

January 17, 2017; 5:55 p.m. MST.

Here is what I have learned after interviewing the Roadmaster Chuck Oleson, Track Inspector Dennis Stirmel, and Track Inspector Rodney Huber.

Deceased: Doug Schmitz, 39 years of service, Truck Driver at Edgemont, SD.

Deceased: Richard Lessert, Track Foreman Edgemont, SD., 10 years of service.

Crew member: Stan Mitchell, Trackman Edgemont, SD., 36 years of service. (witness)

Interviewee: BNSF Roadmaster Chuck Oleson

The Edgemont Section crew consisted of the above three men on 1-17-2017.

The Newcastle Roadmaster, Chuck Oleson was in Scottsbluff, NE. attending a staff/training meeting this morning and did not talk to the Edgemont Section crew at the beginning of their shift. He did talk to the crew at 9:12 a.m. to discuss a DOT issue for Truck Drive Schmitz. It was a paperwork issue. Nothing accident related.

However, Track Inspector, Dennis Stirmel, who works out of Newcastle, WY. did talk to the train dispatcher to check on a work window for the day. At that time the dispatcher informed Mr. Stirmel that operating planned to move a large cut of auto racks off the wye track in Edgemont. Knowing this the Section crew went to wye track where the auto racks were parked to check that the crossings were clear for the move. At least one crossing had to be cleaned. At that point the section crew apparently went to check the west leg of the wye switch. The switch had been used earlier in the morning in order to get one locomotive in to move the auto racks.

It is unclear exactly what happened after the crew arrived at the switch. This switch is an electric lock switch and was lined for main track No. 1 and apparently never lined for the wye after the Section Crew arrived.

The only information about what happened was related to the Roadmaster when he talked to Mr. Mitchell.

Mitchell said they were only at the wye switch for less than a minute when the accident occurred. Apparently, Mr. Schmitz was to be the lookout and Mr. Lessert and Mr. Mitchell would do the needed work. Mr. Mitchell stated to the Roadmaster via a phone call that he went to the truck to get a shovel when the accident occurred.

That was about the end of the conversation as Mr. Mitchell was pretty choked up. Mr. Mitchell had already left the property when the Roadmaster talked to Mr. Mitchell. There are no other witnesses to the accident. Mr. Mitchell was picked up by his wife in Hot Springs, SD and was already back at his home in Rapid City, SD.

The recorded speed of the train at the time of accident was 35 mph. The lead engine had a recorder and there is video of the accident. The BNSF has the recording and have been instructed to secure it. The train is still on track and will not be moved until the BNSF is given the okay to do so.

Interviewee: Chuck Oleson _____

BNSF Witness to Interview: Doreen Powers _____

Interviewer: Craig C. Clarke (Safety Inspector: _____