

**REPORT:** FE-30-97  
**RAILROAD:** Norfolk Southern Railway (NS)  
**LOCATION:** Chicago, Illinois  
**DATE, TIME:** Oct. 7, 1997, 2:13 p.m., CST

**PROBABLE CAUSE:**

The Motor Vehicle Operator did not yield the right-of-way to the oncoming Metra train at a private highway-rail grade crossing.

<b>EMPLOYEE:</b>	<b>Craft.....</b>	<b>Other (Not Contractor)</b>
	Activity.....	Patrolling NS property and responding to call of possible trespasser
	Occupation.....	Railroad Special Agent
	Age.....	56 years
	Length of Service.....	24 years
	Last Rules Training.....	Aug. 6, 1997
	Last Safety Training.....	Aug. 6, 1997
	Last Physical Examination.....	Jan. 15, 1997

**Circumstances Prior to the Accident**

Norfolk Southern Special Agent

The Norfolk Southern (NS) Special Agent reported for duty at 7 a.m. at the NS Police Office at NS Landers Yard. His assignment was to patrol and provide police protection for NS property, its employees, and goods in transit. He was operating police vehicle no. 396018, a 1996 Chevrolet Lumina, while performing his duties. His tour of duty was scheduled to end at 3 p.m.

At 2:10 p.m., the Special Agent received a radio message from the Conductor on NS Freight Train No. 268, reporting a trespasser on his train. When the Special Agent received the call, he was on Columbus Drive at Kedzie Avenue, approximately one half mile west of the private entrance for Landers Yard. After receiving the call, he proceeded eastward on Columbus Drive toward the private entrance for the yard. Columbus Drive was immediately north of and parallel

to Metra's single main track. The northern boundary for Landers Yard was parallel to and south of the main track. The private entrance and grade crossing provided passage across Metra's main track for vehicles entering and exiting the yard. Visibility for drivers in motor vehicles approaching the private entrance from the west was unobstructed.

### Metra Commuter Train No. 7

On Oct. 7, 1997, after receiving the statutory off-duty period, the Crew for Metra Commuter Train No. 7 reported for duty at 179<sup>th</sup> Street in Orland Park, IL at 5:04 a.m. The Crew comprised an Engineer, Conductor, and Assistant Conductor. The equipment for Train No. 7 comprised one Model F40-PH diesel electric locomotive, NIRC 124, and seven passenger cars.

Using this equipment, the Crew completed one and a half round trips between Chicago, IL and Orland Park, IL. The accident occurred during the return leg of the second round trip. The Crew departed Chicago's Union Station at 1:45 p.m. for its final westbound trip of the day destined for Orland Park, IL.

Approaching the accident site, the main track passed through Forest Hill Interlocking with a restricted speed of 30 mph. West of the interlocking, authorized track speed increased to 50 mph at milepost 9.8, which is 5,280 feet east of the Landers Yard private grade crossing. For a distance of 700 feet, there was no physical obstruction limiting the Engineer's view of the railroad's right-of-way.

After proceeding through Forest Hill Interlocking, the Engineer increased train speed to approximately 40 to 45 mph. Westbound Metra Commuter Train No. 7 approached the NS private crossing at a recorded speed of 43 mph. The Engineer was seated on the right side of the control cab. He first noticed a white automobile when the train was about 138 feet from the crossing. The Engineer sounded the locomotive whistle, providing 11 seconds reaction time for the motorist. The strobe light was on; the crossing warning (ditch) lights were on; and the head light was on bright.

At the time of the accident, the sky was clear, and the temperature was 86° F.

### **The Accident**

The Locomotive Engineer sounded the whistle to warn the driver, but the automobile driver did not stop before pulling onto the track. The automobile, driven by an NS Special Agent, was traveling northbound on Columbus Street in the right lane as it approached the entrance for the Landers Yard private crossing. The driver was responding to a call concerning a trespasser suspected of attempting to board NS Freight Train No. 268, which was being assembled. When the automobile reached the private entrance for Landers Yard, the driver made a right turn into the entrance and proceeded onto the crossing and into the path of the oncoming train.

When the Engineer realized that the vehicle was not going to stop, he initiated an emergency

application of the train's air brakes. The locomotive struck the automobile on its left side. The impact caused the automobile to spin around, flip over, and come to rest at the south curb on Columbus Avenue, 31 feet north of the track and 37 feet west of the crossing. The body of the driver was ejected from the automobile and came to rest on the pavement in the eastbound lanes of Columbus Avenue. The train came to a stop 1,106 feet west of the impact point.

