

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

COLLISION OF LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD *
(LIRR) TRAIN NO. 2817 WITH THE *
PLATFORM AT ATLANTIC TERMINAL, *
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, JANUARY 4, 2017 *

* Accident No.: DCA17FR002

* * * * *

Interview of: CHRISTOPHER VAZOULAS

LIRR Facilities
Jamaica, New York

Friday,
January 6, 2017

APPEARANCES:

TOMAS TORRES, Rail Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

ANNE GARCIA, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

JANET LEE, Deputy Regional Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration

JOSEPH MEADE, Operating Practice Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

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ROBERT MARALDO
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MARK ELLIOTT, Director of Investigations & Analysis
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BRET BECKER, Superintendent of Engine Service
Long Island Rail Road

DONALD HILL, Safety Task Force
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WILLIAM BATES
SMART National Transportation Safety Team

WILLIAM NEARY
SMART National Transportation Safety Team

DOMINIC AMENDOLARE
SMART National Transportation Safety Team
(Observer)

VINCENT TESSITORE, General Chairman
SMART 645
(On behalf of Mr. Vazoulas)

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:54 a.m.)

1
2
3 MR. TORRES: Okay. We're going to get started. It's 11:54
4 a.m. My name's Tomas Torres, T-o-m-a-s, T-o-r-r-e-s. Today's
5 date is January 6, 2017. We are at location Jamaica Queens on the
6 Long Island Railroad F&A facility interviewing the assistant
7 conductor in connection with an accident that occurred at Atlantic
8 Terminal in Brooklyn, New York on the date of January 4, 2017.
9 The NTSB accident number is DCA17FR002.

10 The purpose of the investigation is to increase safety, not
11 to assign fault, blame or liability. NTSB cannot offer any
12 guarantee of confidentiality or immunity from legal or certificate
13 actions. A transcript or summary of the interview will go into
14 the docket.

15 The interviewee can have one representative of the
16 interviewee's choice.

17 Do you have anybody?

18 MR. VAZOULAS: The union rep. Yes.

19 MR. TORRES: Okay. Do you understand this interview is being
20 recorded?

21 MR. VAZOULAS: Yes, I do.

22 MR. TORRES: Okay. Please state your name and spell it out.

23 MR. VAZOULAS: My name is Christopher Vazoulas, C-h-r-i-s-t-
24 o-p-h-e-r, Vazoulas, V, as in Victor, a-z, as in zebra, o-u-l, as
25 in Larry, a-s, as in Sam.

1 MS. GARCIA: Anne Garcia, G-a-r-c-i-a. I'm a human
2 performance investigator for the National Transportation Safety
3 Board.

4 MR. MEADE: Joe Meade, M-e-a-d-e, operation practice
5 specialist -- I just gave myself a promotion -- inspector for the
6 FRA. Thank you.

7 MR. NEARY: William Neary, N-e-a-r-y, SMART Transportation
8 Safety Team member.

9 MR. ELLIOTT: Mark Elliott, E-l-l-i-o-t-t, director of
10 investigations, Long Island Railroad.

11 MR. AMENDOLARE: Dom Amendolare, A-m-e-n-d-o-l-a-r-e, SMART
12 Transportation Safety Team, observer.

13 MR. TOMASZEWSKI, Bob Tomaszewski, T-o-m-a-s-z-e-w-s-k-i,
14 operating practices inspector for the FRA.

15 MR. MARALDO: Robert Maraldo, M-a-r-a-l-d-o, with New York
16 State Department of Transportation, Public Transportation Safety
17 Board.

18 MR. HILL: Donald Hill, H-i-l-l, BLET Safety Task Force.

19 MR. BATES: William Bates, B-a-t-e-s, SMART National
20 Transportation Safety Team.

21 MR. BECKER: Bret Becker, B-r-e-t, B-e-c-k-e-r. I'm the
22 superintendent of engine service for the Long Island Railroad.

23 MR. TESSITORE: Vincent Tessitore, Jr., T-e-s-s-i-t-o-r-e,
24 vice general chairman, SMART transportation union, and
25 representing the member.

1 MS. LEE: Janet Lee, L-e-e, deputy regional administrator,
2 FRA. Sorry to be sitting behind you.

3 MR. VAZOULAS: It's okay.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Watch your back.

5 INTERVIEW OF CHRISTOPHER VAZOULAS

6 BY MR. TORRES:

7 Q. Tomas Torres with the NTSB. Do you mind if we call you
8 Chris, Christopher?

9 A. Chris is fine.

10 Q. Okay. We'll call you by your first name, Chris.

11 Chris, can you please give us a description of your work
12 history here, like from the date of hire and training.

13 A. I've been employed since July of '07 as an assistant
14 conductor for the railroad, qualified as a conductor roughly 3½
15 years after that, roughly around 2010. Went through training
16 pretty much throughout that whole period as an assistant
17 conductor, and then qualified as regular conductor, as a full
18 conductor for the railroad. I've been a full conductor for the
19 last 7 years, I would say.

20 Q. Okay. On the day of the incident, could you describe, maybe,
21 the previous 3 days, like the time that you went on duty, off
22 duty?

