

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN RE: :

THE ACCIDENT THAT OCCURRED : NTSB Accident No.

ON LA JUNTA SUBDIVISION AT : DCA16MR004

MILEPOST 373 ON MARCH 13, :

2016 :

Tuesday,
 March 15, 2016

Cimarron, Kansas

Interview of:

JENNIFER MONTANEZ

BEFORE:

TOMAS TORRES, NTSB
 ARNOLDO GONZALEZ, FRA
 CHARLES WHALEN, FRA
 EUGENE SEE, FRA
 STEVE FACKLAN, BLET
 ERNIE HIGGERSON, UDU LOCAL 25
 JOHN OBRIEN, SMART TRANSPORTATION DIVISION
 RONALD SPRAGUE, BLET
 DANNY O'CONNELL, AMTRAK

This transcript was produced from audio
 provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

1
2 MR. TORRES: Okay, we'll get started with
3 the engineer interview. My name is Tomas Torres, T-O-
4 M-A-S T-O-R-R-E-S. Today is March 15, 2016 and we are
5 at Cimarron, Kansas interviewing an engineer in
6 connection with the accident that occurred at La Junta
7 Subdivision Milepost 373 on March 13 at approximately
8 12:10 a.m. The NTSB Accident is DCA16MR004. The
9 purpose of the investigation is to increase safety, not
10 to assign fault, blame or liability. NTSB cannot offer
11 any guarantee of confidentiality or immunity from legal
12 or certificate actions. A transcript or summary of
13 this interview will go into the public docket. The
14 interviewee can have one representative of the
15 interviewee's choice. Do you have anybody you'd like
16 to have present?

17 MS. MONTANEZ: Brian Porter's supposed to be
18 here any minute.

19 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, you do have some BLET
20 --

21 MR. TORRES: I mean we can wait if we need
22 to.

23 MS. MONTANEZ: I just know that he's on his
24 way. I'm okay.

25 MR. TORRES: Okay, do you understand this

1 interview is being recorded?

2 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes, I do.

3 MR. TORRES: Please state your name and
4 spell it.

5 MS. MONTANEZ: Jennifer Montanez. J-E-N-N-
6 I-F-E-R Montanez, M-O-N-T-A-N-E-Z.

7 MR. TORRES: FRA.

8 MR. GONZALEZ: Arnoldo Gonzalez, A-R-N-O-L-
9 D-O G-O-N-A-Z-L-E-Z, FRA out of Kansas City.

10 MR. WHALEN: Charles Whalen, W-H-A-L-E-N,
11 FRA Passenger Rail Safety Specialist Headquarters.

12 MR. SEE: Eugene See, E-U-G-E-N-E S-E-E, FRA
13 Inspector out of Wichita, Kansas.

14 MR. FACKLAN: Steve Facklan, F-A-C-K-L-A-N,
15 BLET, Safety Task Force Primary Investigator in an
16 observer role.

17 MR. HIGGERNSON: Ernie Higgerson, E-R-N-I-E
18 H-I-G-G-E-R-S-O-N, UDU Local 1525, just as an observer.

19 MR. OBRIEN: John Obrien, J-O-H-N O-B-R-I-E-
20 N, Accident Investigator for Smart Transportation
21 Division.

22 MR. SPRAGUE: Ronald Sprague, R-O-N-A-L-D S-
23 P-R-A-G-U-E, BLET, Safety Task Force Investigator.

24 MR. O'CONNELL: Danny O'Connell, D-A-N-N-Y O
25 apostrophe, capital C-O-N-N-E-L-L, AMTRAK Assistant

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1 Superintendent Road Operations for Los Angeles.

2 MR. TORRES: Okay, Tomas Torres with the
3 NTSB. Ms. Montanez, can you please tell us, you know,
4 the date of that incident, like when you went on duty,
5 you know, what happened at the office and throughout
6 your trip?

7 MS. MONTANEZ: Sunday, March 13, we were on
8 duty at 1911 Mountain Time and train was due in at
9 1935. I got there at about -- straight up 1900 and did
10 our job briefing the conductor, Will Benoit, AC Nick
11 Stovall, and my student, Zach Blea. We were all there,
12 did our job briefing. Conductor contacted dispatcher
13 for track warrant. Got a track warrant on the way.
14 Went over our GTB, slow orders for the night. Nothing
15 out of the ordinary and left on time, 1941.

16 MR. TORRES: And then throughout the trip?

17 MS. MONTANEZ: Throughout the trip the
18 equipment was good. We were talking about how we were
19 having a good trip and Zach's my student. He ran --
20 right now he's running from La Junta to Garden City and
21 I take over Garden City to Dodge going east, so Zach
22 ran to Garden. I picked it up at Garden City and
23 everything was normal. We've got ten slow orders at
24 the time but on our whole run, that first leg is like a
25 six to seven minute delay by Garden City for slows. We

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1 did have some signals going into Syracuse, caused a
2 little bit more, think about seven minutes on that, and
3 departed Garden City headed east to Dodge and we were
4 just kind of talking about Zach's station stop and how
5 he could have done a little -- what he can do better
6 next time. We were just talking about that and then we
7 had a little down time and we had a slow order coming
8 up at 369.9.

