



PRELIMINARY REPORT

RAILROAD

Housatonic Railroad Employee Fatality

North Canaan, Connecticut

October 14, 2020

RRD21LR002

The information in this report is preliminary and will be either supplemented or corrected during the course of the investigation.

On October 14, 2020, about 2:50 p.m. local time in North Canaan, Connecticut, a Housatonic Railroad (Housatonic) employee with 21 years of railroad service was struck and killed by a rail-mounted rubber-tire track excavator traveling in an out-of-service track.¹ At the time of the accident, the employee was walking in the foul between the out-of-service track and a new switch panel that had been positioned to the side of the track for installation.² (See figure 1.) At the time of the accident, the sky was clear with few clouds, the temperature was 67°F, and wind was variable at 1 mph.

¹ (a) *Rail-mounted* means that the machine was mounted and traveling on railroad tracks. (b) A *track excavator* is a machine with a digging bucket used to move and grade earth material.

² *Foul* means the placement of an individual or an item of equipment in such proximity to the track that there is a probability of being struck by a moving train or on-track equipment.



Figure 1. Location of the accident showing the excavator.

Prior to the accident, the employee, who was also the roadway worker in-charge of the out-of-service track had just completed taking measurements of the new switch panel with another Housatonic employee.³ He then walked back to a small clearing area near the rear of the switch panel to have a work-related conversation with the track excavator operator. After the conversation, the operator started moving the track excavator forward at the same time the employee starting walking in the same direction as the equipment. As the equipment continued forward, the employee was pinned between the switch panel ties and the moving track excavator.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigation is ongoing. Future investigative activity will focus on Housatonic's rules and on-track safety when employees are working near moving and working equipment.

No parties were established; however, the Housatonic Railroad, the Federal Railroad Administration, and the Connecticut State Police are cooperating with the NTSB in the investigation.

³ *Roadway worker-in-charge* means a roadway worker who is qualified in accordance with Federal Railroad Administration regulations to establish on-track safety for themselves, roadway workgroups, and lone workers.