

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

----- :
 IN RE: :
 :
 THE HEAD-ON COLLISION : NTSB Accident No.
 THAT OCCURRED NEAR : DCA16FR008
 PANHANDLE, TEXAS ON :
 JUNE 28, 2016 :
 :
 :
 ----- :

Interview of: Vincent Blake

Thursday,
June 30, 2016

Pampa, Texas

BEFORE:

TOMAS TORRES, NTSB
 AARON RATLEDGE, BNSF
 STEVE DUPONT, FRA
 ERICH JESKE, BLET
 RAFAEL MARSHALL, NTSB
 STEVE FACKLAM, BLET
 KAMRON SAUNDERS, SMART TD
 CHRIS MARTINEZ, FRA

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

APPEARANCES:

On Behalf of the Interviewee:

VINCENT BLAKE (pro se), BNSF Train Dispatcher

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

(Time not Given)

MR. TORRES: Okay. We'll get started here.

My name is Tomas Torres, T-O-M-A-S, T-O-R-R-E-S.

Today's date is June 30th, 2016. We are at Pampa, Texas in a Holiday Inn Express interviewing the train dispatcher, Vince Blake, in connection with an accident that occurred near Panhandle, Texas on June 28th, 2016.

The NTSB accident number is DCA16FR008. And the purpose of the investigation is to increase safety, not to assign fault, blame or liability. NTSB cannot offer any guarantee of confidentiality or immunity from legal or certificate actions. A transcript or summary of the interview will go into the public docket.

The interviewee can have one representative of the interviewee's choice. Do you have anybody that you want to have stand by next to you or anything like that?

MR. BLAKE: No, I'm fine.

MR. TORRES: Okay. Do you understand that the interview is being recorded?

MR. BLAKE: Absolutely.

MR. TORRES: Okay. Would you please state your name and spell it?

MR. BLAKE: My name is Vincent Blake, V-I-N-

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 C-E-N-T, last name Blake, B-L-A-K-E.

2 MR. TORRES: Okay. Thank you. BNSF?

3 MR. RATLEDGE: Good morning, Vince. It's
4 Aaron Ratledge.

5 MR. BLAKE: Good morning.

6 MR. RATLEDGE: How are you, sir?

7 MR. BLAKE: Doing well under the
8 circumstances.

9 MR. RATLEDGE: Understood. My name --
10 spelling my name, it's A-A-R-O-N, R-A-T-L-E-D-G-E.

11 MR. SAUNDERS: Good morning, Vincent.
12 Kamron Saunders with SMART TD. It's K-A-M-R-O-N, S-A-
13 U-N-D-E-R-S.

14 MR. JESKE: Good morning, Vincent. Erich
15 Jeske, BLET Safety Task Force, E-R-I-C-H, J-E-S-K-E.

16 MR. MARSHALL: Hello, Vince. This is Rafael
17 Marshall. I'm with the National Transportation Safety
18 Board. It's R-A-F-A-E-L, M-A-R-S-H-A-L-L.

19 MR. FACKLAM: Hi Vince. Steve Facklam, BLET
20 Safety Task Force, Primary Investigator, S-T-E-V-E, F-
21 A-C-K-L-A-M.

22 MR. MARTINEZ: Good morning, Vince. Chris
23 Martinez, FRA, C-H-R-I-S, M-A-R-T-I-N-E-Z.

24 MR. DUPONT: Good morning, Vince. Steve
25 Dupont with the FRA Operating Practices, S-T-E-V-E, D-

1 U-P-O-N-T.

2 MR. TORRES: Okay, Vince. That was
3 everybody's introduction there. This is Tomas here
4 with the NTSB. Can you give us a brief history of your
5 work history with the BNSF?

6 MR. BLAKE: Yes. I hired out for Sante Fe
7 Railway in February 1976 as a clerk. I was promoted to
8 engineer August 1981 out of Chicago to Fort Madison. I
9 transferred to California in May-ish of 1986, I
10 believe, working as an engineer.

11 From there, in 1991, I became a train
12 dispatcher in the Albuquerque office for Sante Fe
13 Railway. In 1993, we had transferred back up to
14 Schaumburg, Illinois working in the SOC and I was a
15 train dispatcher there.

16 A short time after that, six months or so, I
17 went back into engine service in Chicago area. And
18 then in 1994 I became a train dispatcher again in the
19 Fort Worth office. And then in 1998 I became a chief
20 dispatcher in Fort Worth, Texas.