9 It's about a mile and a half and I think it
10 was previously just about a five mile long slow, so we
11 were just talking about that before we noticed the
12 rail. We were talking about how long that slow order
13 used to be and, you know, because I was like yes, the
14 yellow flag would normally be up here, you know, by the
15 curve at the whistle board and we soon after came
16 around that actual curve and we just kind of both said
17 a few words, what is that, and just -- I put in
18 emergency. I saw Milepost 373. It was either, you know,
19 I don't know if it was right before or right after that
20 crick in the rail but I noticed that both rails were,
21 they both had a -- I don't know what I want to say, a
22 bend in them. They were crooked and when I -- me and
23 Zach saw it at the same time, I put in emergency and I
24 really thought we were just going to skid sideways and
25 end up out in a prairie, but when it came to a stop and

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1 we were upright my conductor, Will, said what do we got
2 and I said Will, both rails were bent and he said let
3 me see what we got and Zach had toned the dispatcher,
4 DS-104, who is J.J.B. No answer. I do know that Will
5 had come back and said he had reported that the lounge
6 car was leaning and pretty soon he says I have all
7 coaches on the ground. Repeat all coaches are on the
8 ground. At this time we need ambulances and
9 authorities, so we called a dispatcher again, called
10 him again with the nine code and no response so Zach
11 got his personal phone out and called 911. And I want
12 to say about midnight ten is when J.J.B. answered.

13 When we came to a -- let me step back here.
14 When we came to a stop from the emergency application,
15 we realized we're still upright I said okay, Zach where
16 we at. I said I know I saw Milepost 373 and that
17 bridge ahead of us is 372.8. We stopped right before a
18 crossing and that highwater -- that bridge location was
19 just east of that crossing that we stopped in front of.
20 So I looked at my watch. It was midnight oh-five when
21 I did that at that time. So I said I would guess that
22 this happened about straight up midnight and I jotted
23 that down. So J.J.B. did answer us by radio at midnight
24 ten and so when he did answer I just said dispatcher,
25 Amtrak Number Four, we've been in an emergency.

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1 Conductor reports all coaches on the ground. The rails
2 were bent and we need ambulance on site. So he said
3 all right. He came back a few minutes later and asked
4 me if I said that there was a switch lined against us
5 and I just, I said no, I did not say that. I said the
6 rails were bent.

7 So after that Zach wanted to go help. He
8 asked if I needed him on the head end. I said I'll stay
9 here. I called the conductor on the radio and said
10 Zach wants to come back and help. Is that all right
11 with you? You need him back there? He said yes,
12 definitely, so he put on his vest and got his stuff and
13 went back. He helped. I stayed on the engine and just
14 waited and watched all the mutual aid and everybody
15 showing up and back and forth with the ambulances and
16 all of that.

17 So when everything had settled down and
18 maybe a couple of hours it probably was, Zach had come
19 back up to the engine.

20 MR. TORRES: As you were approaching the
21 area where the track was buckled, what was the speed of
22 your train? You know, what throttle positions?

23 MS. MONTANEZ: I think I was actually in
24 dynamics right before that because I had just taken
25 over at Garden City and Zach had told me, you know,

1 this is one that, you know, once you get it up to speed
2 it'll maintain speed but if you notch down and you
3 don't, it doesn't, some of the engines like if you
4 notch down they just, they'll drop on you a couple MPH
5 and it's a little more work to get it back up to speed.
6 He had just made that comment and so at the time I
7 noticed I looked and I was going, I believe 62. I
8 kicked it over to dynamics just to toggle it down and
9 get it back in and I know -- I'm a hundred percent
10 sure, that I was in dynamics doing that but I know that
11 when I did stop and I -- after the emergency
12 application, I looked down and my combination throttle
13 was all the way down in the eight dynamic position, so
14 I, you know, don't consciously remember putting it down
15 but afterthought -- after it was all settled, I did
16 notice that that combination handle was in the eight
17 position.

18 MR. TORRES: So you went to full dynamic?
19 You don't recall --

20 MS. MONTANEZ: I don't consciously remember
21 putting it there and then the automatic brake valve but
22 I must have, so --

23 MR. TORRES: Can you estimate, I know it's
24 hard. Can you estimate how far you were from the track
25 that was buckled when you applied the emergency brakes?

1 MS. MONTANEZ: It would all be a guess. I
2 really don't know.

3 MR. TORRES: I mean like what was it --

4 MS. MONTANEZ: Maybe a car length. I really
5 don't know.

6 MR. GONAZALEZ: Arnoldo Gonzalez, FRA. Do
7 you remember it being prior to or after?

8 MS. MONTANEZ: What?

9 MR. GONZALEZ: Before where the track
10 deformity was did you place the emergency before that
11 or after?

12 MS. MONTANEZ: I believe I put it in before.

13 MR. GONAZALZ: Okay.

14 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah.

15 MR. GONZALEZ: Well, could you at least try
16 to estimate?

17 MS. MONTANEZ: That's how it feels I
18 remember it, yeah I mean --

19 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. No, I'm just asking.

