



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
Investigative Hearing

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Metrorail train 302 that encountered heavy smoke in the tunnel between the L'Enfant Plaza Station and the Potomac River Bridge on January 12, 2015

GROUP	
EXHIBIT	

Agency / Organization

Title

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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WMATA INCIDENT AT L'ENFANT PLAZA
STATION, WASHINGTON, D.C.
JANUARY 12, 2015

Docket No.: DCA-15-FR-004

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Interview of: JOHN BUTLER

Washington, D.C.

Thursday,
January 29, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: RICHARD DOWNS, JR.
Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

RICHARD DOWNS, JR., Survival Factors Investigator
Chairman, Survival Factors Technical Working Group
National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

ROBERT JOE GORDON, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

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Office of Emergency Management
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

DERRON HAWKINS, Deputy Fire Chief
Homeland Security & Special Operations Division
D.C. Fire and EMS

JOSEPH TEBO, Program Manager
State Safety Oversight
Tri-State Oversight Committee
Maryland Department of Transportation

JAMES GORDON, Secretary
International Fire Fighters Association Local 36
(Representative on behalf of Mr. Butler)

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I N T E R V I E W

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2 MR. DOWNS: Today's date is January 29, 2015, and the
3 following is an interview being conducted in reference to NTSB
4 investigation number DCA-15-FR-004 which relates to an accident
5 involving a heavy smoke release and train evacuations that
6 occurred in and near the L'Enfant Plaza Station of the WMATA
7 Metrorail system here in Washington, D.C. on the afternoon of
8 January 12, 2015.

9 This interview is being conducted with a member of the
10 District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Medical Services
11 Department as conducted by the NTSB Survival Factors Technical
12 Working Group of the investigation. My name is Richard Downs,
13 Jr., and I am a Survival Factors Investigator with the NTSB in
14 which I also serve in the role as a Survival Factors Technical
15 Working Group Chairperson. I will preside over this interview,
16 which is being recorded for the record in which a transcript may
17 also be compiled of the recording as a permanent docketed record
18 of the interview.

19 I'll now ask that our witness please identify themselves,
20 their employment affiliation, and job position/title for the
21 record.

22 MR. BUTLER: Name is John Butler with the D.C. Fire
23 Department assigned to Truck 6 as the sergeant.

24 MR. DOWNS: Thank you, sir. Thank you for joining us
25 today, and if you're accompanied by anyone here, could you please

1 identify that individual?

2 MR. JAMES GORDON: My name's James Gordon. I'm
3 Secretary for Local 36, and I'll be his union rep today.

4 MR. DOWNS: Thank you. I'll now ask that the
5 participants of this interview who will also have any opportunity
6 to present questions to the witness, to please individually
7 identify themselves, their employment affiliation, and job
8 position/title for the record.

9 MR. ROURKE: Good morning, Sergeant. My name is Denton
10 Rourke. I'm with WMATA. I am the Operations Manager in the
11 Office of Emergency Management.

12 MS. BURTCHE: Good morning. I'm Kimberly Burtch with the
13 Federal Transit Administration's Office of Train Safety and
14 Oversight, and I'm a safety assurance and risk management lead.

15 MR. HAWKINS: Good morning. Derron T. Hawkins, Deputy
16 Fire Chief, D.C. Fire and EMS, Homeland Security Division.

17 MR. TEBO: Good morning. Joe Tebo. I'm with the
18 Maryland Department of Transportation. I'm with the Tri-State
19 Oversight Committee.

20 MR. JOE GORDON: Good morning. Joe Gordon, National
21 Transportation Safety Board investigator in charge on the L'Enfant
22 Plaza incident. And before we get started, just to let you know
23 the purpose of the NTSB investigation is to enhance safety,
24 looking for process improvements, not to assign any fault or
25 blame. And Mr. Downs mentioned the transcripts that will come

1 from the recordings. NTSB cannot offer or guarantee any
2 confidentiality or immunity from legal action or certificate
3 action.

4 With that, Mr. Downs, if you'd like to begin the interview?

5 INTERVIEW OF JOHN BUTLER

6 BY MR. DOWNS:

7 Q. Thank you. And as my first question for this witness,
8 would you please briefly describe for us your role or involvement
9 in this event.

10 A. We received a call stating that --

11 Q. No, no. What was your role in the event? You were
12 assigned to?

13 A. Engine 18.

14 Q. 18.

15 A. The first battalion company as recon.

16 Q. And were you in charge of that fire crew?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Very good. That's what I was looking for. And could
19 you please describe for us in your own words what occurred on the
20 day of the event relative to your actions and involvement at the
21 L'Enfant Plaza Station, starting at the time you got the initial
22 call to respond?

23 A. Okay. We received a call stating that there was smoke
24 in the Metro tunnel. We proceeded to the L'Enfant Plaza and
25 parked the apparatus at 7th and D Streets at the building called

1 the Comptroller of Currency.

2 We had the SCBA on, two standpipe racks, and what's
3 called our Metro bag as far as our equipment. We proceeded down
4 to the tunnel where -- and down to the mezzanine. At that point
5 we experienced heavy gray smoke.

6 I had one firefighter stay at the mezzanine level and
7 took the other firefighters with me due to I wasn't sure about our
8 radios. He stayed on channel 16, and my other firefighters with
9 me stayed on 16 and I stayed on the TAC channel.

10 We proceeded down to the tunnel and met Metro officials.
11 They stated that the third rail was -- the power was already down.
12 I proceeded to hit the blue light station, which is -- takes this
13 -- de-energizes the third rail.

