

Accident: Panhandle, TX (DCA-16-FR-008)

Interview of Mrs. Donna Smith (spouse of conductor BNSF eastbound train train S-LACLPC1-26K)

The following is a summary of an interview conducted of Mrs. Donna Smith, the spouse of the conductor of BNSF eastbound train S-LACLPC1-26K. Present at this interview were:

Mrs. Donna Smith

Lawson F. Narvell, Jr. - NTSB

Michael Sable - Representative for Mrs. Smith

Kamron Saunders - SMART

On August 23, 2016 the spouse of the conductor of BNSF eastbound train S-LACLPC1-26K was interviewed in Amarillo, TX to provide relevant information pertaining to his background. The following is a summary of that interview in the context of Human Performance areas of interest.

1. Railroad background. When asked about his railroad career, Mrs. Smith said that the conductor's father had worked for the railroad, that the conductor began his career as a switchman and that in April 2016 he marked 39 years with the railroad, most recently as a conductor.

2. Work/rest schedule. Mrs. Smith said that the weekend before the accident, the conductor arrived home Saturday night, time unrecalled and remained home all day Sunday. She said that about 3:40 p.m. the day before the accident, June 27th, the conductor left a message on her cellphone that he was due to go to work at 1:00 a.m., and that he was getting ready for bed. She stated she spoke with him at about 5:00 p.m. and that when she arrived home about 8:00 p.m. he was sleeping. She recalled hearing him taking a shower at about 4:00 a.m. the following day, June 28th, the day of the accident. She added that he usually was away from home for 36 hours (working/sleeping), and home for 48 hours.

3. Health. Mrs. Smith characterized the conductor's health as good. She said that he used to consume alcohol, but stopped drinking in 2013. although he continued to have an occasional beer (no further information). He did not use illicit drugs. His most recent physical examination before the accident occurred in 2016, and that the physician checked his liver at that time (no further information). She said that he never mentioned being tired/fatigued. She said that he wore prescription lense glasses for 30 years. He had no difficulties with his hearing. Regarding his use of medications, she provided the following information:

Prescription medications:

Temazepam, 30mg (as needed for sleep, generally once per day)

Furosemide, 40mg (as needed for swelling in feet, generally once per day)

Spironolactone, 100mg (for swelling in feet, don't know when this one was added)

Gabapentin, 400mg (as needed for nerve pain in feet, but he didn't think they helped so he rarely took them)

Non-prescription medications:

Mrs. Smith said that after the accident she found a bottle of Melatonin, which had expired, leading her to surmise that the conductor hadn't used it. She also said she found a container of "MidNite Drug-free sleep aid" and that it consisted melatonin, lemon balm, chamomile & lavender. She provided no information as to whether he had used either of them before the accident.

4. Additional information. Mrs. Smith said that she was not aware that the conductor experienced undue stress, was preoccupied or unreasonably distracted with anything in his life. With regards to working for the railroad, she said she was not aware of any problems/difficulties he had with co-workers or supervisors. She was unaware if he has previously worked with the engineer (Mr. Owens) before the accident.