

<https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/mother-of-man-who-died-in-northern-manitoba-train-derailment-speaks-out-1.4152540>

Mother of man who died in northern Manitoba train derailment speaks out



Supplied photo of Kevin Anderson.

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The mother of the man who died following a train derailment in northern Manitoba last month is speaking out about the emergency response to the crash while two crew members were trapped, waiting for help.

Hours after the train plunged into the creek near Ponton, Man. Sept. 15, its 59-year-old engineer and 38-year-old conductor Kevin Anderson were alive.

Anderson's family said in an interview with CTV News Saturday his legs were pinned and he had a broken hip, but after the train went off the tracks he remained calm, was talking and stayed confident that help was on its way.



New photos given to CTV News, taken by Jackie Gogal show a hand outside one of the locomotives and several close up angles of the wreckage.



A zoomed in image of the photo taken by Jackie Gogal.

New photos given to CTV News, taken by Jackie Gogal show a hand outside one of the locomotives and several close up angles of the wreckage.

Leeper said Gogal is the wife of the helicopter pilot who called 911 and took the photos around 5:30 p.m.

She said photos of emergency responders in vehicles at night were also taken by Gogal around 8:30 p.m.

Anderson's mother Debbie Leeper said in the hours after the derailment, she too was reassured her son would emerge alive, but that changed with an early morning phone call with the hospital in Thompson.

"I called back and she said only one passenger is in the ambulance. And it wasn't my son," said an emotional Leeper.

The Transportation Safety of Board of Canada said the train was travelling 40 km/h when it hit a washout on the Hudson Bay Railway, which runs between The Pas and Churchill.

Leeper said she initially believed her son died on impact until another call from a prospector in the area, who told her he heard the crash around 3:30 p.m. and helped bring the helicopter and its pilot to the site.

But Manitoba RCMP said the crash was reported around 5:45 p.m., with officers arriving around 7 p.m. and spending five hours with the trapped men until emergency responders showed up before midnight with a rail truck and equipment to begin rescue operations.

The Mounties said on Oct. 2 the train had been carrying liquid petroleum gas, which was a significant hazard for all first responders.

Responding to questions over concerns that first responders may have been told to wait before beginning the rescue, CTV News was told in an email Friday from RCMP that was inaccurate.

"Thompson Fire and Emergency Services arrived, immediately ensured the area was safe, and began lifesaving operations. The emergency crew had to use a rail truck to get to the location with their equipment. RCMP remained with the trapped individuals until those responders arrived," said spokesperson Tara Seel in an email Oct. 26.

RCMP said Anderson died close to 1 a.m. on Sept. 16.

Leeper said with emergency responders just 12 kilometres away and in 2018, she doesn't know why her son died close to nine hours after the crash

"To think your son is alive expecting help to come, I mean why wouldn't you think help was coming," Leeper said.

"In this day and age most people would not die of a broken hip if you have medical assistance."

Arctic Gateway Group, which owns the railway tells CTV News it had an emergency measures plan that was followed and RCMP and the Thompson Fire Department were in control of the site.

The TSB said its investigation is ongoing. A spokesperson told CTV News its investigation covers all aspects of the incident.

The rail workers union has asked Manitoba's Chief Medical Examiner to conduct a coroner's inquest.

"Why was it okay for two RCMP officers and four civilians to be on scene but paramedics and fire fighters were not allowed in," said Roland Hackl with Teamsters Canada Rail Conference.

Leeper said her son used to the prospector's phone to call home, but she missed the call, and before dying he asked to pass along the message he loved his family very much.

CTV News reached out Thompson Fire and Emergency Services Saturday. They said its chief was out of town and could be reached Monday.

TRAIN RUNNING AGAIN

Arctic Gateway Group said trains are running on the line again.

"VIA Rail resumed its services on October 24 between Winnipeg and Gillam, following confirmation from the infrastructure owner that the track was safe for passenger train operations," said a VIA Rail spokesperson in an email to CTV News.