23 A. Starting with, I would say, 3 days before, that would be
24 December 31st, I would guess. Would that be correct? I was off.
25 That's my scheduled day off. January -- no, sorry, that's January

1 1st. That's my scheduled day off.

2 Monday the 2nd I was scheduled for job 89 with a report of
3 1:08 a.m., and I was done roughly around 8:30 a.m. And then
4 Tuesday the 3rd, I worked job 91. That is a 2:36 report in West
5 Side Yard, 2:36 a.m., and I was done roughly about 10:30 a.m. And
6 then I worked -- I was assigned to job 85 the day in question,
7 which is a 12:16 report to New York.

8 Q. Okay. On the day of the incident, January 4th, you reported
9 at 12:16 a.m.?

10 A. I -- yes.

11 Q. Can you describe that, you know, where you went on duty, and
12 what happened after that?

13 A. When I reported, I was informed that the equipment was not
14 going to be starting out of West Side Yard. It was going to be
15 starting out of Penn Station. So I reported to Penn Station to
16 the stationmaster's office to -- and I met my conductor there, and
17 waiting for a track assignment for the equipment, which was train
18 802 to Long Beach.

19 Q. Where were you supposed to report originally?

20 A. West Side Yard.

21 Q. West Side Yard. And then you got on board, on a train there
22 at Penn Station?

23 A. Well, I called West Side Yard ahead of time, on my train I
24 was traveling in on, to find out what track assignment that train
25 would be on. And I was told -- I was informed that that train was

1 going to be originating out of the station instead of the yard.
2 Because there was a incident that was taking place east, out east,
3 and I guess it was messing up the manipulation of the equipment,
4 so that's why we were starting out of the station.

5 Q. Okay. So once you left Penn Station, you went to where?

6 A. Our destination was Long Beach.

7 Q. Long Beach. And when did you meet up with the train involved
8 in the incident? Or the engineer? When did he get on board?

9 A. Oh, when did he meet with us?

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. He met with us on train 805 in -- when we arrived in Jamaica.
12 That was roughly about 4:30 a.m., I think it was.

13 Q. And from Jamaica you went to where?

14 A. Atlantic Terminal.

15 Q. Do you recall what happened there at Atlantic Terminal? How
16 long were you there?

17 A. Maybe -- I'm guessing. I'm -- probably about 20 minutes,
18 half hour tops, somewhere around that time frame.

19 Q. So that's where you turned around?

20 A. We turned around. We came in. We -- I cleared -- we cleared
21 the equipment, we lost the equipment, and we proceeded to -- came
22 out of track 1; we proceeded over to track 3 to pick up our new
23 equipment to go to Far Rockaway.

24 Q. Okay. When you reach Far Rockaway, what happened then?

25 A. Discharged the passengers. Conductor and I cleared the

1 train. We met as we cleared the train; we switched ends. She
2 went to the west end of the train. I proceeded to go to the east
3 end of the train to give the brake test.

4 Q. Okay. Any time did you ever meet with the engineer?

5 A. I did. I met with the engineer after he came on at -- on
6 train 805.

7 Q. And that would be at --

8 A. That was on train 805 going to Atlantic Terminal, Jamaica,
9 when he relieved the YE engineer. I met -- I came up to see
10 actually who it was, because I wasn't sure who the engineer was.
11 I wanted to make sure the relief took place; that was number two.
12 But if he did show up, I wanted to make sure I got a -- since he
13 was the actual engineer on that job, I wanted to get a job
14 briefing from him how the rest of the day went. And when I saw --
15 so I got the job briefing from him as to how the rest of the day
16 was going to go.

17 Q. Have you worked with him before? Are you familiar with him?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. What did you think about him on that day? Was there anything
20 unusual, or --

21 A. No. Nothing at all.

22 Q. So, it was -- he was, he looked --

23 A. He seemed fine to me.

24 Q. Okay. So when you got to Far Rock -- is that what you call
25 it?

1 A. Far Rockaway.

2 Q. So what happened there, after you --

3 A. Like I said -- like I stated, when we arrived at Far
4 Rockaway, we discharged our passengers, we cleared the train. The
5 conductor and I switched ends as we -- you know, to meet and make
6 sure the train was clear, we switched ends. She went to the west
7 end of the train. I went to the east end of the train to get
8 ready to administer the brake test.

9 Q. How long were you there at that station?

10 A. That spin was 50 minutes.

11 Q. Fifty minutes. And did you ever see the engineer at that
12 station?

13 A. I saw him walking the platform to go to the east end.

14 Q. And that's the only time you saw him?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. So when you departed that station, where did you go from
17 there?

18 A. Our destination was Atlantic Terminal.

19 Q. Anything in between? I mean, how did the trip go? Could you
20 describe the trip?

21 A. It was all local stops to Valley Stream followed by stopping
22 at Locust Manner, then Jamaica, then East New York and Ocean
23 Avenue, and Atlantic Terminal, Brooklyn.

