

Amtrak trains strike 2 more, killing man in New Hampshire

Crew hit by Acela in R.I. had been on tracks hours



A contractor's body was covered before rescue officials removed it Thursday just north of downtown Providence. (CHRISTINE HOCHKEPPEL FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE)

By James Vaznis

Globe Staff / [March 15, 2008](#)

An Amtrak train struck and killed a person in Claremont, N.H., last night, in the second fatality in New England involving Amtrak trains in two days.

A train bound for St. Albans, Vt., killed a man who was on the tracks leading to the Claremont station at around 7, according to police. Police found Douglas McGuire, 57, of Claremont dead upon arrival.

The fatality occurred as investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board began to take measurements, schedule interviews, and analyze the event recorder on the locomotive of the Amtrak train involved in a fatal crash Thursday in Providence.

In a third accident, a 69-year-old woman was hit by an Acela train yesterday in Stonington, Conn., while walking her yellow Labrador on the tracks about 8:30 a.m. The woman suffered serious injuries to her arm, and the dog was killed.

Karina Romero, an Amtrak spokeswoman, said the company is very concerned about the number of accidents.

"Safety is a priority for us, and we will definitely look into this," she said.

Claremont police, the Sullivan County attorney's office, and Amtrak are investigating the circumstances of McGuire's death. His body was discovered on tracks that run alongside a road in a woody area near a shuttered manufacturing plant, about a half mile south of the Claremont station.

Claremont is a struggling mill city of about 13,000 located in western New Hampshire some 55 miles north of the Massachusetts line.

Mayor Deborah Cutts said police told her that the train conductor spotted the man sitting on the tracks. The conductor blew the whistle, and the man stood up. But then, she said, the man sat down again.

"It's very, very tragic," she said.

Two of the 68 passengers said in cellphone conversations last night that the train's sudden stop took them by surprise and that they heard no whistle blowing. The two passengers were in a car near the front of the train.

"I thought we were slowing down to let a train go by, but then it got really quiet," said Jason Bodnar, 35, who was traveling from New York City with his 5-year-old daughter for some skiing.

The train remained stationary for nearly three hours before finally arriving at the Claremont station, where passengers boarded buses to finish the journey. The train had originally left Washington, D.C., at 9:30 a.m. and was already running an hour late before the accident occurred.

In Providence, the probe of an accident in which a contractor was killed and two Amtrak employees were injured, is expected to last nine months to a year. An investigation team arrived at the accident site yesterday.

Ruben Payan, the leader of the team, said the three-man crew had been working on the tracks for several hours before the fatal crash and were in contact with a railroad dispatcher in Boston. He said the exact communication from the three men who were hit had not yet been determined.

At a press conference yesterday, he would not speculate about the cause of the accident.

One of the survivors, Julius M. Chisholm of Boston, said he was "glad to be alive," according to a relative reached by phone who declined to give a name.

"I almost died," said Chisholm, who did not suffer any broken bones, but was in a Rhode Island hospital for observation, according to the relative. "I don't know what happened. I just saw this train coming and just jumped out of the way."

Amtrak did not release the name of the other employee, who suffered serious injuries.

The contractor, Gary Graves, 65, lived in Delaware and died from multiple blunt traumatic injuries, according to the Rhode Island medical examiner. Graves was a retired Amtrak employee who worked out of the Philadelphia office of HNTB Corp., a national architecture and engineering company.

"Our firm is greatly saddened by the tragic death," HNTB said in a statement. "Our sympathy goes out to Gary's family."

The event recorder, similar to the black box on an airplane, will be shipped to Washington, D.C., where officials will determine the speed of the train, position of the throttle, and whether there was any use of the horn or brakes in the moments before the crash.

The train was traveling through an area with a 55-mile-per-hour speed limit, but it has not yet been determined how fast the Acela was going, Payan said.

Investigators will also try to determine whether the location of the collision, on a bend just north of downtown Providence, played a role in the crash.

"It's a sharp curve; that's all I can say," Payan said. "We'll do our sight distance test to see how much that played into it."

Andrew Ryan and John R. Ellement of the Globe staff contributed to this report.

NTSB begins probe of fatal Acela accident

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By Andrew Ryan, Globe Staff

The work crew hit by a high-speed Acela train in Providence had been on the tracks for several hours Thursday and were in contact with a railroad dispatcher in Boston, a federal investigator said at a press conference this afternoon.

The exact communication from the three men who were hit by the train has not yet been determined as investigators were in the process of transcribing dispatch records, said Ruben Payan, who is leading the probe for the National Transportation Safety Board.

Payan's three-member team arrived on the scene of the fatal accident today and has begun taking measurements, scheduling interviews, and analyzing the locomotive's event recorder, which is similar to a black box on an airplane. The event recorder will be shipped to Washington, D.C., where officials will determine the speed of the train, position of the throttle, and any use of the horn or brakes in the moments before the collision, he said.

Investigators will also try to determine if the location of the collision -- on a bend in the track just north of downtown Providence -- played a role in the crash.

"It's a sharp curve, that's all I can say," Payan said. "We'll do our sight distance test to see how much that played into it."

On Thursday, Acela train number 2154 was heading north in Providence when it struck three workers who were inspecting tracks at 1:15 p.m. A contractor -- Gary Graves -- was killed, and two Amtrak employees were injured.

Graves worked out of the Philadelphia office of HNTB Corp., a national architecture and engineering firm based in Kansas City, Mo. "Our firm is greatly saddened by the tragic death," HNTB said in a statement. "Our sympathy goes out to Gary's family and we offer them our full support during this difficult time."

This morning a relative of one of the survivors of the accident told the Globe that he was "glad to be alive."

Man killed by Amtrak train on Thursday grew up in Brattleboro

Reformer.com

[Monday, March 17](#)

PROVIDENCE, R.I. -- Gary Graves, 65, a Brattleboro native, was killed Thursday when he was struck by an Amtrak train heading to Boston, investigators said.

Graves was a retired employee working for the company as a contractor. He worked for Amtrak for 35 years.

He was raised in Brattleboro, nephew Keith Graves said, and moved to New Jersey in the early '70s. He then moved to Delaware with his wife in 2007 after they retired.

Gary Graves would return as often as possible every five years to attend his BUHS class reunion, his nephew said. Graves graduated in 1961.

Two others were injured in the accident. None of the 168 people on the train were hurt.

The state medical examiner's office said the cause of death was multiple blunt traumatic injuries.