

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Railroad Accident Brief Report

ATL 97 FR 012
EMPLOYEE FATALITY
SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA
APRIL 24, 1997

On April 24, 1997, at approximately 12:02 a.m., eastern daylight time, a Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) track workman was fatally injured when he was struck by a SEPTA subway train at the 52nd Street Station in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The train was operating west on the eastbound track due to track work. As the train approached the 52nd Street Station the motorman observed two individuals in the track area near the east end of the station platform. The motorman sounded the whistle and placed the train into emergency braking. One of the men fled to the eastbound track, and the other attempted to climb onto the platform but slipped and was fatally injured when he was pinned between the train and the platform. No passengers or crewmembers were injured as a result of the accident. A light rain was falling at the time of the accident.

According to SEPTA's rules, no one may enter the track areas without the permission of the train dispatcher. The workmen failed to obtain the permission from the train dispatcher. The workmen also failed to comply with SEPTA's rules that require employees performing work on or about tracks to carry and display the worker's portable warning signal, which during daylight hours is a whistle sign consisting of a black "W" on a rectangular sign with a black border and at night a flashing yellow lantern. The track workman stated that he did not place any yellow lanterns or banners out for protection. The motorman said that he never passed any work zone lights or flagmen to warn him of persons working on or about the track.

PROBABLE CAUSE

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of this accident was the failure of the two trackmen to obtain permission from the train dispatcher to perform the assigned work, and their failure to properly protect themselves by placing yellow lanterns or banners as required by SEPTA rules. Contributing to the accident was the lack of management oversight to have a program to monitor the performance of track department personnel.

Adopted: August 18, 1998