



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Office of Research and Engineering
Washington, DC

Medical Factual Report

August 22, 2016

Mary Pat McKay, MD, MPH
Chief Medical Officer

A. ACCIDENT: DCA16FR003; New Orleans, LA

On February 20, 2016, at approximately 6:10 a.m., Norfolk Southern (NS) Train #298 struck and fatally injured a NS Terminal Trainmaster on main track #1 at milepost 186 of the NE Subdivision, Alabama Division. The visibility conditions at the time of the accident were very poor with low lying fog.

B. GROUP IDENTIFICATION

No group was formed for the medical evaluation in this accident.

C. DETAILS OF INVESTIGATION

1. Purpose

This investigation was performed to evaluate the deceased trainmaster for any medical conditions, the use of any medications/illicit drugs, and the presence of any toxins.

2. Methods

The NS employee medical records, autopsy report, coroner's photos, FRA toxicology results, FAA Bioaeronautical toxicology results, and the investigator's reports were reviewed for the deceased 25 year old male trainmaster.

NS employee medical records

The trainmaster had undergone a pre-employment medical examination for Norfolk Southern on 7/17/2014. The examination included a complete medical history, vital signs, height and weight determination, vision and hearing testing, and a complete physical examination. At that time he reported intermittent symptoms of seasonal allergies, occasionally treated with Zyrtec. Zyrtec is a common name for cetirizine, a sedating antihistamine that carries these warnings: "When using this product:

drowsiness may occur; avoid alcoholic drinks; alcohol, sedatives, and tranquilizers may increase drowsiness; be careful when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery.”¹ In addition, he had a distant history of a thumb fracture, a period of back pain at age 10, and a work related right shoulder injury in 2011 that resolved with physical therapy. Records from the shoulder injury were requested and reviewed by NS and the trainmaster was determined to be fit for duty as of 9/3/2014. No other occupational medical evaluations had been performed at NS.

Autopsy

According to the coroner’s report from the Orleans Parish Coroner’s Office, the cause of death for the trainmaster was multiple acute blunt force injuries and the manner of death was accident. He suffered a 12 cm open fracture of the left parietal skull, an open, non-displaced fracture of the right angle of the mandible, displaced fractures of all ribs along the sides of the spine with fracture fragments pushed into the thorax to the depth of the pulmonary hila, an unstable fracture of the T2 vertebrae, multiple liver lacerations, a closed dislocation of the right ankle, and multiple contusions and abrasions.

No significant natural disease was identified at autopsy.

Toxicology

Toxicology testing performed by the FAA’s Bioaeronautical Research Laboratory did not identify any tested-for substances in the trainmaster’s blood. Post mortem toxicology testing performed by the St. Louis University Laboratory also did not identify any tested-for substances in the trainmaster’s blood.

D. SUMMARY OF MEDICAL FINDINGS

The 25 year old male trainmaster had a history of seasonal allergies and some orthopedic injuries and had reported occasional use of Zyrtec. The autopsy identified a 12 cm open fracture of the left parietal skull, an open, non-displaced fracture of the right angle of the mandible, displaced fractures of all ribs along the sides of the spine with fracture fragments pushed into the thorax to the depth of the pulmonary hila, an unstable fracture of the T2 vertebrae, multiple liver lacerations, a closed dislocation of the right ankle, and multiple contusions and abrasions. Extensive toxicology testing in two laboratories was negative.

References

¹ National Institutes of Health. US National Library of Medicine. Zyrtec. <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=b165db38-b302-4220-8627-77cb07bb078c> Accessed 7/5/2016.