20 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah. I mean I can't be 100
21 percent, you know what I mean?

22 MR. TORRES: And the track was out of
23 alignment. Was it like way off or it was like ---

24 MS. MONTANEZ: To me it was extreme. It
25 wasn't like there was a slight curve or something, it

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1 wasn't like is that curved. It was oh, shit, Zach, and
2 in my head I'm thinking we're not going to make -- this
3 isn't good. We're not going to come out on the other
4 end of it.

5 MR. GONZALEZ: Arnolando Gonzalez, FRA again.
6 I want to go back. You said it happened right at
7 midnight and then you talked about the dispatcher
8 answering, J.J.B. at 12:10. What time -- do you recall
9 the time, or if you do, when you first toned him up?
10 Was it immediately after you went to emergency?

11 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah, it was immediately,
12 Zach actually toned him up and, you know, it seemed
13 like forever --

14 MR. GONZALEZ: So it was approximately ten
15 minutes before he answered you?

16 MS. MONTANEZ: He actually answered.

17 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay.

18 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

19 MR. GONZALEZ: That's the only question I
20 have right now at this time.

21 MR. WHALEN: Charles Whalen, W-H-A-L-E-N,
22 Passenger Rail Specialist, FRA Headquarters. I believe
23 on those locomotives, when you're in dynamic and you
24 put it into emergency, dynamic drops out. I would have
25 to read the book on that genesis again, but that's what

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1 happens so even if you had your hand on it, when you
2 went into emergency --

3 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah, yeah, I'm just saying I
4 know I put it over to toggle it just to ease it back
5 down to 60 because I had noticed I crept up to 62 and
6 that was before I just kicked it over, toggled it.
7 That's just how I do it. I don't just pop it with a
8 minimum when I need to get it back down just a couple -
9 -

10 MR. WHALEN: Well, that makes sense with
11 dynamic to, you know, yeah --

12 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah. I just happened to be
13 in dynamics when I needed to pop the air brake valve.

14 MR. WHALEN: Because if you throttle down to
15 get it back up again is going to huff and puff for a
16 long time.

17 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I just
18 happened to be in it and then I needed to pop the
19 automatic brake valve into emergency. I just noticed
20 when we came to a stop that that combined lever was all
21 the way down and I don't consciously, I mean I don't
22 remember doing that.

23 MR. WHALEN: That's all I have.

24 MR. SEE: Eugene See, S-E-E. The only
25 question I got, I know it was dark. Was there any kind

1 of fog that night or was it just dark?

2 MS. MONTANEZ: No. It was just dark.

3 MR. SEE: Okay.

4 MS. MONTANEZ: It was a clear night and the
5 weather was good.

6 MR. SEE: Okay. Thank you.

7 MR. SPRAGUE: Ron Sprague, S-P-R-A-G-U-E,
8 BLET Safety Task Force. Ms. Montanez, you said that
9 your student engineer toned the dispatcher --

10 MS. MONTANEZ: Mm-hmm.

11 MR. SPRAGUE: -- first, correct?

12 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

13 MR. SPRAGUE: And he didn't get any
14 response.

15 MS. MONTANEZ: I believe he did it twice.

16 MR. SPRAGUE: He did it twice? Okay. And
17 then you said that you toned the dispatcher after that?

18 MS. MONTANEZ: He had answered, yeah. I had
19 toned him up again as well.

20 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay. Had he answered prior
21 to that, prior to you toning him?

22 MS. MONTANEZ: No. Mm-mmm.

23 MR. SPRAGUE: No. What kind of tone do you
24 use? I'm not familiar with ---

25 MS. MONTANEZ: On the radio, it depends on

1 your location, so each, I don't know, there's several
2 locations and if you're, you know, if you're closer to
3 this location, the tone is, like at Syracuse it's 45
4 and if you want the dispatcher you put zero.

5 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay.

6 MS. MONTANEZ: So --

7 MR. SPRAGUE: And with that there was no
8 response?

9 MS. MONTANEZ: Right.

10 MR. SPRAGUE: And then you said that you did
11 a nine code?

12 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah, and that's an
13 emergency. So you would do whatever your prefix is,
14 the two digit prefix with a nine.

15 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay, so if it was 45, then
16 you would do 45 and then nine?

17 MS. MONTANEZ: Nine, yes.

18 MR. SPRAGUE: And there was still no
19 response ---

20 MS. MONTANEZ: Right.

21 MR. SPRAGUE: -- for several minutes?

22 MS. MONTANEZ: Mm-hmm. Yes.

23 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay. You had said that you
24 were -- toggled the dynamic brake or you went into
25 dynamic brake.

1 MS. MONTANEZ: Mm-hmm.

2 MR. SPRAGUE: Was the engine responding to
3 your dynamic brake --

4 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah.

5 MR. SPRAGUE: -- throttle positions? And
6 then how far in advance did you see this? I mean you
7 said you were coming around a curve and then you saw
8 the track out of alignment.