24 Q. And as you're approaching Atlantic Terminal, can you describe
25 the trip going in there?

1 A. After Ocean Avenue?

2 Q. Yeah, once --

3 A. After we left Ocean?

4 Q. Coming into Atlantic.

5 A. As far as I was concerned, I was in the rear of the train and
6 I was getting all my stuff ready to -- because we were going to
7 switch equipment to go to another train. And getting ready to
8 apply the brake, the hand brake, once the train stopped, and then
9 -- because those last two cars do not platform, it was also my
10 responsibility to clear those rear two cars of the passengers once
11 we got there. As we were approaching the station, everything just
12 seemed normal to me, normal speed. Honestly, the only thing I was
13 just waiting for was the train to dump, so I can apply the hand
14 brake.

15 Q. Okay. So that was the second time going into Atlantic
16 Terminal, right?

17 A. That's correct.

18 Q. Was there any different from the first time --

19 A. No.

20 Q. -- you went in there?

21 A. I didn't take any exceptions from the first time.

22 Q. Okay.

23 MR. TORRES: Anne.

24 MS. GARCIA: Okay. Thank you.

25 BY MS. GARCIA:

1 Q. Anne Garcia. I have a few questions for you.

2 A. No problem.

3 Q. Okay. First, you mentioned that you are fully qualified as a
4 conductor.

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. And this particular day you were working as an assistant
7 conductor.

8 A. Correct.

9 Q. Can you -- explain to us; is that normal? Why were you doing
10 that?

11 A. Because I'm on what they call the extra list.

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. So I get to put in picks on a daily basis for what jobs I
14 would like to be assigned to. It's based on what's the -- based
15 on seniority. I mean, for that day, I did put in to be the
16 conductor for that day, but the conductor that's on there has more
17 seniority than me so I ended up being the brakeman for that day.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Based on seniority.

20 Q. I'm curious. Is you pay the same regardless of what position
21 you take?

22 A. No, it's not.

23 Q. Okay. So it's a good incentive --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- for you to pick one position --

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. -- rather than another? Okay.

3 Can you go over for me exactly what your duties are in that
4 capacity, then, as assistant conductor?

5 A. Number one is to ensure that the brake tests are completed
6 properly with no exceptions. I'm also to get the doors, if
7 necessary, and also to collect revenue, the tickets.

8 Q. Okay. And on this --

9 A. And ensure safety on the train, as well.

10 Q. Thank you. On this particular train, the incident train --

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. -- there was also a fourth crew member for a while?

13 A. There was a collector who boarded that train at Far Rockaway.
14 She was -- she got off at Valley Stream because that's where the
15 job, her job assigns -- tells her to get off.

16 Q. Okay. And is that a normal thing, to pick up an additional
17 collector or crew member for a certain portion of the run?

18 A. Yes. I guess it depends on that collector's job.

19 Q. Okay. It wasn't something that you were wondering why you're
20 doing this?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Okay. Good. On this particular -- on the incident train, on
23 that run on this day, what breaks did you have during that day,
24 from when you came on to when you came off?

25 A. It was full operable brakes on that train.

1 Q. No, I'm sorry. Spell breaks a different way. What time off
2 did you have, like for eating, for restroom, your personal breaks?

3 A. There was -- like I -- when we got in, 8:05, there was about,
4 let's say 25-minute break, maybe 30 minutes. I was able to get a
5 cup of coffee on that. And then when we got up Far Rockaway on
6 2806, the break was at least 45, 50 minutes. So --

7 Q. Okay. And what did you do during that time?

8 A. I administered a brake test and then I caught up on my last
9 general notice that I had. And that's pretty much it.

10 Q. Okay. Did you have a meal at any time that day?

11 A. No, I had yet --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. I was actually waiting to get it when we got to Brooklyn.

14 Q. Okay. Do you take anything with you, any personal
15 belongings, snacks, water, that type of thing?

16 A. Sometimes.

17 Q. Okay. So you're able to stay hydrated --

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. -- during your shifts?

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. Okay. On any breaks, did you see the engineer or the
22 conductor?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. I saw both -- yeah, I saw both of them.

1 Q. And what were they doing?

2 A. Well, I saw -- not -- I don't know what she was doing -- I
3 don't know what either one were doing after -- I mean, I saw them
4 as we were switching ends, but after that, I don't know exactly
5 what they were doing on their own time. No. If that's what
6 you're asking me. But --

7 Q. Okay. Do you know if they stayed on the train during those
8 breaks or if they left the train?

9 A. I don't know.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Can't honestly say that.

12 Q. Fair enough. I just want what you remember. Okay. When was
13 -- you mentioned that you know the engineer, you've worked with
14 the engineer before.

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Do you recall when the last time was that you worked with
17 him?

18 A. Not exactly, no.

19 Q. Roughly?

20 A. Maybe a year or 2 ago.

21 Q. Okay. That's good. That's a good time frame. Thank you.

22 Now you were stationed, you said, in which car of the
23 consist?

24 A. When?

25 Q. Prior to the incident.

1 A. I was in the last car, the sixth car.

2 Q. Okay. Could you paint a picture for of us where you are
3 located, where your station point is?

4 A. I was in the east car. I was in the cab, the operating cab
5 of the east car --

6 Q. Is that in the --

7 A. -- or sixth car.

8 Q. -- front of the cab, the back of the cab?

9 A. It's the back of the train.

10 Q. It's the very back of the train?

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. Okay. And in that position, where are the emergency brakes
13 in that car?