21 And we were transferred as a chief
22 dispatcher up to the Kansas City Regional Operation
23 Center in August of 2000. And I was a chief dispatcher
24 up until June 1st of this year, 2016, where I exercised
25 my seniority and went back into dispatching service.

1 MR. TORRES: Okay. How long have you been
2 working in this territory dispatching?

3 MR. BLAKE: I came back on June 1st of this
4 year on the Hereford split dispatching desk that I was
5 on.

6 MR. TORRES: Well, what's your work schedule
7 like? You know, you --

8 MR. BLAKE: We tied in an 0630 a.m. first
9 shift and we take transfer somewhere around 1430 in the
10 afternoon.

11 MR. TORRES: So you work daylights --

12 MR. BLAKE: Correct.

13 MR. TORRES: -- Monday through Friday or
14 what's your rest day?

15 MR. BLAKE: Monday through Friday is
16 correct, yes.

17 MR. TORRES: And what kind of territory is
18 this that you --

19 MR. BLAKE: This is --

20 MR. TORRES: -- you're on?

21 MR. BLAKE: I have approximately 70, 75
22 miles. It's double track CTC from West Tampa, which is
23 Milepost 500 all the way in to Amarillo where it
24 becomes triple main track there at Milepost 555 at
25 Amarillo south yard terminal. And then it becomes --

1 that's all -- everything on the desk is CTC. And then
2 west of Amarillo it goes back down to two main tracks,
3 CTC territory, and I handle to Canyon, Texas which is
4 basically Milepost 569.

5 MR. TORRES: Okay. When you're dispatching
6 do you have like a log of when the crews go on duty or
7 the names of them?

8 MR. BLAKE: Yes, federal train sheets we
9 have.

10 MR. TORRES: Is that to keep hours of
11 service?

12 MR. BLAKE: Keep hours of service mandated
13 by FRA, yes.

14 MR. TORRES: And when you're dispatched
15 trains, you know, how do you dispatch them, like as far
16 as who has priority or what?

17 MR. BLAKE: BNSF runs priority traffic. We
18 dispatch by priority of trains.

19 MR. TORRES: And what's the decision? You
20 know, who makes the decision who's going to take the
21 siding or who's going to run down the main or, you
22 know, how does that work?

23 MR. BLAKE: Normally, in my mind I normally
24 put the first train that's going to arrive at the
25 location in the siding. I also take in the

1 consideration the stack train was 10,000 feet. So
2 there's various considerations being made before I make
3 a decision.

4 MR. TORRES: So it depends who's closer to
5 the siding and train length and what's the most
6 practical way to do it, is that it?

7 MR. BLAKE: Correct. Yes, it varies from
8 situation to situation.

9 MR. TORRES: So you don't automatically run
10 like Z trains down the main all the time or like --

11 MR. BLAKE: I try to keep the high priority
12 traffic on straight rail. And, you know, move slower
13 traffic out of the way if possible. But again, that's
14 a situational approach.

15 MR. TORRES: Okay. So on the day of the
16 incident, June 28th, can you describe, you know, when
17 you went on duty and, you know, what you did -- what
18 your activities were up to that point?

19 MR. BLAKE: I came on duty. I took transfer
20 at 6:30 a.m. and signed in, took control of my
21 territory and began dispatching trains, taking care of
22 what needed to be taken care of the falls and issues
23 presented themselves. Just a regular basic day is all.

24 MR. TORRES: Okay. So that day do you know
25 what time the crews went on duty? I mean, do you

1 recall?

2 MR. BLAKE: Yeah, the stack LECLPH 126 was
3 on duty at 6:15. And the westbound train to Q CHI
4 started 6:27. That crew was on duty at 0145 at
5 Wellington.

6 MR. TORRES: Okay. As you were dispatching
7 those two trains can you describe what your activities
8 were?

9 MR. BLAKE: Yes, at about 8:06 I attempted
10 to raise the stack LACLPC 126 to BNF 5162 on the radio
11 to give them a courtesy heads up about the meet that
12 was going to take place at the Panhandle.

13 I was unable to hear the BSNF 5162 answer
14 the radio. And a little bit after that I had asked for
15 a radio check. At that point somebody else had said my
16 radio check was good and then they went on to ask about
17 changing GTBs and changing the engine number on their
18 GTB and other issues going on.