9 MS. MONTANEZ: Mm-hmm.

10 MR. SPRAGUE: Can you give me an idea how
11 far it might have been, quarter mile?

12 MS. MONTANEZ: Well, quarter mile or less I
13 would say.

14 MR. SPRAGUE: Quarter mile or less?

15 MS. MONTANEZ: I mean that would be a guess.

16 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay. And you were already in
17 dynamic brake, so you ---

18 MS. MONTANEZ: I was in it. Just maybe
19 notch one, two, back and forth. I wasn't in a heavy
20 dynamic braking.

21 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay, so any idea on your amp
22 reads? Was it over 350 amps or --

23 MS. MONTANEZ: It wouldn't have been over
24 350 if I was just in like one or two.

25 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay. All right, I'm going to

1 ask you some more questions here. How long have you
2 been an engineer?

3 MS. MONTANEZ: About five years.

4 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay.

5 MS. MONTANEZ: Running for five years.

6 MR. SPRAGUE: Did you start out with Amtrak
7 or did you start out on another railroad?

8 MS. MONTANEZ: Mm-hmm. Yes, I did.

9 MR. SPRAGUE: Amtrak?

10 MS. MONTANEZ: I started out with Amtrak.

11 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay. And how long were you a
12 student engineer?

13 MS. MONTANEZ: Eight months. Nine months.

14 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay. And what type of
15 training did Amtrak give you as a student engineer and
16 a locomotive engineer?

17 MS. MONTANEZ: Went to Wilmington for the --
18 you know, classes everyone does two and a half months
19 and come out and ran with my instructor for that eight
20 months. Yeah, eight months.

21 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay, so were you assigned to
22 a specific instructor or did you work with different
23 engineers along the way?

24 MS. MONTANEZ: I was predominantly assigned
25 to one engineer and then when I -- maybe six months in

1 on this side, running east, then I went west for maybe
2 a month or so and ran Raton Pass and I ran with several
3 different Albuquerque engineers, just the ones who were
4 certified to be OJ instructors.

5 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay. How about your
6 promotion process, how does Amtrak promote you from a
7 student engineer to a locomotive engineer?

8 MS. MONTANEZ: It's the throttle time and I
9 don't remember the number of that. Sorry, but you have
10 to meet the requirement of so many observation hours
11 and so many throttle hours and then there's kind of
12 like a -- you know, a progress checklist and, you know,
13 I guess as a student I would say they don't really like
14 tell you, I mean it's just kind of like the powers that
15 be get all the paperwork and say, you know, she's met
16 the requirements and doing well or whatever, you know,
17 she's ready to mark up, so --

18 MR. SPRAGUE: Who fills this progress
19 checklist out? Just your instructor engineer or --

20 MS. MONTANEZ: Well, your instructor does
21 like a progress checklist on each trip that you have
22 together and then that instructor logs how much time
23 the student ran in that trip from point A to B they ran
24 and they ran for so many hours and so many minutes and
25 total time on duty is logged on that instructor sheet

1 that the instructor fills out and then on the back is
2 stuff like, it's broke down by, you know, zero to five,
3 like an evaluation form starting/stopping dynamic, air
4 brake, AMT 5, G-core, schedule. It's just a little bit
5 of everything, kind of like a grade sheet and then
6 there's a spot for comments that the instructor fills
7 out on the student.

8 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay.

9 MS. MONTANEZ: So they fill out that and
10 then, you know, I know they have to turn it in to the
11 -- like I turn my stuff in to the RFE and then he turns
12 it in to the OJT in LA and from there I don't know who
13 else knows about it.

14 MR. SPRAGUE: Did they ever put you through
15 a simulator training of any kind or anything like that?

16 MS. MONTANEZ: We did simulator in class in
17 Delaware and that was -- kind of the Raton thing was
18 that I was told I needed some grade experience so, you
19 know, if I didn't do it by going like west to Raton
20 that I would maybe do some on a simulator but I ran
21 direct home, so --

22 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay, so then when you were
23 promoted to engineer, was that with a RFE riding with
24 you or a simulator or anything like that? When they
25 made you a locomotive engineer from a student engineer.

1 MS. MONTANEZ: Mm-hmm.

2 MR. SPRAGUE: Did you have to do like a
3 check ride or something with an RFE?

4 MS. MONTANEZ: They ride with you once a
5 month in your first year that you're marked up as an
6 actual, you're no longer a student, so, yeah, that
7 first year it's once a month somebody still check rides
8 you.

9 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay. How do they go about
10 getting through this checklist that you talked about?
11 Can you tell me that?

12 MS. MONTANEZ: Who?

13 MR. SPRAGUE: Your instructor. You know, if
14 you have a checklist if you, you know, using dynamic or
15 using throttle modulation or use of air, things like
16 that. Do they put you through certain events or is it
17 just a normal trip is what I'm getting at.

18 MS. MONTANEZ: I don't see what you're
19 saying.

20 MR. SPRAGUE: Well if you're a student
21 engineer for a certain period of time.

22 MS. MONTANEZ: Right.

23 MR. SPRAGUE: I'm trying to figure out what
24 Amtrak's promotion process is to get like -- some
25 railroads it's you'll be a student engineer and then

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1 they send you to the simulator and do a check ride at
2 the simulator. Some railroads will have you be a
3 student engineer and then they will have an RFE come
4 out and ride with you.

