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Preliminary Report: RRD23FR016

This information is preliminary and subject to change.

CSX Transportation Conductor Trainee Fatality

Cumberland, Maryland
August 6, 2023

On August 6, about 11:42 p.m. local time, a CSX Transportation (CSX) conductor trainee was fatally injured during a shoving movement at the CSX railroad yard in Cumberland, Maryland.¹ The conductor trainee was riding on the side of an intermodal railcar on CSX train I13706 that was moving eastward on the track when he struck the handrail of a standing locomotive on an adjacent track.² (See figure 1.) He was taken to a nearby hospital, where he later died. Visibility conditions at the time of the accident were dark and clear, and the temperature was 73°F.

¹ (a) All times in this report are local times. (b) *Shoving* is the process of using a locomotive to push railcars or a train from the rear.

² An *intermodal railcar* is designed to carry shipping containers used in intermodal freight transportation.



Figure 1. Aerial view of the accident scene. (Source: CSX.)

The crew of train I13706 consisted of an engineer, a conductor, and the conductor trainee. The train was composed of two locomotives and three loaded articulated intermodal railcars.³

Preliminary information indicates the conductor was directing the eastward shoving movement by radio to the engineer, who was in the locomotive cab. The conductor was positioned at the leading end of the movement, riding on a ladder on the south side of the final railcar in the consist. The conductor trainee was riding on the next ladder back on the same side of the same railcar. As the train reversed down the track at approximately 9 mph, it approached three locomotives parked on an adjacent track, and the accident occurred. Postaccident measurements taken by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) on scene indicated about 7 inches of clearance between train I13706 and the standing locomotives. (See figure 2.)

³ The intermodal railcars in this accident were each made up of three to five connected single-unit railcars; all railcars in the accident train were loaded with shipping containers.



Figure 2. Clearance between the intermodal car and standing locomotives. (Photo: CSX.)

While on scene, NTSB investigators examined data from the locomotive's event recorder and image recorders; reviewed radio recordings, photographs, and drone-recorded video footage; completed interviews; and conducted accident reenactments to understand the position of the conductor trainee and the close clearance of the standing locomotives.

The NTSB's investigation is ongoing. Future investigative activity will focus on CSX employee training and close clearance identification practices throughout the railroad industry.

As a result of this accident, on August 11, 2023, the Switching Operations Fatalities Analysis Working Group issued an alert advising railroad employees to remain vigilant when mentoring inexperienced employees and to conduct job briefings whenever a job changes.⁴ On August 16, 2023, the Federal Railroad Administration issued Safety Bulletin 2023-05: Shoving Movement Close Clearance Fatality, which urges railroads to review employee training programs that address

⁴ The Switching Operations Fatalities Analysis Working Group alert can be found at <https://railroads.dot.gov/elibrary/sofa-alert-august-11-2023>.

riding equipment in close-clearance situations and to consider marking close or no clearance areas with highly visible signs.⁵

Parties to the investigation include the Federal Railroad Administration; the Maryland Department of Labor; CSX; the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen; and the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers—Transportation Division.

⁵ The safety bulletin can be found at <https://railroads.dot.gov/elibrary/safety-bulletin-2023-05-shoving-movement-close-clearance-fatality>.