19 At that time I crossed over the stack LACLPC
20 126 from Main 2 the main one at Roberts, which is
21 Milepost 538.2, to make them meet at Panhandle at
22 Control Point 5261 which is basically Milepost 526 with
23 the Q CHI about 627 and that was to allow the Z train,
24 the Z SBDWSB 626 to get around the stack train running
25 on -- I was going to keep him on Main 2. And the stack

1 train would get around the -- excuse me. The Z SBDWSB
2 626 would get around the stack train while they were
3 making a meet at Panhandle.

4 Then at 8:12 I contacted the Q CHI squad,
5 BNSF 5416, on the radio and I did advise them on the
6 upcoming meet at Panhandle with the stack train. That
7 crew did answer me and responded. Although, the stack
8 train, even though I attempted to contact them, I did
9 not hear them respond.

10 I contacted the Q CHI squad 627 at 8:12 and
11 then about 8:22 I noticed the switch at CP 5261 on Main
12 1 track that was lined for the siding with a signal
13 showing line westbound from the main track to the
14 siding.

15 It went into -- it showed occupied and the
16 symbol from the Q train had jumped up into the occupied
17 indication and the switch was flashing out of
18 correspondence. So I immediately started calling for
19 both the BNSF 5416 and the BNSF 5162. Neither train
20 answered.

21 At this time I notified my chief dispatcher
22 who was working behind me that we had a situation going
23 on where neither train was talking. And I noticed the
24 track indication pop in around that same time on Main
25 Track 2.

1 I immediately started calling both of the
2 trains. Neither train answered as I said before. And
3 then the track indication, I then called the Z SBDWSB
4 626 for their location and they informed me that they
5 were approaching CP5314 and the signal had dropped on
6 them.

7 I informed them to stay west of CP5314.
8 They immediately secured the area and escalated the
9 situation to both the ROC supervision here and called
10 for field employees out in the field, anyone around the
11 Panhandle area, to respond to Panhandle because I had
12 not known what was taking place at that time. I just
13 knew that we had -- my experience told me that a track
14 light that shows up on the other main and a switch
15 flashing out of correspondence is not a normal
16 situation.

17 MR. TORRES: So the Z train that was going
18 to run around the stack train eastbound, at some point
19 as he was approaching the area, he got a stop
20 indication, a red signal?

21 MR. BLAKE: Yes, he was lined up at
22 eastbound and CP 5416 -- excuse me --

23 MR. TORRES: 5314.

24 MR. BLAKE: -- that CP 5314 is the control
25 point 5314 and the signal -- as a matter of fact, he

1 told me he was at the approach signal and he had a
2 clear. He was at the approach signal, the CP 5314, and
3 he had a clear signal and the approach signal had
4 dropped from clear to yellow.

5 At that time I advised the Z train to stay
6 short of CP 5314 until we find out what we had in front
7 of us with a occupied indication. And I also asked the
8 engineer on the Z train if he could comply with the
9 stop indication at CP 5314 at that time.

10 MR. TORRES: Okay. I'm going to pass it on
11 to the BNSF.

12 MR. RATLEDGE: Vince, I don't have any
13 questions at the moment.

14 MR. BLAKE: Okay. Thank you.

15 MR. SAUNDERS: Kamron Saunders with SMART.
16 I don't have any questions.

17 MR. BLAKE: Thank you.

18 MR. JESKE: Erich Jeske, BLET. No questions
19 at this time.

20 MR. MARSHALL: Rafael Marshall with the
21 NTSB. I don't have any questions either.

22 MR. FACKLAM: Steve Facklam, BLET. Vince,
23 quickly, I just wanted to recap some of this. So you
24 had -- the stack train, you'd crossed over from two to
25 on at approximately 538.2, is that correct?

1 MR. BLAKE: That's correct.

2 MR. FACKLAM: Okay. And with the intention
3 on bringing the Z train around on Main Track 1 -- or
4 Main Track 2, I'm sorry.