5 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes, when you are the student
6 you're ridden with every two weeks, well it's twice a
7 month, so I don't know if I can say it's every two
8 weeks, but it's twice a month.

9 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay. So you feel that Amtrak
10 did a good job training you then?

11 MS. MONTANEZ: I do.

12 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay. I don't have any
13 further questions at this time. Thanks.

14 MR. OBIEN: John Obrien, Smart
15 Transportation Division. Just so I can clarify it in my
16 mind, when you say you toned the dispatcher, what does
17 that do, send an audible tone to his control desk that
18 he's aware a message is to follow?

19 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah. That's why I say like
20 our run's 200 miles and we have several different --
21 what do I want to say, those tones. They're different
22 numbers along the way. When we depart, it's 41. Then
23 we go to Los Angeles junction and we're on the other
24 sub and then it starts 52 so it just changes every so
25 often but it'll ping a different tower, because there's

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1 been times where we're kind of at this in between spot.

2 MR. O'BRIEN: Right.

3 MS. MONTANEZ: And you tone him up and he'll
4 hear you but he'll come and, you know, we'll say hey,
5 dispatch, this is Amtrak and he'll say hold on. Let me
6 try a different tower and then he'll come back and
7 he'll say can you hear me better on this, and I'll say
8 I could hear you before and he'll say well, I can hear
9 you better off this one, so, you know, it just depends
10 where you are. There's some in between, where you try
11 one, gosh, one tone to get ahold of him and if that one
12 doesn't work you maybe try the one ahead of you a
13 little bit and see if you can reach him then.

14 MR. O'BRIEN: Do you know where this J.J.B.
15 dispatcher is located? What's the ---

16 MS. MONTANEZ: I don't actually.

17 MR. O'BRIEN: Okay, and then have you or the
18 crew members that you worked with that day that you're
19 aware of, have you been offered any critical incident
20 trauma counseling?

21 MS. MONTANEZ: Care contacted me, I know. I
22 know my student had commented he hadn't talked to
23 anyone. I can't remember her name. Kramer was her
24 last name I know that, but she contacted me yesterday.

25 MR. O'BRIEN: What is your current work

1 status right now, are you --

2 MS. MONTANEZ: As far as I know marked off
3 Care.

4 MR. O'BRIEN: Okay. That's all the questions
5 I have.

6 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay, Danny O'Connell, O-C-
7 O-N-N-E-L-L, Amtrak. I have a few questions and maybe
8 we can clarify some of the answers that you have. So
9 when did you first hire out for Amtrak?

10 MS. MONTANEZ: July of '06.

11 MR. O'CONNELL: Of 2006?

12 MS. MONTANEZ: Mm-hmm.

13 MR. O'CONNELL: And you hired out in the
14 capacity as a --

15 MS. MONTANEZ: Ticket agent.

16 MR. O'CONNELL: Ticket agent, so you worked
17 from there to become a --

18 MS. MONTANEZ: An assistant conductor and
19 they had abolished that job I was hired for in
20 ticketing after just a few months and then they were
21 hiring two ACs and I went to AC school in January of
22 '07.

23 MR. O'CONNELL: And that's an assistant
24 conductor?

25 MS. MONTANEZ: Mm-hmm. Yes.

1 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay, and then from there?

2 MS. MONTANEZ: I did that for five years and
3 then by August --

4 MR. O'CONNELL: Were you a promoted
5 conductor?

6 MS. MONTANEZ: I was a promoted conductor,
7 and I worked the board.

8 MR. O'CONNELL: Mm-hmm.

9 MS. MONTANEZ: There was a lot of seniority
10 in La Junta at the time and I just worked the extra
11 work.

12 MR. O'CONNELL: So then after you were a
13 conductor, then you became an engineer in, remember
14 what year?

15 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah, I was in school in
16 August of '11, 2011.

17 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay, and then you became an
18 instructor. When did you become an engineer
19 instructor?

20 MS. MONTANEZ: Just October of '15.

21 MR. O'CONNELL: So you've been an instructor
22 for approximately five months?

23 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

24 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay. So what I'm getting
25 at is you've worked your way through the company to

1 become where you're at, and within that timeframe, I'd
2 say you're doing very well. When did you last go to
3 block training?

4 MS. MONTANEZ: I believe it was June of '15.
5 It was later in the year. I usually get sent out in
6 January or February but this year was later, June.

7 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay, now a little while ago
8 you talked about the amount of hours that it takes for
9 an engineer to become an engineer at Amtrak. Does
10 240/480 ring a bell? Two hundred and forty hours of
11 throttle time and 480 hours of cab time?

