



PRELIMINARY REPORT
RAILROAD
CSX Transportation Roadway Worker Fatality
Estill, South Carolina
November 30, 2018
RRD19FR002

The information in this report is preliminary and will be either supplemented or corrected during the course of the investigation.

On November 30, 2018, at 10:20 a.m. eastern standard time, CSX Transportation (CSX) northbound freight train F-794-30, traveling about 50 mph, struck and killed a CSX track welder. The accident occurred at the North End Estill Siding switch, MP S-449.7, on the CSX Columbia subdivision in Estill, South Carolina. The welder was occupying the track as the train approached; an additional roadway worker was at the work location and had been assigned to watch for approaching trains and provide a warning to the welder. The crew members of train F-794-30 told investigators that they did not realize that a person was on the track until moments before impact. The crew of train F-794-30 sounded the train horn and bell; however, there was no response from the roadway work group. At the time of the accident, the sky was clear; the wind was from the southeast about 4 mph, and the reported temperature was 60°F.

The CSX Columbia subdivision consists of 137.5 miles of single main track between milepost S-359.7 and milepost S-497.2. According to CSX documentation, on average there are 22 trains that operate daily over the CSX Columbia subdivision. Train movements on the main tracks in this area are controlled by centralized traffic control and governed by operating rules, general orders, timetable instructions, and the signal indications of an absolute block system.

The roadway work group consisted of a track welder and one additional roadway worker who was assigned as a watchman/lookout.¹ The welder had been tasked to repair the surface of a track frog in the switch at the North End Estill Siding switch.² (See figure 1.) During interviews, the watchman/lookout stated that prior to the accident the welder had told him that the work was complete. The welder and the watchman were both headquartered in Yemassee, South Carolina. The welder had about 10 years of railroad service, and the watchman had about 4 years of railroad service.

¹ A *watchman/lookout* is a railroad employee who is trained and qualified to watch for approaching trains and give notice of trains in ample time for employees working on the tracks to clear prior to the train's arrival.

² A *track frog* is a component of a railroad switch that allows the wheels of railroad rolling stock to transition from one track to another. The frog is connected to the switch points by the closure rails and is the last component of a railroad switch.



Figure 1. Photo of track frog at the accident location.

The National Transportation Safety Board investigation is ongoing. Future investigative activity will focus on the CSX operating rules and Federal Railroad Administration safety standards regarding roadway worker protection. Investigators will also review and assess the effectiveness of both the internal and external oversight of the applicable rules and standards.

Parties to the investigation include CSX Transportation; the Federal Railroad Administration; the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen; the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers; and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes Division.³

³ The Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes Division spells the word “Employes” in its name with one e. Therefore, we are using that spelling in this report.