*(Please see the attached two diagrams of Landers Yard to better visualize the accident scene and chain of events that led up to the fatality.)*

### **Post-Accident Investigation**

Chicago Department Ambulance No. 27 transported the driver of the automobile to Christ Hospital and Medical Center in Oak Lawn, Illinois, where he was pronounced dead at 2:42 p.m. Death was caused by multiple injuries. Toxicological tests performed on the Special Agent were negative.

Investigators found light crushing damage to the right front pilot of the locomotive. The right uncoupling lever handle was smashed, and the right sill step for the cab door ladder was bent inward and fouling against the truck. There was no other visible equipment damage.

There was no track damage. The train's impact caused the automobile to be thrown against the warning and stop signs at the northwest corner of the grade crossing, pulling the signs out of the ground.

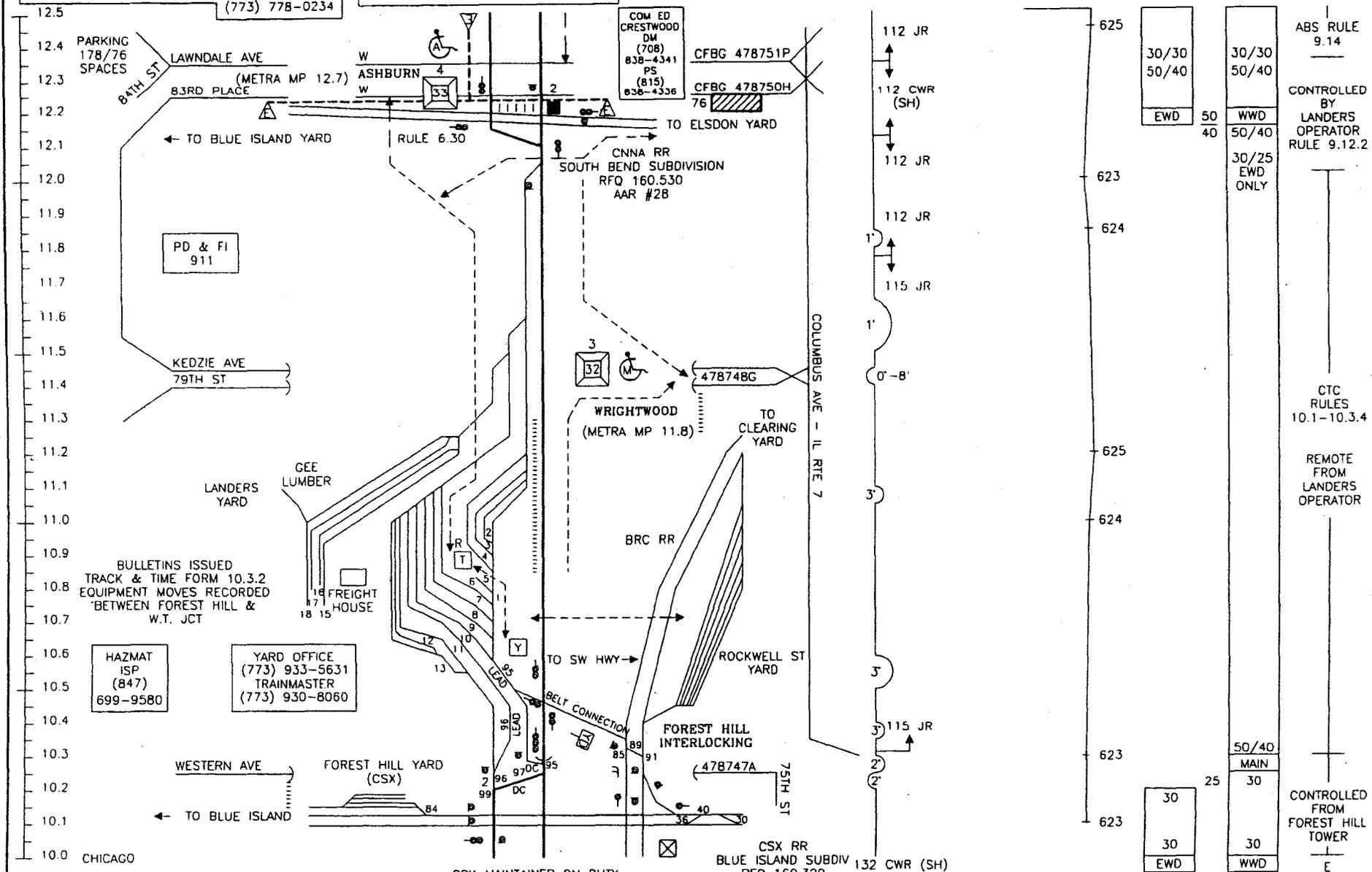
An inspection of the interior of the vehicle confirmed that the driver's seat belt was in the locked position and the seat back was collapsed onto the rear seat. The impact apparently had forced the driver to the rear. As the seat reclined backward, he slid backward and upward. The momentum of the vehicle caused the driver to be ejected through the left rear door window.