12 MS. MONTANEZ: Okay. Yes.

13 MR. O'CONNELL: Do you remember that? Do
14 you remember how many hours that you had in throttle
15 time?

16 MS. MONTANEZ: I really don't know. I don't
17 know if I was ever actually given that number as a
18 whole.

19 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay. So -- but that would
20 be the basis, once you get the required amount of time
21 then you can be ---

22 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

23 MR. O'CONNELL: -- certified as an engineer.
24 So you had an instructor engineer?

25 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes, I did.

1 MR. O'CONNELL: And then you had check rides
2 as a student how often?

3 MS. MONTANEZ: Every, well twice a month.

4 MR. O'CONNELL: Twice a month? And then
5 your final check ride was with a DSLE?

6 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

7 MR. O'CONNELL: And then that was in both
8 directions?

9 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes, it was.

10 MR. O'CONNELL: And did you do a physical
11 characteristics test?

12 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

13 MR. O'CONNELL: And part of that PC test as
14 it's called, does it talk about the tones and the
15 locations?

16 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

17 MR. O'CONNELL: How about, how many
18 subdivisions are you qualified on?

19 MS. MONTANEZ: Two.

20 MR. O'CONNELL: And they're different
21 radios, so --

22 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

23 MR. O'CONNELL: So you would have to know
24 the ---

25 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah, different radio

1 channels and different tones.

2 MR. O'CONNELL: And the time that you spent
3 going west, what kind of training did you call that,
4 mountain break?

5 MS. MONTANEZ: Mountain grade.

6 MR. O'CONNELL: Did you learn much about
7 your dynamic at that point?

8 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes, I sure did.

9 MR. O'CONNELL: Yeah, it's quite intense on
10 that side of the mountain isn't it?

11 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

12 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay. Have you ever had
13 other instances where you had to place the train in
14 emergency?

15 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah. Probably five or six.

16 MR. O'CONNELL: Five or six times. So
17 you're --

18 MS. MONTANEZ: Near misses with vehicles.

19 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay. So and you've made
20 dispatcher tones at that point also?

21 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

22 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay. So was it ever the
23 timeframe now that you experienced, was it like that
24 before?

25 MS. MONTANEZ: You mean like in the middle

1 of the night?

2 MR. O'CONNELL: Yeah.

3 MS. MONTANEZ: No. All my near misses were
4 in the mornings.

5 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay.

6 MS. MONTANEZ: Pretty much, they were all
7 going west actually.

8 MR. O'CONNELL: Hmm. Okay. Well, basically
9 that's all I have just to clarify some of your
10 statements.

11 MR. GONZALEZ: Follow-up question. Arnoldo
12 Gonzalez, FRA. Do you recall on those five or six
13 other near misses how long it took for the dispatcher
14 to answer you on those?

15 MS. MONTANEZ: Pretty quick actually.

16 MR. GONZALEZ: You didn't have any issues
17 that you remember?

18 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah, I don't believe I ever
19 had to retone.

20 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. That's all I had.
21 Thanks.

22 MR. WHALEN: I have one more question.
23 Charles Whalen, W-H-A-L-E-N, FRA, Passenger Rail
24 Specialist Headquarters. Talking about tones, you said
25 that the engineer trainee, he toned him twice using the

1 same numbers that you finally used?

2 MS. MONTANEZ: Mm-hmm. Yes.

3 MR. WHALEN: Did the dispatcher ever come
4 back and say try another tone, I can't hear you?

5 MS. MONTANEZ: No, no, no.

6 MR. WHALEN: Okay, so you used the same tone
7 numbers three times and the third time he finally
8 answered you and it was like ten minutes?

9 MS. MONTANEZ: I -- yes, I believe it was
10 ten minutes. But Zach did actually contact 911 before
11 we actually made contact with DS-104, so Zach called
12 him twice. Zach called on his personal, and then I had
13 toned him and soon after he answered, so --

14 MR. TORRES: Tomas Torres with the NTSB.
15 Prior to initiating an emergency brake-up location that
16 night, did you see any motor vehicles on or near the
17 track?

18 MS. MONTANEZ: No, I did not.

19 MR. TORRES: There was no highway vehicles
20 of any type?

21 MS. MONTANEZ: No.

22 MR. TORRES: After you guys contacted, or
23 made the call to 911, right?

24 MS. MONTANEZ: Zach did, mm-hmm.

25 MR. TORRES: How soon afterwards did they

1 respond?

2 MS. MONTANEZ: I really can't tell you. I
3 wasn't looking at my watch at that time.

4 MR. TORRES: Did you think it was fairly
5 quick or, you know, within a --

6 MS. MONTANEZ: It felt like forever but I'm
7 sure it wasn't as long as it felt like.

8 MR. TORRES: I don't have any questions.

9 MR. WHALEN: Oh, I do have one more
10 question. Charles Whalen, W-H-A-L-E-N, FRA, Passenger
11 Rail Specialist Headquarters. After you came to a
12 stop, how long do you think time went by before you
13 were asked to knock down HEP?

