

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN

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CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK

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Docket No.: HWY-15-MH-005

FEBRUARY 3, 2015

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Telephonic Interview of: HENRY MARKOWSKI

Metro-North Railroad
North White Plains, New York

Friday,
February 6, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: DAVID BUCHER
Railroad Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

DAVID BUCHER, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BRUCE PARKIN, Safety Inspector, Region 1
Federal Railroad Administration

PATRICK VEDDER, Inspector, Region 1
Federal Railroad Administration

KEVIN MAHONEY, Road Foreman
Metro-North Railroad

KIRK THOMAS
Association of Commuter Rail Employees

MICHAEL BELLUCCO
Association of Commuter Rail Employees

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I N T E R V I E W

(12:10 p.m.)

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3 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher, Rail Accident
4 Investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board. And
5 this is a telephone interview of Henry Markowski. He's the
6 regular train engineer on Train 659 Metro-North Railroad. And
7 this is the interview related to the accident that occurred on
8 February 3, 2015, Valhalla, New York. The accident number is HWY-
9 15-MH-005.

INTERVIEW OF HENRY MARKOWSKI

BY MR. BUCHER:

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11
12 Q. Okay, Mr. Markowski. Dave Bucher, again, and I just
13 have one question to start out and we'll just go around our little
14 table here.

15 A. Okay, Dave.

16 Q. How long have you been on Train 659?

17 A. We have what's called a pick where we select a certain
18 job or run every 6 months. And I believe that went into effect in
19 November. So since approximately November I've been on this run
20 doing that particular train.

21 Q. Okay. Okay, and how long have you been a locomotive
22 engineer?

23 A. I marked up in October of 2005.

24 Q. Okay. Did you hold any other positions with the
25 railroad prior to that?

1 A. I started with Metro-North Railroad as an electrician in
2 the mechanical department.

3 Q. Okay. Do you know about what year that was, or --

4 A. When I started with the railroad, that was December of
5 2002.

6 Q. '02. Great. Thank you.

7 Okay, my initial question related to the accident is:
8 In your experience, have you ever encountered vehicles at the
9 Commerce Street crossing where the accident occurred at, as an
10 engineer on the 659 train, before?

11 A. No, I have not.

12 Q. Okay. Any other crossings in that area, has there been
13 vehicles or in your, you know, prior experience any accidents like
14 that or close calls even?

15 A. No, I've never had an accident with a vehicle or a close
16 call. Not, you know, not in my career or in that area.

17 Q. Okay. Thank you.

18 MR. BUCHER: Okay, I'm going to pass it off to Kirk and
19 we'll go around the table.

20 BY MR. THOMAS:

21 Q. Hey, Henry, how you doing? It's Kirk Thomas, man, ACRE.
22 How are you?

23 A. Good afternoon. And Kirk, I'm doing fine. Thank you.

24 Q. Just a quick question. The route that you take going up
25 on this train, did it vary from time to time with different track,

1 or could it --

2 A. Yeah, it could vary depending on what's going on with
3 the track, you know, possibly workers or something, you know, some
4 routing condition. Most of the time, I would say, we go north on
5 track 1. Occasionally maybe we've been routed over to 2 for
6 whatever reason.

7 Q. Okay.

8 MR. THOMAS: That's it for me.

9 MR. BUCHER: Okay -- this is Dave Bucher again. I
10 neglected to go around the table and everybody spell their names.
11 So Dave Bucher, B-u-c-h-e-r. To my left I have?

12 MR. THOMAS: Kirk Thomas, K-i-r-k, T-h-o-m-a-s, ACRE.

13 MR. MAHONEY: Kevin Mahoney, M-a-h-o-n-e-y, road
14 foreman.

15 MR. BELLUCCO: Mike Bellucco, B-e-l-l-u-c-c-o, ACRE.

16 MR. VEDDER: Patrick Vedder, P-a-t-r-i-c-k, V-e-d-d-e-r,
17 FRA inspector, Region 1.

18 MR. PARKIN: Bruce Parkin, B-r-u-c-e, P-a-r-k-i-n.
19 Federal Railroad Administration, safety inspector, Region 1.

20 MR. BUCHER: Okay, sorry about that Henry. I should
21 have done that first and we needed to get that in there.

22 MR. MARKOWSKI: Oh, that's okay.

23 BY MR. MAHONEY:

24 Q. Henry, it's Kevin Mahoney. I just wanted to know, when
25 you're running through that area, do you typically scan the area

1 as far as the traffic's concerned? I know when operating the
2 train you're kind of aware of everything around you. Do you
3 happen to notice if the traffic is very heavy at that time?

4 A. Are you referring to just the highway, for instance --

5 Q. The road traffic, correct.

6 A. -- like the Taconic on the right-hand side or
7 specifically at the crossing or crossings?

8 Q. Well, just -- the crossings more, per se. Those
9 particular group of crossings there.

10 A. Okay. Referring to like Lakeview, Commerce?

11 Q. Right, correct.

12 A. In general, I would say no. I find them to be somewhat
13 light in traffic.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. There are other crossings on the Harlem Line that I
16 think, you know, you usually see, you know, traffic at the
17 crossings. But in general, I would say that those are fairly
18 light crossings.

