



# PRELIMINARY REPORT

## RAILROAD

### Union Pacific Conductor Fatality

**Northlake, Illinois**

**April 23, 2020**

**RRD20LR003**

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

On April 23, 2020, at 10:02 a.m. local time, Union Pacific (UP) train YPR64 was shoving rail cars into an industry track just outside of the Proviso hump yard in Northlake, Illinois, when it struck a tractor semi-trailer (truck) at a public highway-rail grade crossing.<sup>1</sup> The UP train consisted of two locomotives and four rail cars. The conductor, who had been remotely controlling the movement of the train from the end rail car, died in the collision as the train entered the grade crossing at Railroad Avenue. Preliminary information from the event recorder indicates that the train was traveling at about 10 mph when it struck the truck, which was traveling forward at an estimated speed of 25 mph.

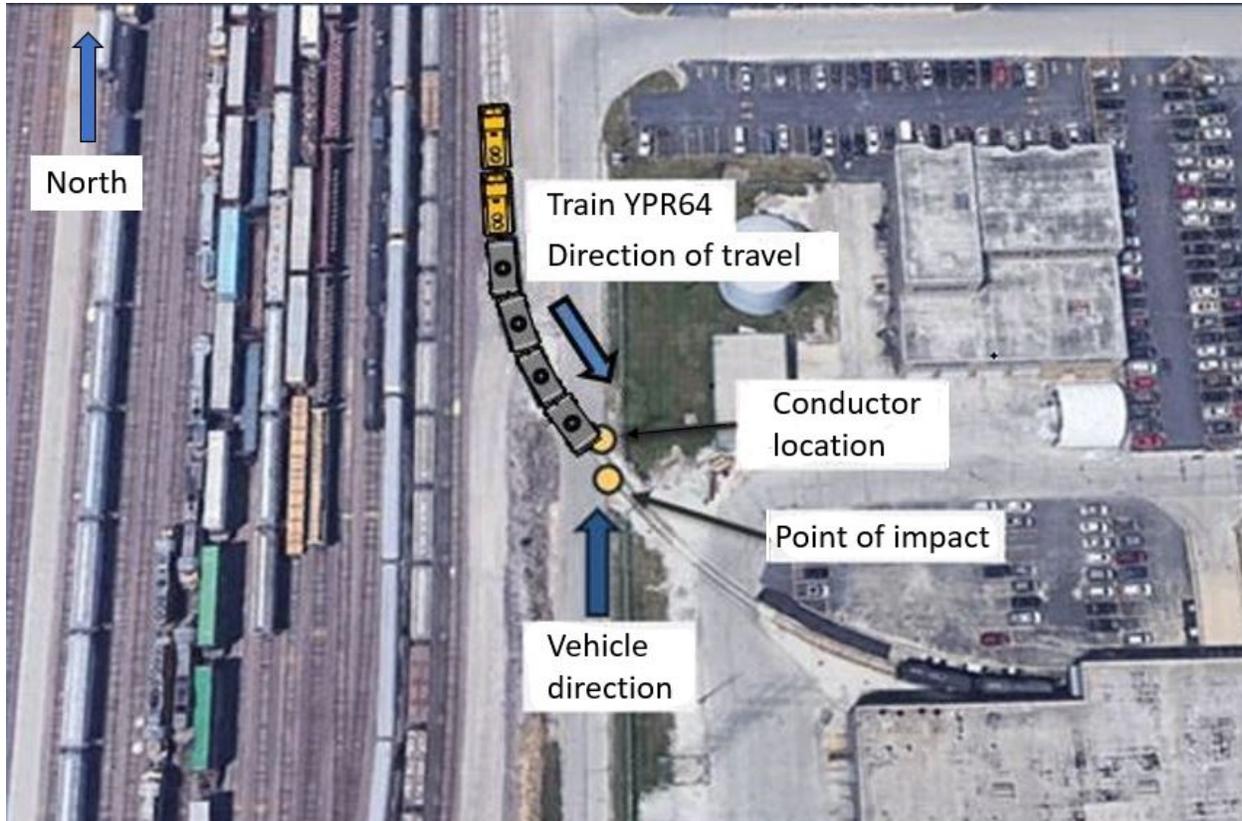
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<sup>1</sup> (a) All times in this document are local time unless otherwise noted. (b) *Shoving* describes the process of pushing rail cars backward using a locomotive. See UP Operating Rule 6.5 “Shoving Movements” and Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)* 218.99 “Shoving and Pushing Movements” for additional information.



**Figure 1.** Final resting position of the truck and train. (Source: Union Pacific Railroad)

The crew for train YPR64 consisted of a trainee and two remote control locomotive operators (RCO), of which the conductor was one. At the time of the accident, the second RCO was in the cab of the front locomotive, and the trainee was in the cab of the second locomotive. The crew was shoving the train from the yard tracks to the industry tracks of a nearby building. The conductor had been on the opposite side of the rail car from the approaching truck. The rear of the rail car collided with the trailer of the truck. The highway-rail grade crossing where the accident occurred was equipped with crossbucks.<sup>2</sup> Preliminary information acquired from a video surveillance camera that monitored the rail yard indicates that a railroad employee was not on the ground to provide warning at the grade crossing, a violation of UP operating rules.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 2.** Aerial view of the accident scene. (Source: Google Earth)

The National Transportation Safety Board investigation is ongoing. Future investigative activity will focus on UP operating rules and special safety rules regarding highway-rail grade crossings. The conductor had three primary responsibilities: operating the remote-control locomotive, protecting the shoving movement, and providing protection for the public crossing, all while positioned at the rear rail car. Therefore, this investigation will also look at the risks involved in performing multiple duties while operating a remote-control locomotive.

<sup>2</sup> A crossbuck is a sign used to indicate a highway-rail grade crossing. It is composed of two slats of wood or metal of equal length, fastened together on a pole in a saltire formation resembling the letter X.

<sup>3</sup> According to *Union Pacific Railroad General Code of Operating Rules*, subsection 6.32.1 (updated January 23, 2020), “When cars are shoved, kicked or a gravity switch move is made over road crossings at grade, an employee must be on the ground at the crossing to provide warning until crossing is occupied. Make any movement over the crossing only on the employee’s signal.”