November 5, 2022: At approximately 8:54 am (CDT) a 54-year-old roadway worker with 18 years of service was fatally injured when the oxygen/propane gases exploded in a compartment housing the cutting torch and hoses on the welding truck. The deceased employee was making a saw cut on the rail for a thermite weld when the sparks from the rail saw entered the truck compartment and ignited the gases.

Take Away
Although this recent tragedy has not yet been analyzed, the FAMES Committee reminds all roadway workers to remain vigilant. Ensure you safely store and transport combustible tanks and compartments are properly ventilated. Close valves when not in use. Ensure all hoses and components are in good condition and free from leaks. Be mindful of the direction of sparks when cutting or grinding.

The FAMES Committee consists of safety representatives from a cross section of rail labor, railroad management, and federal regulators. FAMES is a continuous improvement process that relies on the candid sharing of available data and the views of its participants. To enable the process, FAMES explicitly refrains from making any findings regarding whether any past or present practice or protocol satisfies any legal duty or standard of care.

The views, opinions, and recommendations contained in this report are those of the FAMES Committee and do not necessarily represent the views, opinions, or recommendations of any specific railroad, labor organization, or governmental agency.