

# Fatality Narrative

## Mechanic Killed When Tunneling Locomotive Crashes \*

**Industry:** Heavy and civil engineering construction  
**Occupation:** Mechanic  
**Task:** Passenger on locomotive  
**Type of Incident:** Train crash

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On February 7, 2007, a mechanic died in a tunneling locomotive crash. The 49-year-old victim had worked with his employer, a heavy and civil engineering construction firm, for almost a month. The victim was working on a project to construct a tunnel for a light rail transit system. He had never driven a locomotive prior to this job and had received limited on the job training. At about 4 a.m. on the day of the incident the victim was working inside the tunnel, when he discovered that he needed to get some parts to complete the job he was working on. He hitched a ride on a 30-ton tunneling locomotive pulling four rail cars containing construction materials that was going out of the tunnel to a staging area. There was no seating for a passenger, so the victim stood beside the operator. The locomotive began to move down an incline and gathered speed on the wet, muddy track. The operator made several attempts to slow it down but the locomotive was going about 50 mph when it came out of the tunnel and crashed into a parked locomotive at the end of the track. The passenger was thrown or jumped from the cab and was fatally injured when he struck a beam. The locomotive operator remained in the cab and received minor injuries.



**Photo:** The site and train after the incident.

### Requirements/Recommendations

(! Indicates items required by code)

- ! Employers are responsible for training and supervising employees operating tunneling locomotives to ensure that they understand how to safely operate the locomotive and are aware of potential hazards.
- ! A competent person must do a pre-shift locomotive inspection to ensure that there are no hazards that could affect the safe operation of the locomotive.
- ! Place stopping devices, such as bumper blocks, at all track dead ends.
- ! Employers are responsible for ongoing clean-up of rail tracks in tunnel passageways. Slippery tracks interfere with locomotive braking and control.
- ! Passengers may only ride in seats designated and designed occupant seating on locomotives.

**State Wide Statistics:** This was the 9<sup>th</sup> out of 76 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2007, and was the 1<sup>st</sup> out of 16 construction-related fatalities.

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SHARP – Promoting Safer, Healthier Workplaces



*\*This bulletin was developed at the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries to alert employers and employees of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State. We encourage you to consider the above information as you make safety decisions for or recommendations to your company or constituency. The information in this notice is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the fatality.*