

Train crash near Baytown

Human error causes wreck

United Press International
BAYTOWN — Human error was blamed Monday for a railroad accident in which the engineer of a moving train slammed into a line of parked rail cars early Saturday, killing four men.

"We have determined the cause to be the failure of the head end crew (moving car) to take action to stop the train short of the cars that were on the track," said Southern Pacific Transportation Co. spokesman Tony Aleman.

"There was no indication the brakes were applied," he said.

Aleman said the moving train left Baytown about 4 a.m. Saturday. About 5:15 a.m. witnesses said they heard the accident.

Aleman said the train was operating under "yard limit rules," which mandates that a train in the yard must be able to stop within one-half of the distance of the range of vision. For example, if the engineer can see 100 feet ahead, he must be able to stop within 50 feet, Aleman said.

And, he added, no one is permitted to travel at speeds over 20 mph. Officials initially said the train was moving about 20 mph. Before dawn Saturday, a loco-

otive, caboose and 10 tank cars slammed into a parked 41-car train which was waiting to be moved to another location. Four Southern Pacific employees, including the train's engineer, two brakemen and firemen, were killed by the accident. A fifth employee was taken to Hermann Hospital in Houston suffering from two broken legs and an injured arm.

James Wilbert Muchow, 59, the conductor and only surviving witness, still must be interviewed, Aleman said.

The Harris County Medical Examiner's office reported the four men died from injuries suffered in the accident.

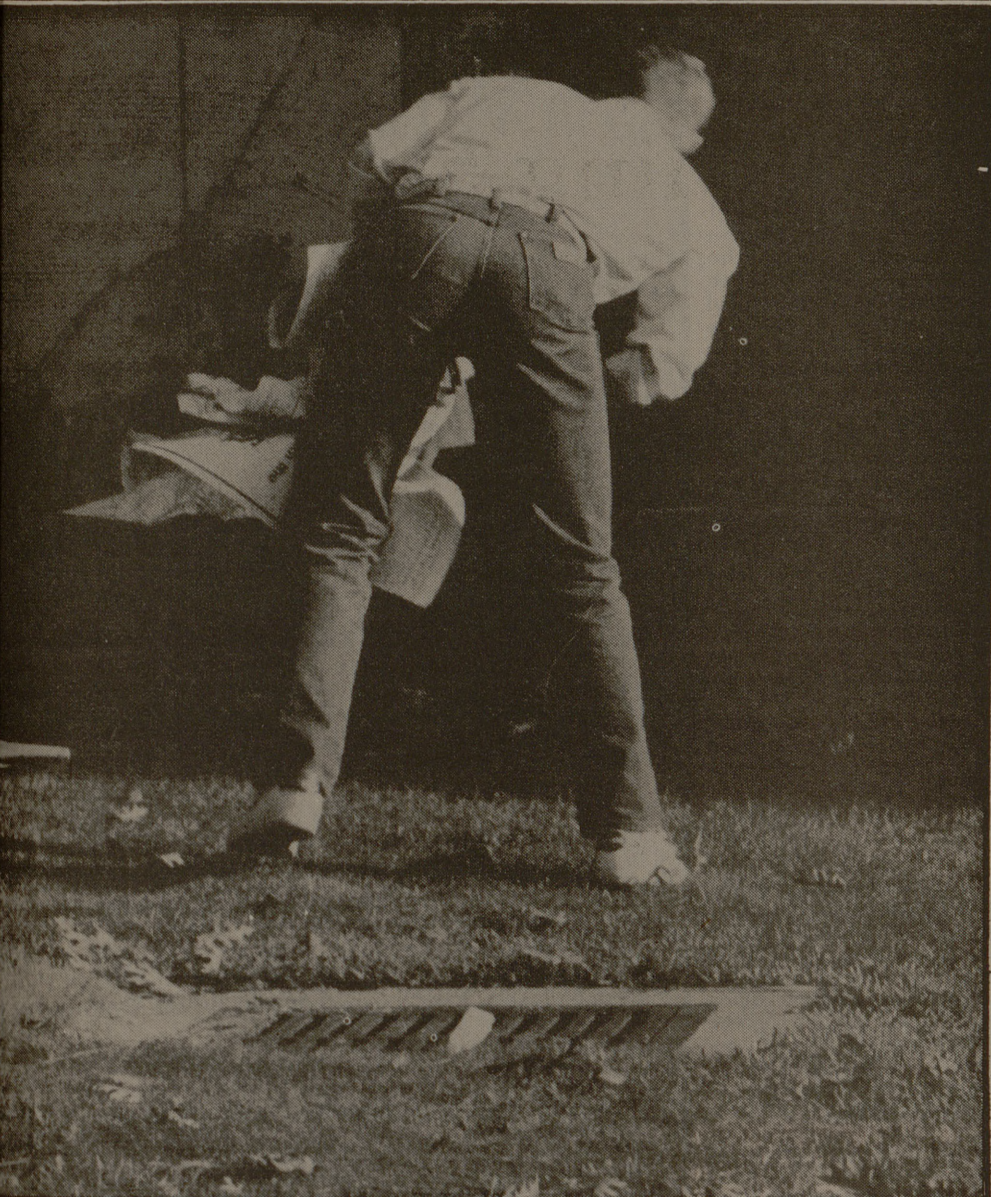
Aleman said by 7:20 p.m. Sunday, all but one car had been moved. The remaining damaged tank car, however, was not blocking the tracks, which are located in a piney forest about three miles from Interstate 10 near the Cedar Bayou Industrial area in Baytown.