14 A. Where I was, the emergency hand brake is right there, right
15 in front of me, above the operation cab.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. The operating console.

18 Q. Have you ever had an occasion in your experience to use an
19 emergency brake?

20 A. No.

21 Q. In the training that you get, do you have refresher training
22 that you receive?

23 MR. TESSITORE: Vincent Tessitore. Periodics.

24 MR. VAZOULAS: Yeah, periodics, yeah. Yeah, we'll go out to
25 the equipment, yes.

1 MR. TESSITORE: When you requalify.

2 MR. VAZOULAS: Yes.

3 BY MS. GARCIA:

4 Q. Okay. How often is that?

5 A. It's every 2 years.

6 Q. Okay. And that qualifies you both as conductor an assistant
7 conductor?

8 A. Correct.

9 Q. Okay. The training is identical, then?

10 MR. TESSITORE: Yes.

11 MR. VAZOULAS: Yes.

12 BY MS. GARCIA:

13 Q. Okay. And do you receive training on fatigue management
14 or -- that you recall?

15 MR. TESSITORE: May I? Vincent Tessitore.

16 MS. GARCIA: Um-hum.

17 MR. TESSITORE: So in that 5-day periodic week, they squeeze
18 in a lot of stuff, you know, relative, and I'm -- there is some
19 review in fatigue management, hours of service stuff, all lumped
20 into that week.

21 MS. VAZOULAS: Oh, you mean like hours of service? Yeah.
22 Then, yes. Yes.

23 BY MS. GARCIA:

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. They go over everything. Yeah.

1 Q. Good. And some of these, we just want to get on the record.

2 A. Yep.

3 Q. Okay. So fatigue management, you receive that?

4 A. Um-hum. Yes.

5 Q. And on this particular day, jumping a little, you've had a
6 chance to observe both the engineer and conductor. Had you worked
7 with the conductor before?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. So you knew both of them somewhat?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. How did they appear to you?

12 A. They seemed fine to me.

13 Q. Okay. Do you receive training in how to assess one of your
14 colleagues, another crew member, whether they're fit for duty on a
15 particular day?

16 A. No. No.

17 Q. Okay. So that's not -- is that one of your formal
18 responsibilities to do that? Or just something --

19 A. No.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. I would say no.

22 Q. Okay. If you were -- have you ever worked with someone who
23 you felt was not fit for duty?

24 A. No. Not at all.

25 Q. If you did find that someone reported with you, a crew

1 member, and you had reason to believe they were not, what would
2 you do?

3 A. Probably reach out to my union first, and talk to them and
4 get their advice as to what my --

5 Q. Okay. And how --

6 A. -- options were.

7 Q. Right. How would you do that?

8 A. I would call whoever I have on my phone, whomever's number I
9 have on my phone, to contact them and hopefully -- and wait for
10 them to call me back.

11 Q. Um-hum. Is that a company phone or is that your personal
12 phone?

13 A. It's my regular phone, my company phone.

14 Q. Okay. Good. And they typically would call you back --

15 A. Yes. Within, you know -- yeah, within, probably 15, 20
16 minutes, they call me back.

17 Q. Okay. And what I'm trying to understand is that in your
18 capacity as either an assistant conductor or conductor, if you
19 have the authority to not allow the train to leave the station if
20 you think that one of the crew members is not fit for duty?

21 A. I don't have the authority, no.

22 Q. Okay. So if that was case --

23 A. I can -- I probably -- I feel that I would have -- I do feel
24 that I have the right to voice my opinion to the manager on duty,
25 and then they make the final call.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. If they order me out, they order me out.

3 Q. So if you didn't reach someone from the union, would you then
4 reach for management, or not?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. You would wait for union?

7 A. Yeah. At that point, yeah.

8 Q. I'm not asking him.

9 A. No, yeah.

10 Q. I'm asking you.

11 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

12 Q. It's your opinion.

13 A. Yes, I would.

14 Q. Okay. Okay. You would reach for management?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay. Thank you. I appreciate it.

17 A. You're welcome.

18 MR. TORRES: Joe Meade, FRA.

19 BY MR. MEADE:

20 Q. On 2817, as you were approaching, who was going to control
21 the doors?

22 A. The conductor.

23 Q. And was the conductor controlling the doors through the
24 entire trip on 2817.

25 A. Yes, with the exception of East New York and Ocean Avenue.

1 Q. Okay. And you took control of the doors?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. As you came in after the incident happened, you were
4 still in the cab car?

5 A. Correct.

6 Q. In the cab? Were you thrown around, were you --

7 A. I was jostled.

8 Q. Jostled. Okay. Could you walk us through what you did after
9 that?

10 A. Once I felt the impact, I looked at the operations screen to
11 see what error messages were popping up. At the same time, I was
12 trying to call the conductor on the PA, but I saw on the screen
13 that it looked like everything was only localized, that we were in
14 train line, because I was getting red error messages on the
15 display. At the same time, the YE crew engineer was coming out of
16 the tower, coming, walking along the tracks in front of me -- on
17 the tracks in front of me. He was coming aboard to take the train
18 to the yard. Apparently there was a drill move that was about to
19 be made. When he came on board, I informed him, I said to him
20 that I believe we hit the bumper block. He and I proceeded to
21 call the yardmaster on the radio to inform them that we needed EMS
22 to track 6.

