the trailing locomotive looking out the window. He then moved to the right side to look out the window and see whatever had caused the Engineer to blow the train whistle and slow down. He then saw something between the tracks and did a double-take, as it looked like the Conductor. The Brakeman immediately hollered at the Engineer via radio and told him that it was the Conductor between the tracks. The Brakeman received no response from the Engineer, but the train came to a stop. The Brakeman looked to see if the Engineer was in his seat, and he was not. The Brakeman then looked out the left window and saw the Engineer running towards the Conductor. The Brakeman then disembarked the trailing locomotive to join the Engineer on the ground.

Upon discovering the Conductor's remains between the rails, the Engineer and Brakeman then ran back to the lead locomotive, and the Engineer called the Dispatcher on 911. When the Dispatcher responded, the Engineer was unable to talk. The Brakeman told the Dispatcher they needed emergency medical personnel and gave the Dispatcher the train's location.

The Saunders County Sheriff's Department was notified at 7:58 a.m. Two investigators from the Sheriff's Department arrived at the scene at 8:10 a.m., and the Chief Deputy arrived at 8:20 a.m. The Saunders County Coroner and Yutan EMS personnel were also notified and responded to the scene. The Conductor was pronounced dead at the scene by the Saunders County Coroner at 9:25 a.m. The cause of death was determined to be massive head trauma from being crushed by the locomotive. The BNSF did not request an autopsy.

The body was transported from the scene to the Reichmuth Funeral Home Elkhorn Chapel in Elkhorn, Nebraska, where post-accident toxicological testing took place. The Engineer and Brakeman were transported to Saunders County Hospital in Wahoo, Nebraska, for post-accident toxicological testing.

POST-ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

An Operating Practices Inspector from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) responded to the accident scene for investigation. He inspected the locomotives and the accident area and took no exceptions to any conditions found. He also spoke with BNSF Officials regarding this incident and obtained copies of associated documents from FRA's Drug and Alcohol Program Manager.

With no eye witnesses, no undisputable explanation could be found that determined exactly how or why the victim fell from the locomotive. Post-accident toxicological testing was conducted on all members of the crew. Results of the tests conducted under FRA's post-accident procedures on the Engineer, Conductor, and Brakeman were reported negative.

APPLICABLE RULES

No violation of Federal laws, regulations, or rules were applicable to this employee's death.