

Issued: December 13, 2021

Preliminary Report: RRD22LR002

This is preliminary information, subject to change, and may contain errors. Any errors in this report will be corrected when the final report has been completed.

Railroad Preliminary Report

Houston, TX

October 29, 2021

On October 29, 2021, about 4:02 a.m. local time, a Watco Dock and Rail (WATX) conductor from Watco train 202 was fatally injured when the train collided with a combination vehicle as they simultaneously entered a highway railroad grade crossing in the Greens Port Industrial Park in Houston, Texas.¹ The conductor was riding on the westside of the end platform of the leading railcar during a shoving movement when he was fatally injured between the railcar and the combination vehicle during the collision.²

Train 202 consisted of two locomotives and 25 railcars. Fifteen railcars were hauling gasoline, and 10 railcars were hauling diesel fuel. The crew consisted of a locomotive engineer and two conductors. The combination vehicle was a truck tractor with a cargo tank semi-trailer that was empty at the time of the collision. Preliminary information from security surveillance camera footage obtained from a local business indicates that the driver of the combination vehicle was traveling south on Federal Road, turned east into the industrial park, and proceeded through the highway railroad grade crossing without stopping. (See figure.) The train was traveling about 7 mph restricted to a maximum authorized speed of 10 mph. The highway railroad grade crossing where the accident occurred was equipped with a warning sign that faced the Federal Road entrance.

¹ Watco Dock and Rail LLC (WATX) is a subsidiary of Watco Companies LLC (WATCO).

² A *shoving movement* is the process of pushing railcars or a train from the rear.

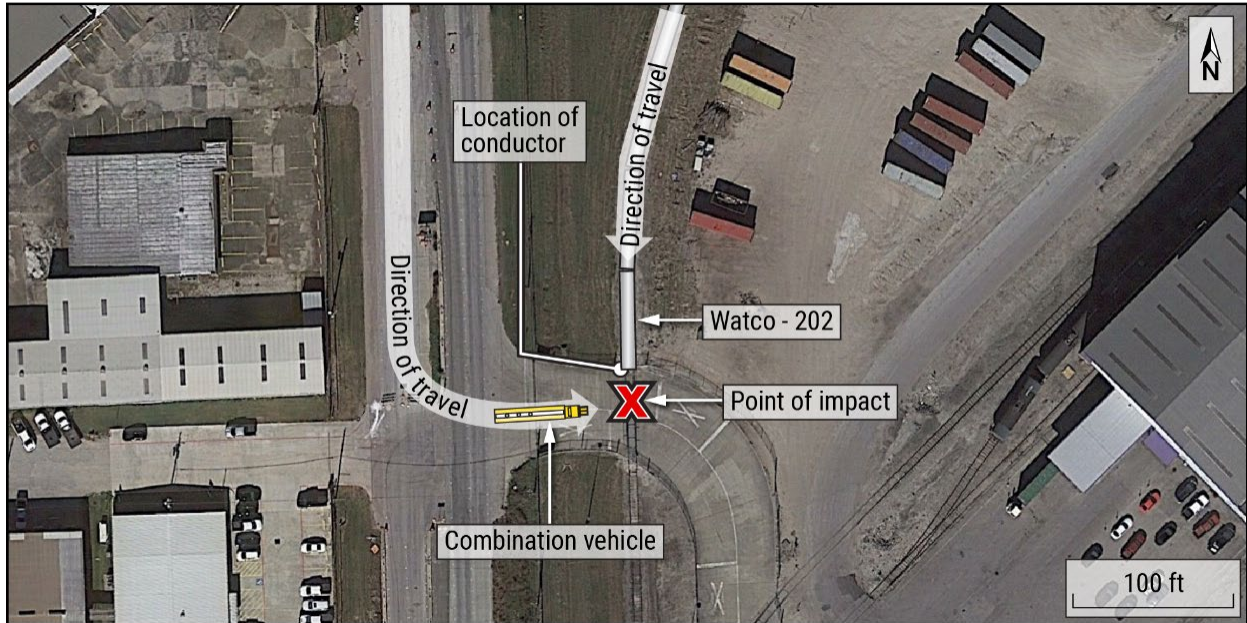


Figure. Aerial view of the accident scene.

While on scene, National Transportation Safety Board investigators conducted interviews, observed surveillance camera footage obtained from a local business, reviewed event recorder data obtained from the lead locomotive, obtained inward- and outward-facing image recorder footage and electronic logging device data from the combination vehicle, and conducted sight distance observations at the highway railroad grade crossing.

The National Transportation Safety Board investigation is ongoing. Future investigative activity will focus on operational rules for highway railroad grade crossings, methods of protection at the highway railroad grade crossings, and requirements for combination vehicles making movements through those crossings.

Parties to the investigation include the Federal Railroad Administration and WATX.