23 Q. Who said they needed EMS?

24 A. The YE engineer and myself called the yardmaster. The
25 engineer climbed onto the train.

1 A. Okay.

2 Q. And I had informed him that I believe we hit the bumper
3 block, and that we needed EMS. So he -- we both called the
4 yardmaster over the radio, over channel 1.

5 Q. Okay. How did you determine that you needed EMS? Did you --

6 A. I just --

7 Q. Just made the assumption?

8 A. -- made the call to do it because we hit the bumper block,
9 and it was hard; it was a hard hit.

10 Q. Got it. Okay.

11 A. Okay. So I wasn't going to wait and see. I made the
12 assumption to have EMS show up immediately in case there were
13 people hurt.

14 As soon as that -- I looked out at the passengers that were
15 still in the car, one thing that was going through me was, okay, I
16 need to ascertain who's hurt, who's not hurt; people that are not
17 hurt, let's get them out of the way, get them off the equipment so
18 that I can get EMS to those people that are actually hurt.

19 So one of the passengers is like, you know, something's
20 wrong. And I was like, yeah, I'm trying to still ascertain what
21 happened. Is anybody hurt? There was a lady in the middle of the
22 aisle who was on the floor. I believe she happened to be the
23 passenger who might have broken her leg. I'm not sure.

24 I then asked if anybody else was hurt. Those people who were
25 not hurt, I showed them how to climb over the chairs and to walk

1 through the next car, to follow me into the next car so I can --
2 that car was platformed, so I popped the emergency handles, let
3 them off the train. Continued to walk through the consist to see
4 who else was hurt so that once I was able to get onto the
5 platform, I can inform EMS, police, personnel that were there what
6 cars they needed to go to, how many people that needed attention.
7 It was roughly about 10 or 12
8 people.

9 Q. Did you at any time try to open the doors with your key?

10 A. No. Negative. I wasn't about to do that.

11 Q. Okay. How many doors did you personally open? Do you
12 remember?

13 A. I opened up one, two -- I opened up three doors.

14 Q. Okay. So as --

15 A. The two doors in the fifth car, and the door on the F end of
16 the fourth car.

17 Q. Okay. What was the demeanor of the people in the train as
18 you were walking through?

19 A. In a state of shock.

20 Q. Okay. Any panic, any -- were they --

21 A. I wouldn't say -- it was more traumatizing than panic.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. More trauma than anything else.

24 Q. Okay. Did you notice the lights in the train? Did you have
25 lights in the hind --

1 A. Yes, we did. Once we hit, and he -- my engineer was getting
2 on, I stuck my head out the window, and I saw that, you know,
3 things were not right.

4 So that's why I decided to start --

5 Q. Walking your way up --

6 A. -- walking forward so I can ascertain what was going on with
7 the passengers, but also I wanted to get to the rest of my crew to
8 see if they were okay, as well.

9 Q. Okay. You said you looked at the display?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. Did you have to put a key in to see that?

12 A. My key was already in the panel?

13 Q. Your key was in the panel. Okay.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. And at any time did you notice that as you were approaching
16 the station --

17 A. No.

18 Q. -- the speed of the train or anything like that? Okay.

19 MR. MEADE: That's all I have. Thank you.

20 MR. TORRES: Bill Neary, SMART Transportation Safety Team.

21 BY MR. NEARY:

22 Q. Chris, I want to get back to something in your training, the
23 fatigue management. Do you recall if components of it -- in other
24 words, what I'm trying to see is did they address in the training
25 managing your rest cycles, managing naps --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. -- when to eat?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Did you think that that training was as extensive as, say,
5 your training to identify signals or operate cab equipment along
6 these lines?

7 A. Pretty much.

8 Q. Say on equal -- and you say you were able to get something
9 from it?

10 A. Yes. Absolutely.

11 MR. NEARY: That's all I have. Thank you.

12 BY MR. ELLIOTT:

13 Q. Mark Elliott. Chris, you said you got two doors in the fifth
14 car, and one door in the fourth car?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. Could you describe how you opened the doors?

17 A. I used the emergency handle above the door, unlatched it, and
18 pulled the door -- and slid the door open.

19 Q. Okay. And then did you try to use dream key to open up the
20 (indiscernible)?

21 A. Wasn't using a dream key? No.

22 Q. You never attempted it?

23 A. I wasn't attempting it.

24 MR. ELLIOTT: Okay. Thank you. That's it.

25 MR. TORRES: Bob Tomaszewski with the FRA.

1 BY MR. TOMASZEWSKI:

2 Q. How many cars were open in the train?

3 A. All six cars were open.

4 Q. All six were open. Okay. When you got -- after the incident
5 happened, did you notice anybody open any windows?

6 A. No, I did not.

7 Q. So everybody in the area that you were in came out through
8 the doors once they were opened?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Coming into the station, you were at the east end in the
11 cab --

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. -- with that? Did you notice about -- or have, maybe, any
14 indication where you were at when the announcement was made that
15 you were coming into --

16 A. It was prior to us actually hitting the platform. We were
17 still in the interlocking when she made the announcement.