19 Q. And do you feel that the way the whistle posts are set
20 up and everything's adequate to get your succession of horns in,
21 in time to properly notify, you know, the crossing? To sound the
22 horn properly before entering the crossing?

23 A. Yes. For the whistle post placement?

24 Q. Yes, correct.

25 A. Yes, I can adequately -- I find that I have adequate

1 time to blow what's our Metro-North Rule 4E5(c), which is the two
2 longs, a short, and a long. I've never had a problem being able
3 to blow that pattern for the crossing.

4 Q. Okay, thank you.

5 A. You're welcome.

6 MR. BELLUCCO: Henry, I don't have any questions for
7 you. These guys are covering everything pretty well, so I'll pass
8 it on.

9 MR. MARKOWSKI: Okay.

10 MR. VEDDER: I got nothing.

11 BY MR. PARKIN:

12 Q. Bruce Parkin, FRA. Henry, just a question with regard
13 to running north on tracks either 1 or 2. Do you have any issues
14 with the sight, line-of-sight visibility for the crossing on
15 either track northbound?

16 A. Well, the one thing I will say if you're running north,
17 just south of Commerce on the west -- yes, west side of the tracks
18 there is an electrical substation which can tend to possibly block
19 your view of the west side of that crossing. There is an
20 electrical substation located there.

21 MR. PARKIN: Okay, thank you very much, Henry. That's
22 my only question.

23 MR. MARKOWSKI: Okay, you're welcome.

24 MR. PARKIN: Because Mr. Bucher asked everything else
25 that I was going to already ask.

1 MR. BUCHER: Well, Henry I have one more.

2 BY MR. BUCHER:

3 Q. Have you ever had any experience with gate crossing
4 protection problems at either Commerce Street or close by there
5 with any of the other active crossing gate protection?

6 A. No, I've never come upon it where the crossing
7 protection wasn't working. I believe, you know, at times in my
8 career of running up the Harlem Line, there have been times where
9 we were issued stop and warns, where we would stop within 50 feet
10 of the crossing. I would have a trainman or some other qualified
11 employee on the head end with me make the stop, per the stop and
12 warn on the Form M, you know, check the protection. And the times
13 that I had to stop and warns, it would be working, and then I
14 would be able to proceed over the crossing. So I have had
15 Form M's with stop and warns issued, but I've never actually seen
16 where the protection failed or a trainman had to get down to flag.

17 Q. Okay, you answered my follow-up question. I can't -- is
18 there anything that you can think of that might be pertinent to
19 the crossing incident that occurred at Commerce? And what I'm
20 trying to say is, you know, we had the accident, but are there
21 other issues that we might not have touched on here besides the
22 traffic and the grade crossing protection?

23 A. To be honest with you, that's all I could think of
24 offhand. I mean, just in my own knowledge of looking out at that
25 crossing, it seems to be like a very small crossing. I believe it

1 connects to the Taconic and so it's like a turnoff maybe. And so,
2 you know, in general, I usually find traffic there to be light. I
3 don't know what changed or what was different that day, but that's
4 probably all I could add, that in general I do consider that to be
5 one of the lighter traffic crossings that I pass on a regular
6 basis.

7 Q. Okay, well I appreciate the insight. That's very
8 important.

9 MR. BUCHER: Any other questions from the group?

10 MR. THOMAS: No, I'm good.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, I'm set.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Henry, just thanks a lot for
13 doing this. You know, we know you're kind of tight on time. I
14 really appreciate it.

15 MR. MARKOWSKI: You're welcome.

16 BY MR. PARKIN:

17 Q. Henry, one question. Bruce Parkin, FRA. I know you
18 said you'd been operating 659 since the pick of November 2014.
19 How long have you operated, though, over the Harlem line, please?

20 A. On and off -- well, that is the main line that I have
21 been operating on for the majority of my career. I do live
22 (indiscernible). I live in upstate New York, which puts me very
23 close to Brewster as my closest terminal. So the beginning part
24 of my career I would continue down to GCT. For 2 years, I guess I
25 worked a lot on the New Haven Line. So I'm going to put it at

1 about maybe 7 of those years mainly working on the Harlem Line.

2 Q. Okay. And Brewster is your crew base, correct?

3 A. That's correct, yes. The job that I work originates out
4 of Brewster.

5 MR. PARKIN: Okay, thank you very much, Henry. No more
6 questions for me.

7 MR. BUCHER: Yeah, thank you, Henry. I appreciate you
8 taking the time out to talk to us.

9 MR. MARKOWSKI: Okay. You're very welcome, sir.

10 MR. THOMAS: Hey, Henry, thanks. Have a good day. All
11 right?

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thanks, Henry, we'll talk.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you, bye-bye.

14 MR. BUCHER: This concludes the interview of Henry
15 Markowski.

16 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK
FEBRUARY 3, 2015
Telephonic Interview of Henry Markowski

DOCKET NUMBER: HWY-15-MH-005

PLACE: North White Plains, New York

DATE: February 6, 2015

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

Keith J. Maurer
Transcriber