

Fatality Analysis of Maintenance-of-way  
Employees and Signalmen



March 28, 2014

---

***Dedication:***

*The FAMES Committee dedicates its efforts to all roadway workers who have lost their lives in the performance of duty and to the families, loved ones, and coworkers they have left behind.*

# Fatalities on Adjacent Tracks

***Mission Statement:***

*The Mission of the Fatality Analysis of Maintenance-of-way Employees and Signalmen (FAMES) Committee is to analyze all fatalities and selected related incidents in order to make recommendations to reduce the risk of future occurrences and eliminate fatalities to roadway workers.*

---

## **Fatalities on Adjacent Tracks**

*Following the implementation of the Roadway Worker Protection (RWP) Rule in 1997, there have been a total of 42 fatal RWP accidents, in which 44 roadway workers have perished, as of January 1, 2012. The FAMES Committee was able to obtain data to analyze 39 fatal RWP accidents, which accounted for 41 of the 44 fatalities. The FAMES Committee analysis is based on the available data.*

In 11 of the 29 cases where an adjacent track was present, the fatal accident occurred on the adjacent track immediately next to where the work was actually being performed. FAMES classified these 11 accidents as adjacent track fatalities. The available data indicates that all 11 adjacent track fatalities occurred on controlled track where track centers were 19 feet or less.

### **Findings:**

- Of the 11 adjacent track fatalities:
  - Eight fatalities (73%) — no protection had been established on the adjacent track;
  - Two fatalities (18%) — exclusive track occupancy was the form of protection established on the adjacent track. Trains were authorized to move on the adjacent track without the fatally injured roadway workers being notified; and
  - One fatality (9%) — train approach warning (watchman/lookout) protection was the form of on-track safety provided for the adjacent track. The watchman/lookout was the fatally injured employee.
- In 10 of the 11 (91%) adjacent track fatalities, Roadway Maintenance Machines (RMMs) were present and in use on the track where work was being performed.
- In 6 of 11 (55%) adjacent track fatalities, roadway workers were struck while conducting training or observing surfacing operations.
  - Four were surfacing gang foremen observing the operation from the ground.
  - Two were trainers struck while training tamper operators.
- In at least 7 of the 11 adjacent track fatalities, the affected roadway work groups consisted of four or fewer roadway workers.

## Recommendations:

- Establish adjacent track protection in accordance with FRA regulations, carrier rules, and as safety conditions dictate.
- Never use the adjacent track to walk around or observe work unless on-track safety has been established on the adjacent track.
- During the on-track safety briefing:
  - Identify if RMMs will be present and take actions to manage any additional risks associated with their presence.
  - Recognize that RMMs introduce noise, reduce visibility, present a striking hazard, and add to the complexity of the work being performed, especially where adjacent tracks are present.
  - Communicate the type of on-track safety in effect, notification and warning procedures for approaching movements, and operating procedures for the adjacent track.
  - Designate place(s) of safety for roadway workers to occupy upon the approach of a train and include specific methods for communicating when it is safe for roadway workers to resume work.
- Prior to authorizing movements through working limits on an adjacent track, the Employee-in-Charge must notify roadway workers and receive verification that personnel and equipment are clear of that adjacent track.
- Roadway work groups, *especially small surfacing gangs*, should have a heightened awareness of adjacent track risks when working in multi-track territory.
- As a supplement to on-track safety protection, RMM operators should sound their horn whenever they observe movements approaching on the adjacent track.
- When using Train Approach Warning, watchmen/lookouts must focus their sole attention to the detection of approaching movements.
- If you see someone fouling an unprotected track, adjacent or not, tell them to move to the clear.

---

*The FAMES Committee consists of safety representatives from a cross section of rail labor, railroad management, and federal regulators. FAMES is a continuous improvement process that relies on the candid sharing of available data and the views of its participants. To enable the process, FAMES explicitly refrains from making any findings regarding whether any past or present practice or protocol satisfies any legal duty or standard of care.*

*The views, opinions, and recommendations contained in this report are those of the FAMES Committee and do not necessarily represent the views, opinions, or recommendations of any specific railroad, labor organization, or governmental agency.*

---