18 Q. With you being in that end of the train, you didn't notice
19 this -- obviously you didn't notice the speed had picked up a
20 little, of the train coming in, or -- I mean -- the only reason
21 I'm asking is, you know, you've got a nice set of windows there,
22 and you -- and I mean, I've seen a lot of the assistant conductors
23 coming and just sitting there waiting for the train to platform.
24 And, you know, you're watching the train as it's moving. And I'm
25 just trying to see, you know, you didn't notice any change in the

1 speed?

2 A. No. As far as I'm concerned -- as far as I recollect, the
3 train was coming in -- I recall that it actually slowed down at
4 some point and then it -- and then that's -- as if we were getting
5 ready to, you know, stop. And I was, like I said, I was just
6 waiting for, just to apply the hand brake at that point.

7 Q. Okay. Thank you.

8 Oh, one other question. You only had the one job briefing
9 earlier in, when you met -- when the engineer came in, when you
10 guys met up later on that night?

11 A. Job briefing with the engineer?

12 Q. Yeah. So there was no complete --

13 A. He -- we went over the -- he and I went over the complete
14 job.

15 Q. And --

16 A. The report, complete rest of the job for the day.

17 Q. And the conductor wasn't part of that?

18 A. Then I shared it with the conductor.

19 Q. Okay. All right.

20 MR. TOMASZEWSKI: Thank you.

21 MR. MARALDO: Rob Maraldo, no questions.

22 BY MR. HILL:

23 Q. Hi, Donald Hill, BLET Safety Task Force. I have a few
24 questions. You used the term general notice. For the record,
25 could you explain what a general notice is?

1 A. General notice is a publication that comes out from the
2 railroad which basically goes over any changes that have been made
3 to either our timetable or our operating rules.

4 Q. And how often do they come out?

5 A. They come out an average of once a week, sometimes twice a
6 week.

7 Q. Generally speaking, not just on this day of this incident, do
8 the crew go over the general notices as part of their job
9 briefing?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Is this the only type of --

12 A. Well, wait -- let me amend that. It depends. The answer is
13 no, but if it's something that takes -- that's taking effect that
14 day, the exact same day, then yes. I would go over it with the
15 conductor.

16 Q. Is this the only type of notice that you carry?

17 A. There's also a -- what is it -- the speed restriction notices
18 as well.

19 Q. And how often do those come out?

20 A. Once a week.

21 Q. When was the last time you was tested by your road
22 supervisor, or road foreman, efficiency test?

23 A. I don't get tested by a road foreman.

24 Q. Do you have any type of efficiency testings at all?

25 A. What do you mean by efficiency test?

1 Q. Like somebody come up to check you, your performance of the
2 job on the train, while you're working the train, your supervisor?

3 A. Somebody evaluating me?

4 Q. Yes.

5 A. Not really.

6 Q. Now you used the term YE engineer. For the record, could
7 you explain that that is?

8 A. That's the drill crew. Because it --

9 Q. I'm sorry.

10 A. It's the yard drill crew that would be responsible for taking
11 the equipment from the station or wherever they're located and
12 bringing it to the yard facility.

13 Q. And you stated that the yard -- I just -- I know you've
14 answered it, but I just want to be clear in my head. You stated
15 that this YE engineer entered the train after it stopped --

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. -- at Atlantic Avenue?

18 A. Um-hum.

19 Q. And how did he enter the train?

20 A. He climbed up -- he came around the off-cab side, and he
21 keyed himself on. Climbed up on the equipment --

22 Q. So he was able to --

23 A. -- (indiscernible).

24 Q. -- to open the door with his key?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. Thank you, sir. I thank you.

2 A. You're welcome.

3 MR. HILL: That's all I have.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

5 BY MR. BECKER:

6 Q. Chris, how you doing? This is Bret Becker from Long Island.

7 A. How are you?

8 Q. Good. I just got a few questions. Throughout the
9 assignment, did you have -- take any exception to the equipment?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Was there any problems that you noticed?

12 A. No exceptions.

13 Q. Okay. And all the brake tests were performed as required?

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. Okay. At any point did you notice the engineer acting
16 erratically, or his behavior was, you know, abnormal, in your
17 opinion?

18 A. No, not at all.

19 Q. Okay. And just to expand on Mr. Hill's question before, I
20 was wondering -- he had mentioned about the road foreman not
21 testing you, but did you ever have an opportunity to have a
22 transportation manager perform the SAFER on you?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. And that's part of our efficiency test?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. And you were tested as per -- since you are a
2 certified conductor, as per 218?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. Thank you.

5 MR. BECKER: I have no further questions.

6 BY MS. LEE:

7 Q. I actually do have a couple questions. And I'm going to
8 stand up so I'm not behind you. Okay?

9 A. Okay.

10 MS. GARCIA: State your name, please.

11 MS. LEE: Janet Lee, FRA.

12 BY MS. LEE:

13 Q. You talked briefly about -- and I know -- company cell
14 phones. Are all crew members issued company cell phones?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. And can you just tell me a little bit about what you use- the
17 cell phones for, what they are capable of doing?

