



National Transportation Safety Board

IIC Factual Report

Film Crew Trespassing on CSX Right-of-Way

Accident No.: DCA14FR005
Location: Jesup, Georgia
Date: February 20, 2014
Time: 4:30 p.m. eastern standard time
Train: Q12519
Railroad: CSX Transportation
Property Damage: \$0
Injuries: 6
Fatalities: 1

On February 20, 2014, about 4:30 p.m. eastern standard time, northbound CSX Transportation (CSX) freight train Q12519 struck a film crew and a bed on a railroad bridge near Jesup, Georgia.¹ At the time of accident, the film crew was beginning to film on the bridge. One person was killed, and six others were transported to hospitals.

The train, operating on a single main track, consisted of two locomotives and 37 cars. The accident occurred on the CSX Nahunta Subdivision (milepost A543.7) on a railroad bridge that crosses the Altamaha River. At the time of the accident, the train was traveling about 56 mph. The maximum authorized train speed was 70 mph.

The sky was clear, and the temperature was 80° F.

Parties to the investigation are the Federal Railroad Administration, CSX Transportation, and the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers.

¹ Times in this report are eastern standard time.

Film Crew Struck by a CSX Freight Train



Figure 1. Railroad bridge over the Altamaha River. (Photo by CSX)

In January 2014, a location manager for a film production company² called CSX to request permission to film on CSX property. In an email dated January 27, 2014, CSX denied this request and stated:

In accordance with our company protocol, CSX does not permit filming on our property. This is based on concern for the safety of those accessing and working on our railroad, security considerations, and our commitment to ensuring on-schedule train operations for the customers we serve.³

On February 7, 2014, film production personnel visited the area surrounding the Altamaha River railroad bridge to scout the site to determine if it would serve as a film location for a scene in a documentary film. The particular scene including filming a person dreaming in a bed on the railroad tracks. The executive producer/unit production manager, the first-assistant director, the director of photography, the production designer, and the location manager attended the location scout.

The CSX main track passes through private property owned by Rayonier, Inc. A communications manager from Rayonier Inc. escorted the production company personnel onto Rayonier's property surrounding the railroad track and bridge to view the site. According to the communications manager, the production company personnel had Rayonier's permission to be on its property. However, this permission did not apply to the adjacent railroad right-of-way owned by CSX.

² Companies involved with the production included Film Allman, LLC; Unclaimed Freight Productions; and, Meddin Studios, LLC.

³ In an NTSB interview, the location manager acknowledged that he received this email.

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On February 14, 2014, the production company location manager⁴ sent an email to a CSX communications director to request permission to access and film on CSX tracks near the Altamaha river bridge. The Rayonier communications manager was included on this email. The email stated in part:

We would like permission to access CSX tracks with 5 people and no vehicles on Thursday February 20, 2014 for 20 minutes between 4 PM and 6 PM...We are simply filming two actors staring at each other from approximately 50 yards apart. We will not be attaching anything to the tracks or ties. The tracks are located on Rayonier's Jessup Mill location, 4470 Savannah Hwy. Jessup, GA 31545. The site we're requesting is just south of the Doctor Town Trestle on the Altamaha river.

The film production company did not specifically request permission to film on the bridge. On February 20, 2014, at 10:48 a.m., the CSX communications director responded to the production company location manager and the Rayonier communications manager in an email. Again the CSX denied access to their property, and the email stated in part:⁵

Unfortunately, CSX will not be able to support your request. As discussed,⁶ I do suggest that you reach out to the short line railroads as they routinely support filming...

According to the production company location manager, he forwarded the email to the producer, the director, the writer, the production designer, and a location assistant; and, there was some discussion at their studio about if and how to proceed.⁷ During this discussion at the studio, the location manager reported that he made these other individuals aware of CSX's refusal to grant permission for filming on CSX property. According to the location manager, the director indicated that the filming would proceed without CSX's permission. As a result, the location manager said that he refused to be a part of the film shoot.

⁴ The location manager also coordinated with the Rayonier communications manager.

⁵ According to the Rayonier communications manager, she deleted this email without reading it because a recall message was sent for a previous email from the CSX communications director.

⁶ After the location scout, the location manager and the CSX communications director discussed the request in a telephone conversation. The location manager was asked to request permission in writing.

⁷ The NTSB interviewed five people associated with the production company and one Rayonier employee. The information about the events leading up to the accident are inconsistent. See the public docket for five interview summaries and one interview transcript.

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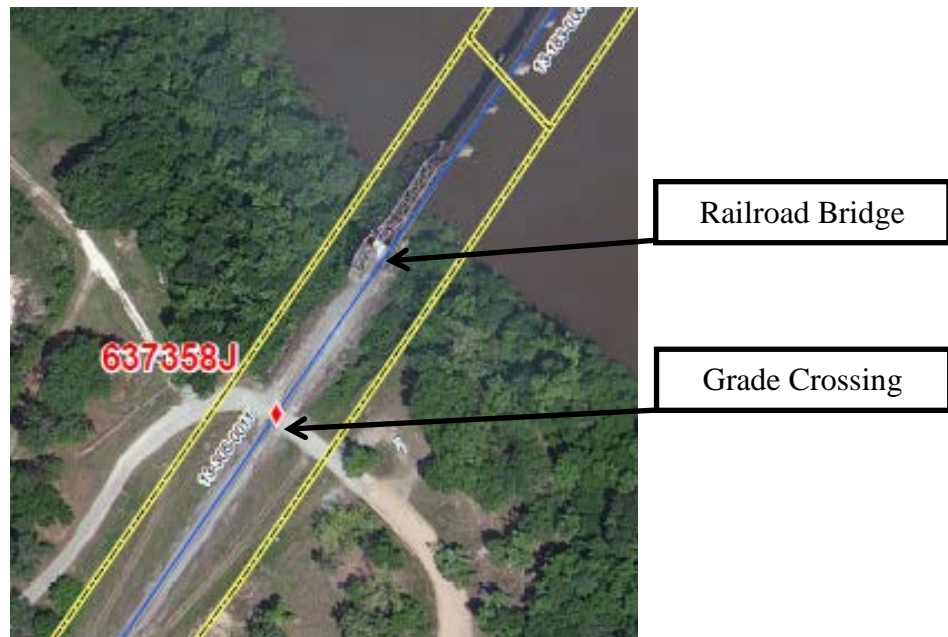


Figure 2. An overhead view of the highway-rail grade crossing and railroad bridge. (Photo by CSX).

On the afternoon of February 20, 2014, after arriving on the Rayonier property, the first assistant director reported that she gave a briefing to the film crew in which she told them that two trains were going to pass by their location.⁸ After the film crew's arrival, two northbound trains passed by. Two assistants with radios were stationed near a highway-rail grade crossing south of the railroad bridge to prevent people from entering the filming location. The production company film crew began filming next to the railroad right-of-way and bridge. Subsequently, some of the film crew moved onto the railroad bridge with the bed and camera equipment to begin to film the planned scene. While they were on the bridge, they heard over a radio a film crew person yell, "Train!" Some of the crew ran off of the bridge, and some of the crew stayed on the bridge's walkway and tried to remove the bed from the tracks. The bed fell onto the tracks, the train hit the bed, and debris stuck some people on the bridge walkway.

⁸ According to the first assistant director, an assistant to the location manager gave her this information. As of the date of this report, the original source of this information is not known.

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Figure 3. Walkway on the east side of the trestle and the remnants of the bed after being struck by the train. (Photo by CSX).