

Suspected illegal alien run over by freight train during chase

by Greg Gross

SAN DIEGO - A man being pursued after he illegally crossed into the United States from Mexico was run over by a freight train late Thursday morning as he tried to escape a Customs agent near the San Ysidro crossing, federal authorities reported.

The man lost several some fingertips of his right hand and had his left foot severed. He was taken to a San Diego hospital. There was no word on his condition.

The incident took place in an area known to Border Patrol agents as "the loading docks," a spot just east of the San Ysidro port of entry where the steel-mat border wall has a sliding gate to allow freight trains to pass back and forth between San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico.

According to Vince Bond, a spokesman for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the incident began about 11 a.m. when five people tried to illegally enter the country aboard a freight train.

Mexican police pulled two of the five from the train while it was still in Mexican territory, and Border Patrol agents nabbed the other three on the U.S. side after the train stopped for inspection, Bond said.

However, one of the two collared by Mexican authorities pulled away and ran through the open gate onto U.S. soil. When a U.S. Customs agent tried to stop him, he ducked under the train - just as it started rolling again.

The train rolled over the man's hand and foot, severing his foot above the ankle, Bond said.

"The train was going very slowly, no more than about 2 mph," he said. "A couple of Border Patrol agents who are trained as first-responders helped to stabilize him until the ambulance arrived.

"It was just a terrible accident."