14 MS. MONTANEZ: You know, probably five
15 minutes. We were just kind of where we're at and I had
16 my papers in front of me and I just started jotting
17 things down and, because we were upright and I had done
18 the emergency application and -- so with us being
19 upright and I called the conductor, then I started
20 telling Zach, I was like okay, I mean I didn't know
21 everything was on the ground behind us so I'm telling
22 Zach okay, I put it into emergency and, you know, and
23 I'm pointing out to him now the screen is telling us to
24 come back to release to recover and, you know, showing
25 him because we had not had an emergency application so

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1 I was, you know, showing him how to come out of that
2 and recover and everything and then, soon after is when
3 Will had said the lounge cars leaning and then comes
4 back and says that the coach cars are on the ground.
5 So it went from, you know, I guess I kind of had it in
6 my head like we're upright. Wow. Everything's good.
7 Okay, Zach, this is how you recover from an emergency
8 and then it just all shifted and went to something
9 else, went into panic mode I guess you'd say so we did
10 not knock down the HEP right away because I thought we
11 were just going to be recovering from the emergency and
12 as far as I knew we were upright and, you know, I was
13 just trying to school Zach on the recovery of the
14 emergency and it just shifted to a whole other
15 scenario.

16 MR. WHALEN: Okay. Thank you.

17 MR. SPRAGUE: Ron Sprague, S-PR-A-G-U-E,
18 BLET Safety Task Force. Can you tell me what HEP is?

19 MS. MONTANEZ: Oh, it's the head end power.

20 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay.

21 MS. MONTANEZ: The head end power that night
22 was actually on the second unit.

23 MR. SPRAGUE: Of the train?

24 MS. MONTANEZ: Mm-hmm. Yeah. We call it
25 the hotel power. It provides all the lights and all the

1 good stuff for the cars in the back.

2 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay.

3 MS. MONTANEZ: But it was on the second unit
4 and yeah, so once Will said everything was on the
5 ground, Zach and I talked and I was like all right, we
6 got to go back to the second unit and shut down the
7 HEP.

8 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay. Thank you.

9 MR. WHALEN: Charles Whalen, FRA
10 Headquarters. You couldn't knock down the HEP from
11 your locomotive?

12 MS. MONTANEZ: That night it was set up on
13 the second engine. You have to shut it down on the --

14 MR. WHALEN: So you had to go on the ground
15 and climb back up again into the second unit to knock
16 it down?

17 MS. MONTANEZ: We had to get down -- right.
18 Yes. Correct.

19 MR. O'CONNELL: Danny O'Connell from Amtrak.
20 You can deactivate it from the lead unit, can't you?
21 You just have to shut it down. Let me take it back.
22 You can emergency shut down from the lead unit, can't
23 you?

24 MS. MONTANEZ: The whole unit?

25 MR. O'CONNELL: Everything will shut down.

1 There's an MU shut down.

2 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes, yes, yes.

3 MR. O'CONNELL: Did you use that? You just
4 went down just because it was HEP.

5 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

6 MR. O'CONNELL: Normally if you hit a
7 vehicle and there were gas or something what would you
8 do?

9 MS. MONTANEZ: Shut everything down.

10 MR. O'CONNELL: Yeah.

11 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah.

12 MR. O'CONNELL: Is that part of training?

13 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah, yes.

14 MR. O'CONNELL: One other question. Do you
15 have your track warrants?

16 MS. MONTANEZ: I have them at the hotel.

17 MR. O'CONNELL: Yeah, that's fine, but maybe
18 you can get me a copy of them later or something?

19 MS. MONTANEZ: Okay.

20 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay. That'd be good. I'm
21 good then. Thank you.

22 MR. TORRES: Any more questions? I have
23 some follow-up questions. This is Tomas Torres with
24 the NTSB. You already answered most of them, but what,
25 that train ID that night that you were on duty. What

1 was it?

2 MS. MONTANEZ: The 153 was the lead, the 152
3 was the trailing T cars.

4 MR. TORRES: Train symbol?

5 MS. MONTANEZ: A4.

6 MR. TORRES: A4. Your work history and rest
7 cycle, like the three days prior to going on duty that
8 night.

9 MS. MONTANEZ: Mm-hmm.

10 MR. TORRES: Can you recall, you know, how
11 many times you went on duty, how long you were off?

12 MS. MONTANEZ: How far back?

13 MR. TORRES: Three days prior to that.

14 MS. MONTANEZ: Well, Engineer Pearson was in
15 block training so Zach and I -- okay, Zach and I always
16 work Sunday/Monday night, so we worked Sunday/Monday.
17 Something happened. Oh, there was a fatality going
18 west and Marilyn Woodall picked up Wednesday, so Zach.
19 Wait a minute. Zach and I worked Sunday/Monday. It was
20 Tuesday. It was Monday, Tuesday morning coming in the
21 three westbound had a fatality five miles departing La
22 Junta going west so Marilyn had to go relieve that crew
23 and work that west, so Zach and I worked Sunday/Monday,
24 Tuesday night and Wednesday morning. I don't know what
25 date that would be. We had Wednesday night off and we

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1 worked Thursday night and then Marilyn worked her
2 Friday/Saturday, and then we were back on Sunday. So
3 we had two nights off, Friday night, Saturday night off
4 and we had worked three of the four days since Sunday.