5 MR. BLAKE: Correct. The Z train was going
6 to operate Main Track 2.

7 MR. FACKLAM: Okay. And both these were
8 eastbound trains.

9 MR. BLAKE: Correct.

10 MR. FACKLAM: Did the stack clear up the
11 crossover movement at 53.2 -- or I'm sorry. Did the
12 stack clear up the crossover -- did he completely go
13 through the crossover at 538.2, if you --

14 MR. BLAKE: Yes.

15 MR. FACKLAM: Okay. And did that crossover
16 then align for straight rail for Main 2 and Main 1
17 after that?

18 MR. BLAKE: Correct.

19 MR. FACKLAM: Okay. With the signals, do
20 you recall what the signals would've been or what they
21 were showing on your display on Main Track 2? I guess
22 what I'm getting at, would the signals have then gone
23 clear on Main 2 for that Z train?

24 MR. BLAKE: On my machine they did not show
25 signal --

1 MR. FACKLAM: Well --

2 MR. BLAKE: -- mains or signal aspects --

3 MR. FACKLAM: Okay.

4 MR. BLAKE: -- just that they're lined up.

5 MR. FACKLAM: Okay. So it would've --

6 MR. BLAKE: But nothing in front of it.

7 Would you think that, you know, that they would have
8 gotten a clear --

9 MR. FACKLAM: Okay.

10 MR. BLAKE: -- aspect.

11 MR. FACKLAM: But -- okay. But you noted --
12 or did you see the crossover that line and then it was
13 straight rail for that Z train? I guess that's --

14 MR. BLAKE: Correct.

15 MR. FACKLAM: Okay. Okay. That's what I
16 wanted to get at. That's all I have at this time.
17 Thanks, Vince.

18 MR. MARTINEZ: Chris Martinez. No questions
19 at this time.

20 MR. DUPONT: Steve Dupont. Can you tell us
21 any conversations you had with the eastbound train from
22 the time they went on duty up to the time that the
23 switch went out of correspondence and you were trying
24 to contact them?

25 MR. BLAKE: I did attempt to contact them

1 about ten minutes prior to the switch going out of
2 correspondence at CP 5261 to give them a courtesy heads
3 up about the meet about to take place there at
4 Panhandle, and I was unable hear them answer.

5 MR. DUPONT: Okay. Did you have any
6 conversation with them when they first came on duty
7 verifying the bulletins and any of that?

8 MR. BLAKE: No, just I may have had a
9 conversation with them when they said they were ready
10 to go, I'm not a hundred percent sure of that, when
11 they were ready to depart Amarillo.

12 MR. DUPONT: Okay. So just so I'm clear, in
13 essence from the time they went on duty to the time of
14 the incident there was no contact between you and them?

15 MR. BLAKE: That's correct.

16 MR. DUPONT: You tried to get them, but you
17 never got them?

18 MR. BLAKE: That's correct.

19 MR. DUPONT: Okay. No other questions.

20 MR. TORRES: Okay. It's Tomas with the
21 NTSB. How many attempts did you make to contact them?

22 MR. BLAKE: I believe I only attempted to
23 contact them that one time.

24 MR. TORRES: Okay. How about radios? Is
25 there like different radio frequencies out there where

1 they have to switch?

2 MR. BLAKE: There is a -- they switch at
3 Roberts there from Channel 28 to Channel 36.

4 MR. TORRES: And is Roberts east of
5 Amarillo?

6 MR. BLAKE: Roberts is Milepost -- it is
7 east of Amarillo. It's Milepost 538.2.

8 MR. TORRES: How far is that out of Amarillo
9 once they depart? Is it --

10 MR. BLAKE: Amarillo is Milepost 555.2.
11 Amarillo Junior South Yard crew office is Milepost
12 555.2 to 555.4, something like that. So, what's that
13 16 miles?

14 MR. TORRES: So when they depart Amarillo,
15 they're operating in Channel 55, 28?

16 MR. BLAKE: No. Yeah, they run on Channel
17 28 for about approximately 16 miles and then they
18 switch over to Channel 36.

19 MR. TORRES: Okay. Do you recall what time
20 they departed Amarillo when you lit them up?

21 MR. BLAKE: Not precisely, but I would guess
22 somewhere around -- I don't know exactly what time I
23 gave that signal to them to depart Amarillo. I don't
24 want to make assumptions.

25 MR. TORRES: Right So what radio channel

1 did you use when you made an effort to contact them?

2 MR. BLAKE: I believe Channel 28, possibly
3 36 as well. I'm not positive. I know it was Channel
4 36 when I contacted the Q train at 8:12 and told them
5 about the pending meet at the Panhandle.

6 MR. TORRES: Okay. I'll pass it on again to
7 the BNSF.

8 MR. BLAKE: Right. And at 8:12 when I was
9 telling the Q train about that meet at Panhandle, the
10 stack train should've been on Channel 36 also.

