

Train wreck of 1976

Man killed in rail boxcar clean-up

NEWAYGO - Two railroad cars still lay beside the C & O tracks Tuesday following a major derailment Saturday and a clean-up early Sunday in which an Illinois man was killed.

Eleven cars of a northbound Chessie System train derailed at 1:15 p.m. Saturday in front of the Newaygo depot when the lead car's journal burned off. The action seized the bearings and caused the car to lock up and pull 10 other cars with it, according to Jay King, Newaygo agent.

No one was injured in the mishap, but Steven Bas, 22, of Pocahontas, Ill. was fatally injured during the cleanup operation.

Mr. Bass, 22, died at 5:25 a.m. Sunday at Grant Hospital from massive internal hemorrhaging. He was pinned between a crane and a Chessie System box car, according to state police.

Mr. Bass, an employe of Hulcher Emergency Services Inc. of Ill., a company under contract with the Chessie System, was working on putting cars back onto tracks and repairing the tracks at the time of the accident. He was walking between a crane which was lifting a box car up in the air so that wheels could be slid underneath it again, when the box car swayed, pinning him between it and the crane, according to the police report.

The accident occurred about 4:05 a.m. Sunday and Mr. Bass was transported to Grant Hospital via ambulance, according to the report.

An estimated \$200,000 damage and clean-up cost was listed by the local agent, Mr. King.

Hulcher Emergency Services Inc. crewmen from Ann Arbor arrived on the scene at 8



Persons inspecting Chessie System railroad cars that derailed Saturday near the Newaygo depot. Sun/J. Suert

p.m. Saturday and worked straight through until they had the tracks repaired for through freight traffic by 6 p.m. Sunday.

The train was enroute from Grand Rapids to Saginaw travelling 22 m.p.h. when the accident occurred.

There were 31 cars ahead of 11 that

derailed and 23 behind them, according to Mr. King.

One car contained toilet paper, two tank cars had latex and one contained potash while the remaining six were empty at the time of the incident. Four hundred eighty feet of track was torn up.

The Newaygo Fire Dept. was called to the scene as a precautionary measure, but no fire occurred.

Mr. King estimated that it will be at least two weeks before everything is cleaned up and returned to proper, full working order.