ACCIDENT SUMMARY

Train & Truck Crash
On Railroad Right-Of-Way

Oxnard, CA

February 24, 2015 at 5:44 a.m. PDT

HWY15MH006
(3 Pages)

Accident Summary

At about 5:44 on Tuesday, Feb 24, 2015 a Metrolink Commuter train (train) with 46 passengers and 3 crew members impacted a 2005 Ford F450 utility service truck that was towing a 2-axle utility trailer, truck) about 80 feet prior to a grade crossing intersection with S. Rice Avenue in Oxnard, CA, fatally injuring the senior engineer and injuring 31 passengers and 2 crew.

The train had departed from East Ventura County and was enroute to Los Angeles, CA. The train had a three-person crew; a senior engineer, an engineer-in-training, and a conductor. Train #102 consisted of 4 cars; a cab/coach car #645[1] at the lead-end of the train, which was coupled to three coach cars, comprised of car #206[2], car #211[3], and car #263[4], respectively, and an unoccupied locomotive #870[5] that was located at the rear of the train.

Prior to the impact, the driver of the truck was traveling southbound on S. Rice Avenue and was approaching the intersection of E. 5th Street. Approximately 55 feet before the intersection, the driver of the truck encountered the railroad grade crossing #745855H, consisting of a protected highway-railroad at-grade crossing, which was marked by a combination of warning lights, gates, signs, and pavement markings.

The truck driver had intended to turn right (westbound) at the intersection of S. Rice Avenue and proceed west on E. 5th Street. However the truck driver inadvertently turned his vehicle to the right and entered the railroad track right-of-way instead of turning right onto on E. 5th Street. Since the train had not yet approached the grade crossing, the crossing's active warning devices, comprised of gates and flashing lights, were not activated.

The truck continued traveling westbound on the railroad right-of-way partially on the railroad tracks. After traveling approximately 80-feet west from the nearest curb line of E. Rice Avenue, the truck became lodged[6] on the southernmost rail of the track[7] and the driver exited the truck and abandoned it on the railroad track[8]; the truck's headlights were on [illuminated], the hazard lights were flashing, and the driver-side door was in the open position.

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[1] Cab/coach car #645 (which is also referred to as a Cab-Control Car) was manufactured by Hyundai-Rotem, and had a 121-passenger capacity.
[2] Coach car #206 was manufactured by Bombardier, and had a 141-passenger capacity.
[3] Coach car #211 was manufactured by Hyundai-Rotem, and had a 132-passenger capacity.
[4] Coach car #263 was manufactured by Hyundai-Rotem, and had a 132-passenger capacity.
[5] Locomotive #870 was manufactured by the Electro-Motive Division (EMD) of the General Motors Corporation.
[6] Also referred to as "high-centered"
[7] No determination could be made as to how long (what time interval) that the truck was positioned on the track
[8] Emergency responders determined that the truck cab, which was found in a severely crushed condition, was unoccupied when they found it (and thus, obviously, was unoccupied at the time of the collision)

Both the engineer-in-training and the senior engineer were in the cab-control car of Train #102. The engineer-in-training was operating the train and the senior engineer was monitoring. The conductor was tending to his duties with the passengers that were on-board. As the train approached the S. Rice Avenue grade crossing the engineer-in-training began to sound the train horn as required[9], which occurred at or before the whistle board located approximately ¼ mile west of the grade crossing.

While sounding the train horn, the engineer-in-training noticed something ahead that appeared to be on the tracks, and placed the train into emergency braking. About eight (8) seconds later the train collided with the truck and utility trailer. A post-collision fire ensued on the pavement of the grade crossing, in which the utility trailer was consumed by the fire. A portion of the utility trailer came to rest proximate to the grade crossing, and most of the truck was carried eastward along the track, in which the remnants of the truck came to rest to the east of the grade crossing, on the south side of the track-bed. During the collision sequence, all four (4) of the coach cars derailed, in which three (3) of the coach cars overturned and came to rest on their sides.[10] The locomotive at the rear of the train did not derail.

A 1998 Toyota Camry that had stopped at the active grade crossing, at the moment of the collision, facing northbound on S. Rice Avenue, was struck by debris from the collision; the sole occupant of the vehicle was not injured. Several of the warning devices located at the grade crossing, and several hundred feet of railroad track were damaged in the event.

Of the 46 passengers on-board the train, a total of 31 passengers were transported to local hospitals, both by local ambulance, and subsequent self-transported, in which injuries of varying degree were reported. No passenger fatalities were identified. The senior engineer, engineer-in-training, and the conductor received injuries ranging from minor to serious. Seven days after the event, the engineer died from the injuries sustained during the crash.

END OF SUMMARY

[9] Pursuant to Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulation

[10] Coach cars #645, #202, and #211 derailed and overturned; coach car #263 and locomotive #870 also derailed, but remained upright.