11 MR. TORRES: Okay. So when that westbound
12 acknowledged you do you remember that conversation? I
13 know it was brief, but do you?

14 MR. BLAKE: Yes. Yes, I absolutely do.

15 MR. TORRES: Well, what did they say to you?
16 How did they respond?

17 MR. BLAKE: They responded okay, we'll meet
18 one at Panhandle and then come on into town, thank you
19 or some kind of acknowledgment like that.

20 MR. RATLEDGE: Hey, Vince, it's Aaron
21 Ratledge, BNSF.

22 MR. BLAKE: Yes, sir.

23 MR. RATLEDGE: Just one clarifying question,
24 do you recall if the stack train was east of CP Roberts
25 when you attempted to call them?

1 MR. BLAKE: I don't recall --

2 MR. RATLEDGE: Okay.

3 MR. BLAKE: -- exactly where they were at.

4 MR. RATLEDGE: Okay. Thanks. That's all I
5 have.

6 MR. SAUNDERS: Kamron Saunders with SMART.
7 Can you tell me what is the approximate mile pole
8 location of the east switch at Panhandle?

9 MR. BLAKE: That's Control Point 5261, so
10 that would be Milepost 526.

11 MR. SAUNDERS: Okay. All right. Thank you.

12 MR. JESKE: Erich Jeske, BLET. What channel
13 did you attempt to raise the stack train on? Was it 36
14 or 28?

15 MR. BLAKE: I'm not sure.

16 MR. JESKE: Okay.

17 MR. BLAKE: I believe it was -- yes, I'm not
18 sure which one it was.

19 MR. JESKE: Okay. Thank you very much.

20 MR. BLAKE: I think it was Channel 28.

21 MR. JESKE: Okay. 28 for the stack train to
22 inform them of the pending meet at Panhandle?

23 MR. BLAKE: Right. I believe.

24 MR. JESKE: Okay.

25 MR. BLAKE: I'm not positive about that.

1 MR. JESKE: I don't have any more questions.

2 MR. TORRES: This is Tomas with the NTSB.

3 Do you recall the speed of the trains, all three of
4 them?

5 MR. BLAKE: You mean how fast they were
6 authorized to operate?

7 MR. TORRES: Correct.

8 MR. BLAKE: I believe that all three of them
9 were 70 mile-an-hour trains. I'm not positive about
10 that either.

11 MR. TORRES: Okay. And that Z train, what
12 time did that crew go on duty?

13 MR. BLAKE: The Z train, he was on duty at -
14 - I don't recall precisely what time he was on duty,
15 but it was fairly close behind the stack LACLPC 126
16 which was on duty at 6:15. So I'm thinking the Z train
17 was on duty at something like 6:30 maybe, if I remember
18 right. But I'm not positive about that.

19 MR. TORRES: Okay. I don't have any more
20 questions then.

21 MR. DUPONT: One more. Okay. Vince, Steve
22 Dupont. Can you tell me, we have two voice recordings
23 and I don't know which one would identify with Channel
24 28, which one would identify with Channel 36. One is
25 the white Deerfield audio. What tower is that?

1 MR. BLAKE: That would be Channel 36.

2 MR. DUPONT: All right. 36. Okay. And the
3 other one, let's see, shows to be the Hereford split
4 dispatcher.

5 MR. BLAKE: Yes, that's my position.

6 MR. DUPONT: That's 28? That's audio.
7 Would that be 28?

8 MR. BLAKE: Well, the Amarillo tower is
9 Channel 28. I work both towers on that position.

10 MR. DUPONT: Yes. The label on this
11 recording that we received from BNSF, it says Hereford
12 split dispatcher audio.

13 MR. BLAKE: Yes, the audio I don't think
14 deciphers between channels. I'm not positive about
15 that. It's just the dispatching desk. It gives the
16 audio, but it doesn't decipher what channel it's coming
17 from.

18 MR. DUPONT: Okay. So what I should have, I
19 guess, is an audio for each one. Since you have two
20 different channels, I should have an audio for Channel
21 28 and one for 36 and that would've captured any
22 conversations you would've had with any of those three
23 trains, correct?

24 MR. BLAKE: Yes, on any channel.

25 MR. DUPONT: And those towers, sometime in

1 my experience in the old KCS dispatch center is
2 sometimes those towers you actually bleed over. So if
3 I get both towers, whether there was a bleed over or
4 not, I still should capture everything, correct?

