

Employee Seriously Injured on the Chicago Division

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Dec. 7, 2021

On Dec. 4, a BNSF Conductor was seriously injured while coupling cars in Galesburg Yard (Chicago Division), sustaining a partial amputation to his right ring finger. Our thoughts are with him during his recovery.

Please take time to engage your teams in a Job Safety Briefing (JSB) about this incident and discuss preventive measures to minimize this risk.

While the investigation is still ongoing, this is the preliminary information we know:

At approximately 1:30 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST), the Conductor pinched his right ring finger while making a coupling move in Galesburg Yard bowl classification track 2048. This injury resulted in the amputation of his right ring fingertip.

As we continue to investigate the circumstances that led to this incident, we want to take the opportunity to review several critical factors to ensure all movements are completed safely:

Pinch Points

Pinch points are a common exposure in our workplace, with hand injuries accounting for a large percentage of disabling work-related incidents that occur each year.

- Always be aware of hand placement. Objects such as pin lifters, derails and uncoupling levers create pinch points as they are being operated—keep hands out of the path of travel of such objects.
- Do not attempt manual adjustment of mismatched couplers unless they move when you apply limited effort. If the drawbar does not move with limited force, use an approved alignment device such as a lining bar, car mover pole or pinch bar, or call for mechanical assistance.
- Wear the proper PPE, such as gloves and safety-toe boots, for the task.

Prevent Holiday Distractions

Between Peak Season—our busiest time of the year—and the upcoming holidays, it is important to remain engaged in our work activities. On the railroad, inattention can lead to incidents and injury; we must not allow anything to take our minds off the task at hand. Consider the following types of distractions:

Mental Distractions: Before you arrive at work, think about how you will handle the additional distractions of holiday celebrations, vacations, weekend plans and kids going on winter break.

Deadline Pressures: The desire to complete a job quickly can take our focus off work. Remember that our rules and procedures exist to protect us and following them, even when faced with deadline pressures, is critical to preventing incidents and injuries.

Complacency: Performing a task multiple times improves proficiency but can also create complacency if we become overconfident in our abilities. The easier or more routine a task becomes, the more likely it is that we could drift into “autopilot” mode and lose our situational awareness. Be diligent to ensure we all return home safely.