Officials from the National Transportation Safety Board, the Texas Railroad Commission, Department of Public Safety and the railroad company are all investigating the accident.

Aleman said it is not uncommon for trains to be left on tracks for later pickups, but the employees on the moving train could have contacted headquarters to find out when the stationary train would be moved. No communication between the train and officials had been made, Aleman said.

The force of the impact knocked the mangled caboose 27 feet off the tracks. One of the men who died was in the caboose with Muchow. Two loaded tank cars derailed, a third car's front wheels also derailed and a tank car carrying a low grade jet fuel landed on top of the locomotive, shearing off the back end of the engine.

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Windy day

Michael Sanchez, Battalion staff

Jim Becker, a junior management major and resident adviser in Puryear hall, picks up copies of

The Battalion that were being blown around on the grass next to the building Monday.

Texas researchers look for blood substitution

United Press International
WASHINGTON — There is no substitute for real human blood, but Texas researchers have reported progress on a temporary replacement made from cattle blood which could be used in emergency surgery or in the battlefield.

Researchers reported they used the product in laboratory rabbits and found it carried oxygen to tissues almost as well as real blood, without causing an immunological reaction. It remains to be seen, however, how the product will perform in people.

"This may be a good substitute for blood," said Dr. Mario Feola, professor of surgery at Texas Tech University and an author of the study, published in Surgery, Gynecology and Obstetrics.

The idea behind blood substitutes is to find a fluid that can carry oxygen to tissues and replenish lost volume in cases where real blood is unavailable, whether for supply reasons or lack of proper type.

Such fluids would keep the patient alive for at least several hours, until surgery can be performed, blood supplies arrive or transport off a battlefield is arranged. They are not intended to be permanent blood

substitutes, nor would they eliminate the need for blood donations. Scientists have been pursuing two avenues toward such a fluid: "artificial" blood and hemoglobin solutions.

An artificial compound called Fluosol, manufactured by the Green Cross company of Japan, is being investigated at several centers nationwide. The oxygen-carrying substance achieved good results in early tests.

Hemoglobin compounds are made from human hemoglobin, the part of the red blood cell which carries oxygen, or animal hemoglobin.

The problem with hemoglobin compounds has been purity. The team from Texas Tech and West Texas State University used a special filtration process to purify hemoglobin from the blood of Hereford cattle, Feola said.

Feola said a bovine hemoglobin molecule is similar to a human one, so the compound may not cause any immunological problems provided it is administered to a patient only once, instead of used as a long-term life-sustainer.

If given repeatedly, it could be rejected, he said, causing

hemorrhaging and other problems.

The advantage to cattle blood is that it is more readily available than human blood, the surgeon said.

"We chose bovine because human blood is in short supply, and it doesn't seem to make sense to me to use human blood to make a substitute for human blood," he said.

He estimated about a year of animal testing remained before the compound could be tried out in humans.

The Army has been investigating hemoglobin compounds made from human blood for some time. Dr. Robert Bolin, chief of the blood research division at the Letterman Army Institute of Research in San Francisco, said human trials won't be considered for three to five years.

Bolin said the main snag in research so far has been that the product stays in a test animal's bloodstream only about five hours before it is cleared out by the kidneys.

The Letterman team is trying to modify the product by linking the small hemoglobin molecules together, which the Texas team also did, making them harder for the kidneys to filter out.

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