5 MR. BLAKE: Well, I'm not a telecom expert -
6 -

7 MR. DUPONT: Okay.

8 MR. BLAKE: -- but I would -- I know what
9 you're saying about bleeding over, but --

10 MR. DUPONT: Right.

11 MR. BLAKE: -- I think that would probably
12 be more of a question for the telecom people.

13 MR. DUPONT: Okay. All right. Thank you.

14 MR. BLAKE: You're welcome.

15 MR. TORRES: This is Tomas Torres with the
16 NTSB. On the information that you get on the train
17 crews and the train themselves, can you tell which ones
18 were equipped with or equipped or operating with a trip
19 optimizer?

20 MR. BLAKE: No, like I don't know which
21 trains operate with optimizers or not.

22 MR. TORRES: Okay.

23 MR. JESKE: Erich Jeske, BLET Safety Task
24 Force. I just have one other question. What tower did
25 you request the radio check on, do you recall?

1 MR. BLAKE: Tower 28.

2 MR. JESKE: Tower 28 was for the radio
3 check. Okay. Thank you.

4 MR. TORRES: Anybody else any questions?
5 No? Okay. I've got a couple more questions for you.
6 Do you get tested? Do you have an efficiency test out
7 there?

8 MR. BLAKE: Oh yes.

9 MR. TORRES: Can you give us a description
10 of what they are?

11 MR. BLAKE: Do you mean operations test?

12 MR. TORRES: Yes, like did somebody test
13 you, like your chief on the --

14 MR. BLAKE: Yes.

15 MR. TORRES: Can you give us a description
16 of what type of tests they are?

17 MR. BLAKE: Pretty much everything that's in
18 the rule book. I mean, train passed the -- you know,
19 flagging trains, switches on hand, stop indication, you
20 know, changing established route. That's why I asked
21 if the engineer can comply with a stop signal even
22 though it was in stop position. It's still got to do
23 that. I mean, we get tested on the entire rule book
24 and dispatcher's manual. I don't know what more you
25 want me to elaborate on that.

1 MR. TORRES: No, I was just trying to see,
2 you know, what kind of tests, you know, your supervisor
3 conducts on --

4 MR. BLAKE: Everything from cover to cover.

5 MR. TORRES: Okay. Is that frequently, once
6 a week, once a month? I mean, how often do you get
7 tested?

8 MR. BLAKE: It all -- it, you know -- I
9 can't answer that. I'm not the one doing the testing.

10 MR. TORRES: Oh, okay. So they don't let
11 you know when you got tested, whether you passed or
12 failed or was it coach?

13 MR. BLAKE: Yes. As you know, as I stated
14 earlier, I was a chief dispatcher and I just came back
15 to dispatching on June 1st. So in the 28 days that
16 I've been -- well, actually less than that because I
17 trained for some of that, I was contacted on at least
18 two tests that I had passed.

19 MR. TORRES: You say you got on this
20 territory June 1st. Where were you at before that?

21 MR. BLAKE: Chief dispatcher.

22 MR. TORRES: Oh, you were chief dispatcher.
23 Okay. Well.

24 MR. BLAKE: Right.

25 MR. TORRES: Okay. Do you think your

1 training prepared you for the job?

2 MR. BLAKE: Absolutely.

3 MR. TORRES: Did you use your cell phone
4 while on duty this particular day?

5 MR. BLAKE: No, I didn't. Matter of fact I
6 forgot my cell phone that day. No, I do not even have
7 my cell phone on while I'm on duty.

8 MR. TORRES: Okay. Is this a safe place to
9 work for?

10 MR. BLAKE: I'm sorry, I didn't understand
11 the question or didn't --

12 MR. TORRES: Is the BNSF a safe place to
13 work for?

14 MR. BLAKE: Oh, absolutely. Safety is the
15 utmost and it's number one. And nobody that I know
16 over the years has ever taken anything but safety in
17 it's highest possible focus. Whether it be my peers as
18 engineers, my peers as dispatcher or my peers as middle
19 managers, we have always placed that on a pedestal,
20 number one on its own.

21 MR. MARSHALL: This is Rafael Marshall with
22 the NTSB. I was wondering have you or has anybody else
23 within the past month experienced any issues with the
24 dispatch system?