The automobile was damaged beyond repair. A review of the maintenance records on the automobile indicated the vehicle had been maintained in accordance with departmental standards. A complete (front and rear) brake job had been performed on July 10, 1997.

**CONTROL POINT PHONE NUMBERS**  
 FOREST HILL TOWER (CSX) (708) 201-5170  
 LANDERS OPERATOR (773) 933-5631  
 (773) 778-0234

**CNNA DISPATCHER (708) 891-8390**  
**CSX DISPATCHER (708) 201-5188**  
**SWS DISPATCHER (312) 322-2846**

**NOTE: CONTROL OPERATOR REFERRED TO AT BOTH FOREST HILLS & BELT JCT IS LANDERS OPERATOR**



BULLETINS ISSUED  
 TRACK & TIME FORM 10.3.2  
 EQUIPMENT MOVES RECORDED  
 BETWEEN FOREST HILL &  
 W.T. JCT

HAZMAT  
 ISP  
 (847)  
 699-9580

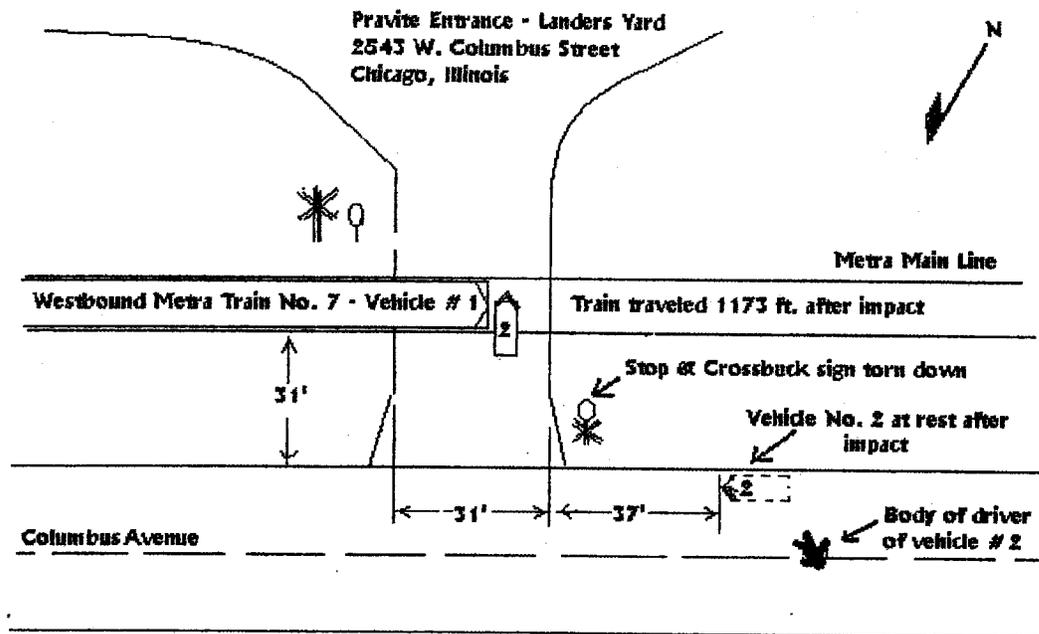
YARD OFFICE  
 (773) 933-5631  
 TRAINMASTER  
 (773) 930-8060

NOTE: AT FOREST HILL STOP SIGNAL CANNOT BE PASSED UNTIL CONTROL OPERATOR CONTACTS DISPATCHER OF CROSSING RR MANUAL DERAILS DEPLOYED IN BOTH DIRECTIONS

CSX MAINTAINER ON DUTY DURING PEAK PERIODS

CSX RR  
 BLUE ISLAND SUBDIV  
 RFQ 160.320  
 AAR #14  
 132 CWR (SH)

30/30 50/40	50 40	30/30 50/40	WWD 50/40	30/25 EWD ONLY	ABS RULE 9.14
EWD		WWD			CONTROLLED BY LANDERS OPERATOR RULE 9.12.2
					CTC RULES 10.1-10.3.4
					REMOTE FROM LANDERS OPERATOR
					CONTROLLED FROM FOREST HILL TOWER
					E



**Grade Crossing Accident**  
Chicago, Illinois  
October 7, 1997  
FE-30-97