

SAFETY BULLETIN

2024-03

SUBJECT: Employee Fatality: Working Around On-Track Equipment

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is investigating an accident that resulted in fatal injuries to a maintenance-of-way employee during on-track excavation activities. At the time of the accident, the fatally-injured roadway worker, who had approximately 13 years of experience, was serving as the roadway worker in charge of a work group working to fill areas along an embankment with ballast. The roadway worker was directing on-track operations of a track hoe excavator (e.g., instructing the excavator operator where to dump ballast and where additional ballast was needed). In the course of this work, the track hoe repeatedly scooped clean ballast and then traveled approximately 40 feet to a fill area where it dumped the clean ballast. To operate the excavator over the track, the excavator arm was positioned inward for travel and then, when the excavator reached the designated fill location, the arm was extended to dump the ballast. During these operations, the roadway worker in charge walked alongside the continuous tread of the track hoe. However, at some point this roadway worker became located between the body of the track hoe and the arm of the machine, where he became pinned between the machine body and the machine's bucket and suffered fatal injuries.

FRA is actively investigating this accident, and is issuing this bulletin to remind railroads, railroad employees, and railroad contractors of the importance of ensuring proper safety precautions are used when working on, near, and around roadway maintenance machines (RMM) including ensuring:

1. Railroads provide employees adequate training on railroad rules for roadway workers who operate and work near RMMs.
2. Railroads provide employees appropriate periodic oversight of compliance with railroad rules for roadway workers who operate and work near RMMs.
3. Railroads empower employees to seek immediate clarification of any safety rule, and the right to challenge rules for roadway workers who operate and work near RMMs.
4. Employees understand the importance of conducting proper job briefings that address all known safety risks involved in the work to be performed.
5. Employees understand the importance of good communication between machine operators and roadway workers assigned to work on or near RMMs.
6. Employees understand the importance of complying with railroad rules for working on or near RMMs.



**U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration**

The purpose of this Safety Bulletin, which is informational in nature, is to ensure the railroad industry, including railroad employees and contractors, are aware of this recent accident that resulted in a fatality of an employee. As FRA completes its investigation into this incident, FRA may take regulatory action with respect to this accident.

For further information, please contact Tim Presser, Track Safety Specialist (RWP/RMM), at timothy.presser@dot.gov (208) 241-9458.

Issued: April 24, 2024