25 MR. BLAKE: Issues with what?

1 MR. MARSHALL: The dispatch system. Has
2 there been any anomalies or have there been any issues
3 that would need repair or anything like that?

4 MR. BLAKE: No.

5 MR. DUPONT: One more, Tom. Steve Dupont,
6 Vincent. Last question. Were you drug tested?

7 MR. BLAKE: No.

8 MR. DUPONT: Okay.

9 MR. TORRES: This is Tomas Torres with the
10 NTSB. Is there anything you would like to add or
11 express?

12 MR. BLAKE: Just one thing, you know, the
13 ultimate communication with trains is obviously signal
14 indication. Me getting a hold of these trains and tell
15 about a upcoming meet is a courtesy on my part and it's
16 something that I try to do as time permits and that is
17 to prevent what just occurred.

18 And I hold myself at a high standard of
19 safety and understand the end from both as an engineer
20 perspective and a dispatching perspective and a middle
21 manager perspective. And something like this is
22 obviously preying on my mind, if you will.

23 I realize that I did nothing wrong
24 personally, but the outcome is unsettling. Even if it
25 didn't happen on my territory and somewhere else, the

1 idea of somebody coming to work and not going home in
2 the same condition that they came in is very unsettling
3 to me. I just happened to be sitting in the chair when
4 it happened.

5 I ask for prayers for the families and
6 friends of these people. I do not take this lightly.
7 And I understand the investigation process that goes on
8 here and I'm willing to answer any more questions that
9 anybody has about this. That's the final word for me
10 as far as what has taken place on this date.

11 MR. TORRES: Okay. I think this is going to
12 be my last question. So when you contacted the train
13 crews that conditions are changing when they are going
14 from one track to another or being lined up to the
15 siding, you call them out of courtesy. Is that
16 correct?

17 MR. BLAKE: I try to if I'm not busy doing
18 other task.

19 MR. TORRES: Yes, so --

20 MR. BLAKE: Dispatching jobs are very busy.

21 MR. TORRES: Right, and I understand. But
22 it's not a requirement?

23 MR. BLAKE: No sir, it is not.

24 MR. SAUNDERS: Vincent, Kamron Saunders with
25 SMART TD. And I just want to let you know that we're

1 praying for you as well. And --

2 MR. BLAKE: Thank you, sir.

3 MR. SAUNDERS: -- if you need help or need
4 to talk to somebody there's people out there. So you -
5 -

6 MR. BLAKE: Thank you, sir. I have a great
7 support here in the ROC with my managers and I do
8 appreciate those comments. I do not take them lightly.

9 MR. SAUNDERS: All right. Well, you take
10 care.

11 MR. BLAKE: Thank you, sir.

12 MR. FACKLAM: Hey, Vince? Steve Facklam.

13 MR. BLAKE: Yes, sir.

14 MR. FACKLAM: After years of working with
15 you out at Kansas City, I know you do a bang up job. I
16 respect the job you do and have no question that you
17 were doing the most professional job of anybody in that
18 dispatching center that night, so.

19 MR. BLAKE: Thank you, sir. I appreciate
20 your comments.

21 MR. RATLEDGE: Vince, I'd be remiss if I
22 didn't say anything either. You did a great job. I
23 appreciate you answering all the questions. Clearly,
24 you're professional with what you do, so glad to have
25 you.

1 MR. BLAKE: Well, I'm here to answer any
2 further questions in the future as well, and thank you.

3 MR. TORRES: Okay. Tomas with the NTSB.
4 Thank you for your candor and giving us the opportunity
5 to interview and asking you questions and you answering
6 them. You did a very good job and we really appreciate
7 it.

8 MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Tom.

9 MR. TORRES: Okay. This will conclude the
10 interview. Thank you very much.

11 MR. BLAKE: Thank you.

12 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went
13 off the record at Time Not Given.)

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

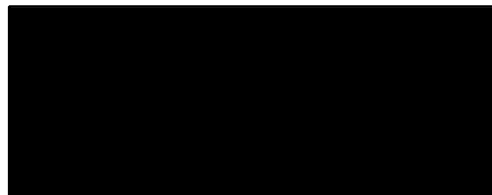
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Head-on Collision that Occurred
Near Panhandle, TX on June 28, 2016
Accident No. DCA16FR008
Interview of Vincent Blake

DATE: June 30, 2016

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 20 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.



NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701