

FE-2012-01

Person Interviewed: Gerald E. Hollinger  
Machine Superintendent  
Loram Maintenance of Way

Place of Interview: La Quinta Hotel,  
Amarillo, TX

Date of Interview: January 10, 2012

Interviewed by: George P. Rasco,  
Railroad Safety Inspector/S&TC

Others Present: Stacy Stokes, FRA MP&E Inspector  
Robert Carlson, Loram Maintenance of Way

In an interview regarding the employee fatality that occurred on January 9, 2012, on the BNSF tracks, Kansas Division, Hereford Subdivision near mile post 552.3, in Amarillo, Texas, Mr. Hollinger stated in substance, the following:

Mr. Hollinger began by stating that he is 50 years of age and resides in Potsdam, New York. He began his employment 25 years ago as a machine operator. He has worked as a Machine Superintendent for the last 15 years.

Mr. Hollinger stated he and the rest of the Loram J-6 grinder crew had met at about 6 am, left the hotel and had arrived at the J-6 grinding machine at about 6:20 am. After their job briefing they inspected the machine. They started the J-6 grinder to allow it to warm up as it was a cold morning. After waiting a while they put antifreeze into the machine water tank and waited for their BNSF employee to arrive. The BNSF employee arrived at about 7:30 AM. After some time a BNSF Roadmaster and a second BNSF officer arrived. They along with the other BNSF employee and the Loram employees conducted a job safety briefing. The briefing included a discussion of the rule of the week, a stop test and brake test of the equipment as well as a decision to use hand signals. After the briefing the BNSF supervisors left. Mr. Hollinger stated they waited to leave the yard due to train traffic until about 10:00 or 10:30 AM. While leaving the yard the BNSF employee threw the switches and derails as they entered lead track 1805. Mr. Hollinger stated that he was seated in the operator seat operating the J-6 grinder as they approached the derail at the east end of the 1805 track near East Tower. He stopped the grinder about 50 feet from the derail. The BNSF employee contacted the train dispatcher on his cell phone and got track and time allowing them to enter the main track. The cell phone was on speaker so the crew was able to hear and make a copy of the authority. Once the dispatcher had lined the main track switch the BNSF employee dismounted the grinder, unlocked and removed the derail. The BNSF employee flagged them to move on past the derail by hand signal. Mr. Hollinger then moved the grinder east past the derail. The BNSF employee knocked on the cab and yelled he had discovered an oil leak. Mr. Hollinger and his general laborer dismounted and inspected the leak. They all agreed they would have to

return the machine to the yard track for repair. As he returned to the operator seat he saw the BNSF employee give a hand signal to back up. He sounded the whistle two times then started the J-6 grinder moving back west. Looking in his monitor as they started moving he saw the BNSF employee come into view. He was between the tracks with his back to the grinder. He heard the general laborer who was on the west end of the machine yelling for the BNSF employee to get out of the way. Mr. Hollinger immediately began stopping the machine. Once the machine stopped he jumped to the ground and saw the BNSF employee under the machine. The general laborer had jumped down and was checking for a pulse. Mr. Hollinger returned to the cab and tried to get the 911 button to work on the radio. Unable to get the 911 buttons to work he began yelling into the mike "Emergency, Emergency, Emergency." A train in the area heard the request and contacted the dispatcher. The dispatcher and Mr. Hollinger were then able to determine their location for the emergency responders. The local police arrived and were quickly followed by the ambulance and local fire department. Mr. Hollinger then contacted a forth Loram employee that was in town getting parts and told him of the accident. When the other Loram employee arrived Mr. Hollinger left the immediate area of the J-6 grinder. After a couple of hours he was taken for a drug test then returned to his hotel.

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