18 A. We receive -- we can receive messages from PIO, which is in
19 conjunction with our moving BRIL (ph.), sending out text messages
20 as to things going on the railroad that would be causing delays,
21 or other information that might be necessary as a conductor to
22 know about what's going on with the moving of the system.

23 Q. Do you have any -- are there any restrictions on your cell
24 phone, on a company cell phone as far as use?

25 A. Well, we're not really -- we're not supposed to use it while

1 we're engaged in the movement of the train unless it's an
2 emergency.

3 Q. But, obviously, if it's an emergency you can use it?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. If -- an opportunity you can use it?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. The other question I have is related to the engineer, and as
8 you were describing all the work that you had done after the
9 incident occurred.

10 A. Um-hum.

11 Q. Did you see the engineer?

12 A. I eventually got to the front of the train. When I got to
13 the front of the train, I saw him in the -- he was sitting in the
14 middle of the train with a fireman and a police officer, and I
15 just basically asked him if he was all right. And that was pretty
16 much it.

17 MS. LEE: Okay. That's all I have. Thanks.

18 BY MR. TORRES:

19 Q. Okay, Tomas Torres with NTSB. Chris, you said you guys
20 performed some air brake tests. Can you describe those for us,
21 and what's involved?

22 A. Basically I gave the sequence of buzzers that are necessary
23 to perform to test the fluidity of the brake system throughout the
24 train, make sure it's train line, and make sure there's no
25 irregularities with the brakes being train line.

1 Q. How do you determine if the brakes apply and release?

2 A. I give series of four short for him to release the brakes,
3 and then four short to apply the brakes, and then one to -- that
4 I acknowledge that the brakes were released and applied. He'll
5 dump the train. I'll give him one to recharge. Once he
6 recharges, I'll give him four short again, depending -- well, on
7 this equipment, it was N-7 equipment, so I'll give him four short
8 again. He'll release the brakes. I'll give him -- he'll apply
9 the emergency brake valve. I'll give him one short to recharge.
10 Once he recharges, he released the brakes. And then I'll give him
11 one long to show that I saw that the train applied and released
12 and is train line.

13 Q. Okay. So when you say you gave him a signal, you're using
14 the horn, or --

15 A. We use the buzzers as --

16 Q. Buzzers?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. So you -- there's a button there?

19 A. Yeah, there's a buzzer.

20 Q. At his station?

21 A. What?

22 Q. And it buzzes him up?

23 A. Yeah, the buzzers are train lined. It's part of the
24 communication system of the train.

25 Q. Oh, okay. So when you mean dump, you mean like he puts it

1 into emergency --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- emergency brake application? So is there a visual
4 inspection on the brakes, when the brake shoes come against the
5 wheels?

6 A. No. You use the -- we use the brake pipe gauge.

7 Q. Okay. So there's a reduction of air brake?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. That's how you determine that the brake's applied? And when
10 there's an increase of air pressure --

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. -- the brake's released?

13 A. Yeah.

14 MR. BECKER: Bret Becker, Long Island. You're looking at a
15 duplex air gauge, correct?

16 MR. VAZOULAS: Correct.

17 MR. BECKER: And you're also looking at brake cylinder
18 pressure for application and release?

19 MR. VAZOULAS: Yes.

20 MR. BECKER: Okay. The brake pipe pressure does not increase
21 and decrease only for the emergency brake application, correct?

22 MR. VAZOULAS: Correct.

23 MR. BECKER: Thank you.

24 BY MR. TORRES:

25 Q. Okay. What other tests, other than a standing air brake

1 test? Is there any other air brake tests?

2 A. No.

3 Q. When the train departs the station, is there an air brake
4 test performed?

5 A. The rear-end brake test. That's the only one we perform.

6 Q. So there's no running air brake test?

7 A. If there's a -- the running test is performed by the
8 engineer, not by the brakeman or the conductor.

9 Q. And when he performs it, can you tell when it's being
10 performed? Does he let you know, notify you?

11 A. No, he doesn't let us know.

12 Q. So he just does it on his own?

13 A. Correct.

14 MR. TORRES: Anne.

15 MS. GARCIA: Thank you.

16 BY MS. GARCIA:

17 Q. Anne Garcia. Couple of follow up questions, Chris. You
18 mentioned that you instructed the passengers how to climb over the
19 seats

20 in order to vacate. So why was that necessary, just for the
21 record?

22 A. Because there was a woman in the -- laying down in the middle
23 aisle who said that she could not move because her leg was hurt.

24 So I wasn't going to move her in case there was something wrong.

25 So it was necessary to get the people behind her to actually climb

1 over the seats to go --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- to evacuate the train.

4 Q. And were they able to do that?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Okay. There were --

7 A. They weren't happy about it. But, yes, they did it.

8 Q. Right. And from where you were positioned

9 in the car, observing what happened, take us from the point --

10 from before the point of impact, what were the passengers doing as

11 -- approaching the station and then after impact, what were they

12 doing?