"Services remain suspended between Gillam and Churchill, Manitoba. Services on this segment will be restored as soon as the infrastructure is determined to be safe for passenger service."

"VIA Rail continues to inform local communities as the situation evolves. We are in contact with customers who have a reservation for travelling on affected trains."

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/family-of-man-killed-in-manitoba-train-derailment-seeks-answers-1.4152627>

Family of man killed in Manitoba train derailment seeks answers

CTVNews.ca Staff

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The family of a man killed in a Manitoba train derailment is left with questions about the circumstances around their son's death – including how long it took emergency officials to respond to the crash.

Transportation Safety Board of Canada says the accident occurred near Ponton, Man. on Sept. 15 when the train hit a washout on the Hudson Bay Railway, sending it off the track. Conductor Kevin Anderson, 38, and his colleague, a 59-year-old engineer, were on board at the time.

The crash was reported to RCMP around 5:45 p.m., with officers arriving on scene around 7 p.m.



Transportation Safety Board of Canada says the accident occurred near Ponton, Man. on Sept. 15 when the train hit a washout on the Hudson Bay Railway. (Source: Jackie Gogal)



According to Debbie Leeper, the mother of train conductor Kevin Anderson, this photo shows her son's hand outside the train after the derailment. He was alive at the time, but died around 1 a.m., according to RCMP. (Source: Jackie Gogal)



In this file photo, crews attend the scene of a train derailment in Thompson, Man. (Source: The Arctic Gateway Group)

The officers then spent about five hours with the trapped men until emergency responders arrived on the scene just before midnight. Those first responders came with a rail truck and equipment that allowed rescue operations to begin.

Police say responders ensured the area was safe as the train was carrying liquid petroleum gas.

Anderson died around 1 a.m., according to RCMP.

What happened in the hours between the afternoon derailment and Anderson's early-morning death has caused much confusion for the family, who have carried out their own research in hopes of finding answers.

"The more we found out, the worse it got," Anderson's mother, Debbie Leeper, told CTV News.

The family spoke with several witnesses who responded to the scene, including a prospector who first heard the crash, a helicopter pilot who responded to the site and a coroner.

The prospector told Anderson's mother that he came across the crash around 3:30 p.m. and helped get the helicopter pilot to the site. They then called 911.

Leeper says the pilot, prospector, and two other civilians were on the scene before police arrived and comforted Anderson and the engineer as they waited for help to arrive.

Witnesses told the family that Anderson suffered a broken hip and his legs were pinned. Leeper says that, according to the helicopter pilot, Anderson wasn't in any obvious distress as they spoke.

Leeper says her son used the prospector's phone to try and contact them as he lay pinned in the wreck, but they missed the call.

The family says a coroner determined that Anderson eventually died from internal bleeding.

Leeper says she still doesn't understand why her son died nearly nine hours after the crash.

"Why would you think help wasn't coming?" she said.

Union calls for inquest

Arctic Gateway Group, which owns the railway, says that it had an emergency measures plan that was followed, and RCMP and Thompson Fire were in control of the crash site.

The Transportation Safety Board said its investigation into the accident is ongoing.

The rail workers union has asked Manitoba's chief medical examiner to conduct a coroner's inquest but has not received any official response other than acknowledgement that the request was received.

"We've got a lot of questions and not a lot of answers," Roland Hackl, Vice President of Teamsters Canada Rail Conference said.

"Why was it okay for two RCMP officers and four civilians to be on scene, but paramedics and firefighters were not allowed in?"

As they're left waiting for answers, Anderson's family has made it their mission to try and ensure that no other family has to go through a needless loss like they have.

"There has to be some things changed, because we won't be ok unless we know the rail is safe and my son didn't die for nothing," Leeper said. "We want his life to matter."

With a report from CTV Winnipeg's Beth Macdonell