5 MR. TORRES: Okay. Thank you.

6 MS. MONTANEZ: I'm sorry. If it's really
7 wordy. I'm just thinking out loud here.

8 MR. TORRES: Yeah, so you had two nights off
9 and then you went to work on the evening of Sunday.

10 MS. MONTANEZ: Sunday.

11 MR. TORRES: Do you take any prescription or
12 non-prescription drugs?

13 MS. MONTANEZ: No. I take Aleve for aches
14 and pains or headaches. That's -- I mean I don't take
15 anything daily.

16 MR. TORRES: And you answered this like two,
17 three times, but your hire date?

18 MS. MONTANEZ: My hire date?

19 MR. TORRES: Yes.

20 MS. MONTANEZ: Just Amtrak, period?

21 MR. TORRES: Amtrak. That's it.

22 MS. MONTANEZ: Yeah, July of '06.

23 MR. TORRES: And you became a certified
24 engineer?

25 MS. MONTANEZ: In August of -- I was marked

1 up in August of '12. I was a student in August of '11.

2 MR. TORRES: And you're trained in emergency
3 preparedness?

4 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

5 MR. TORRES: When's the last certification
6 date? When was the last time you got certified?

7 MS. MONTANEZ: On emergency preparedness?
8 Isn't that all at block training? That'd have been ---

9 MR. O'CONNELL: On your card.

10 MS. MONTANEZ: Oh, on our card.

11 MR. O'CONNELL: Your certification card. Do
12 you remember?

13 MS. MONTANEZ: November of 2015.

14 MR. TORRES: Are you a certified conductor?

15 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

16 MR. TORRES: And what's the certification
17 date on that?

18 MS. MONTANEZ: I don't know.

19 MR. TORRES: Not recall? When's the last
20 time a supervisor, road foreman of engines rode with
21 you or tested you?

22 MS. MONTANEZ: Me? Tested me?

23 MR. TORRES: Mm-hmm.

24 MS. MONTANEZ: We had a test maybe, gosh, a
25 month or six weeks ago, a banner test.

1 MR. TORRES: So they gave you an unannounced
2 stop test?

3 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

4 MR. TORRES: Did your training prepare you
5 for the requirements of your position, your job?

6 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

7 MR. TORRES: Did you use your cell phone
8 while you were on duty?

9 MS. MONTANEZ: That night? Yes.

10 MR. TORRES: And what was the nature of the
11 call or the reasons?

12 MS. MONTANEZ: Well, maybe two hours after
13 everything had settled I turned on my phone and I
14 called the road foreman and I said -- he answered the
15 phone and said, yeah, I heard. Carl's on his way. I'm
16 on my way. I said well, I'm kind of sitting here
17 thinking I might be missing something. Should I be
18 doing something that you want me to do that maybe I'm
19 missing because I might be in a freak out and he said
20 shut down the HEP and sit there. And I said, okay.
21 That's what I've done but I feel like maybe I should be
22 doing something else. He said, no, you're fine, so,
23 and that was it.

24 MR. TORRES: But during the trip you didn't
25 use your cell phone?

1 MS. MONTANEZ: No.

2 MR. TORRES: Is this a safe place to work
3 for?

4 MS. MONTANEZ: I believe so.

5 MR. TORRES: Anything else you'd like to say
6 or add?

7 MS. MONTANEZ: No.

8 MR. TORRES: Anybody else have any follow-up
9 questions or?

10 MR. WHALEN: I do. Charles Whalen, W-H-A-L-
11 E-N, FRA Passenger Rail Safety Specialist Headquarters.
12 You used your private cell phone to call the road --

13 MS. MONTANEZ: I did.

14 MR. WHALEN: Is it Amtrak's policy for
15 employees to have their contacts I guess on their
16 private phone is my question?

17 MS. MONTANEZ: I was told -- I mean, they
18 tell us we can use it in emergency. I just, I wanted to
19 know if I should be doing something else. If we've had
20 stops, we've had things before where I can tell the
21 conductor, you know, hey, can you check with Carl on
22 this or something but I couldn't bug Will at the time,
23 so I used my phone.

24 MR. WHALEN: Okay.

25 MS. MONTANEZ: I'm just being honest. I

1 wanted to make sure I didn't need to be doing something
2 that I was missing just because I wasn't maybe, you
3 know, a hundred percent.

4 MR. TORRES: Tomas Torres with the NTSB. So
5 the nature of the call was to get information, it was
6 business. It wasn't ---

7 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

8 MR. TORRES: It wasn't something else.

9 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

10 MR. TORRES: So it was work related?

11 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes.

12 MR. TORRES: And the train was stopped?

13 MS. MONTANEZ: Yes. We were there a good
14 two hours.

15 MR. TORRES: That's all I have myself.
16 Anybody else? Okay, so thank you for the interview and
17 giving us the opportunity to talk and the information
18 you provided. This will conclude the interview.

19 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went
20 off the record.)

21

22

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Accident That Occurred on
La Junta Subdivision March 13, 2016
Accident No. DCA16MR004
Interview of Jennifer Montanez

DATE: 03-15-16

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 38 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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