13 A. Some of them were still sitting. Some of them were standing,
14 getting ready to walk forward to exit the train.

15 Q. Okay. From the same car, or --

16 A. From that car.

17 Q. -- did they have to -- okay.

18 So all the cars on the train were able to exit onto the
19 platform?

20 A. No. The last 2 cars are not able to exit on the platform.

21 Because of the gap issue in Atlantic Terminal, only the first four
22 cars, the doors would open.

23 Q. Okay. So when you said that you were in the last car,
24 you were in the last car that passengers were allowed on?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Not the last car --

2 A. No.

3 Q. -- of the train?

4 A. No, I was in the last car of the train. There were
5 passengers in the last car of the train.

6 Q. Okay. Now, I'm a little confused.

7 MR. BECKER: Bret Becker, Long Island Railroad. Because of
8 the way this platform is, they're allowed in the rear car --

9 MS. GARCIA: Um-hum.

10 MR. BECKER: -- two rear cars; they're just not allowed to
11 exit onto the platform at that particular station, so we're asking
12 them to move forward to exit. And that's why we had the door
13 toggled, the toggle thrown in the fourth car, and they would be
14 asked to --

15 MR. VAZOULAS: Walk forward.

16 MS. BECKER: -- (indiscernible) cars are going to open, the
17 doors are going to open on the first four cars.

18 MS. GARCIA: Okay.

19 MR. BECKER: Okay?

20 MS. GARCIA: Thank you.

21 MR. BECKER: You're welcome.

22 BY MS. GARCIA:

23 Q. So your position in the last car, your normal procedure on
24 coming into the station would be you would be waiting for the
25 passengers all to move forward --

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. -- in the train
3 so they could exit?

4 A. Correct. I'm supposed to clear that -- I'm supposed to clear
5 out those two cars and walk to clear the train to meet my
6 conductor, because we were going to lose that equipment and pick
7 up new equipment for our last train, and normally you would just
8 clear the train and close up the doors so that the next crew can
9 take over the equipment.

10 Q. And on this day, after the impact, you said that one
11 passenger was on the floor --

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. -- you were instructing other passengers how to climb over
14 the seats so they could evacuate the train.

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. Okay. Did you also climb over the seats to evacuate? Or did
17 you stay with that passenger?

18 A. I climbed over the seat to get those people out -- I asked
19 one passenger to stay with her, okay, if they didn't mind to stay
20 with her while I got everybody else out. And then when I moved
21 up, and then I looked out on the -- as I opened up the doors and I
22 saw that there were police personnel already on the platform, I
23 informed one of the policemen about the injured passenger that was
24 on the floor.

25 Q. Okay. Thank you.

1 Afterwards, did you have an opportunity to walk through the
2 entire train?

3 A. Not the entire train. Just the first -- the rear three -- 4,
4 5 and 6, those last three cars.

5 Q. And are those the cars that are typically within your
6 responsibility?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. So that would be a normal activity for you anyway?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. You mentioned the yard engineer --

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. -- that boarded, did you know him already?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. How do you know him? For how long have you known him?

15 A. I've worked with him before, when I was actually working in
16 the yards. And I worked with him over the last 3 or 4 -- 4 or 5
17 years.

18 Q. Okay. Were there other crew member with the yard engineer to
19 take the train to the yard?

20 A. I would assume they were on the west end waiting to get on
21 that end of the train.

22 Q. So there are other crew members that would accompany the
23 train --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- to the yard? Okay. And what positions would they have?

1 A. That would have been conductor.

2 Q. Just one other crew?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. And you did not see that person?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay. Thank you very much.

7 A. You're welcome.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No further questions.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No further questions.

10 BY MR. ELLIOTT:

11 Q. Mark Elliott. Just to clarify. When the yard engineer
12 walked up to the train, got keyed up at the R-1 door of the east
13 car, they used their dream key to open the door from the outside?

14 A. In retrospect, I'm not sure how he got on. I'm not sure if
15 he used his key or not. I know he got on, but I don't know if he
16 used his dream key or not.

17 MR. ELLIOTT: That's it. Thank you.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have no further questions.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

21 BY MR. BECKER:

22 Q. Brett Becker, Long Island, just one quick question, a follow-
23 up. It was asked in reference to the cell phone, and I just
24 wanted to ask you if you have knowledge, does the engineer get
25 issued a company cell phone?

1 A. No. As far as I know, they do not.

2 MR. BECKER: Thank you. No further questions.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No further questions. Thanks.

4 MR. TESSITORE: May I? Vincent Tessitore. Again, there's a
5 contractual agreement on company-issued cell phone between the
6 organization and the carrier on all aspects of how they're used,
7 restrictions, and things that you guys can gain access to for more
8 detail on how that all pans out in the field.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

10 MR. TORRES: Tomas Torres with the NTSB. I don't have any
11 further questions. Does anybody else have any?

12 Okay. This will conclude the interview with the assistant
13 conductor at 12:41 p.m.

14 (Whereupon, at 12:41 p.m., 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: COLLISION OF LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD
 (LIRR) TRAIN NO. 2817 WITH THE
 PLATFORM AT ATLANTIC TERMINAL,
 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, JANUARY 4, 2017
 Interview of Christopher Vazoulas

ACCIDENT NUMBER: DCA17FR002

PLACE: Jamaica, New York

DATE: January 6, 2017

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.

Karen Coen Brooks
Transcriber