14 Q. The blue light station at what location?

15 A. I'm not sure.

16 Q. Is that -- was that on a platform? Was that --

17 A. Yeah, at that platform, yes.

18 Q. -- at the platform level?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Not down in one of the tunnels?

21 A. Yeah, at the platform level.

22 Q. Very good. This is the upper level?

23 A. Yes. Then I picked up the phone that's located inside
24 the blue light station and called an OCC to notify them that the
25 power was taken off the -- the power was being de-energized.

1 At that point we proceeded to the tunnel.

2 Q. You and this other firefighter?

3 A. Yeah. Well, we had -- it was a recon team. It was one
4 engine company, two -- I'm sorry, two engine companies and one
5 truck company.

6 Q. So there were a total of how many personnel roughly?

7 A. Let me see. Two -- I'm going to say nine.

8 Q. Nine persons in this recon --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. -- in the group that you're managing.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And you started down the tunnel.

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Which tunnel was this?

15 A. The Metro officials directed us and said this is the
16 tunnel where the smoke is coming from. So that's when we
17 proceeded down to -- just went to that tunnel.

18 Q. Okay. Is that the southbound tunnel coming out of the
19 station there? Do you know? Was it towards the Pentagon?

20 A. It was going towards the Pentagon, yes.

21 Q. Very good. That's the southbound --

22 A. I'm sorry. No. No, no, no, I'm sorry. It was the
23 northbound tunnel.

24 Q. Northbound tunnel.

25 A. Yeah. No, they directed us to the wrong tunnel.

1 Q. Oh. They directed you to the wrong tunnel.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. You determined that later on you're saying?

4 A. Once we walked down the tunnel and we didn't see any
5 more smoke. The smoke started to dissipate.

6 Q. I see.

7 A. Then we made a U-turn around.

8 Q. How far down the tunnel did you get?

9 A. Maybe 100 feet maybe.

10 Q. A hundred feet or so?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And you determined there was no smoke?

13 A. Yeah. It started to dissipate. So we made a U-turn and
14 that's when we noticed the southbound train and we proceeded over
15 there and I met up with Battalion Fire Chief Welsh.

16 Q. You noticed a southbound train. Was it parked there or
17 was it --

18 A. It was parked. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. And you're coming out of the northbound tunnel --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- and you -- just to make sure I understand, which --
22 these were Metro officials that directed you to this northbound
23 tunnel --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- at first?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Do you know who specifically directed you?

3 A. No, I don't know.

4 Q. Was it a transit police officer by chance?

5 A. I can't really recall to say if it was.

6 Q. You don't recall?

7 A. If they were Metro police officers there I can't recall
8 if it was a kiosk person.

9 Q. Was it a state -- it was probably a station manager
10 you're thinking?

11 A. Yeah. I believe they were -- I know they was Metro, but
12 I can't tell you exactly who it was.

13 Q. You didn't get a title or anything like that?

14 A. No. It was pretty hectic at that time.

15 Q. Hectic? Okay. So you're -- okay. You come back to the
16 station and you notice the -- you notice the train sitting there.

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. So you're back -- you're back at the station. You
19 notice the train --

20 A. Well, we never made it all the way back to the station.
21 When we made a U-turn there's openings inside the Metro tunnel and
22 that's when we saw the train. Due to the heavy smoke when we
23 walked past, we didn't see the train at first because of the heavy
24 smoke.

25 Q. I see. I see. So it was --

1 A. So we were supposed to --

2 Q. -- that thick --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. -- that you couldn't see actually to the other track?

5 A. We had to put on our SCBA.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Yes. So when we made --

8 Q. So you didn't need your SCBA until you got down to the
9 platform the first --

10 A. No, no. We put our SCBA on once we were down into the
11 mezzanine area.

12 Q. Once you got down there you --

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. -- put it on. Okay. And you went on air?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Very good.

17 A. And when we made the U-turn, then when the smoke started
18 to dissipate, that's when we saw the train, and we crossed over
19 one, two sets of tracks to get to that train.

20 Q. So you came -- you worked your way up behind the train?

21 A. Uh --

22 Q. Was the train in the station?

23 A. The train was maybe I would say 800 feet away from the
24 platform.

25 Q. It had not gotten to the station yet?

1 A. It had not gotten to the station, no.

2 Q. Was there passengers on this train?

3 A. Yeah. At that point there were passengers on that train
4 and I joined up with Battalion Fire Chief Welch, who was in charge
5 of recon. He took over recon and we was assisting passengers
6 using -- assisting them to get off the train using the lights and
7 so forth.

8 Q. Okay. I think we might be getting ahead of ourselves
9 because we first have the train outside the station when you first
10 encountered it.

11 BY MR. ROURKE:

12 Q. Yeah, but hold on. Let's -- geographically let's just
13 let's set it up. When you got -- when you got down to the
14 platform --

15 A. There was no train in.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. There was no train in.

18 Q. And you were guided by the Metro employee to go down the
19 left-hand tunnel.

20 A. Yes, correct.

21 Q. -- as opposed to the right-hand tunnel --

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. -- where the train that you --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- ended up evacuating was.

1 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Yeah, that's our confusion I think
2 here --

3 MR. ROURKE: Okay. So --

4 MR. DOWNS: -- because that is not a northbound tunnel.
5 That is the tunnel to Waterfront.

6 MR. BUTLER: Oh, okay.

7 BY MR. ROURKE:

8 Q. Yeah. That's what it is.

9 A. Yeah. I'm not sure what the --

10 Q. So you went down the -- right. You went down the left-
11 hand side. The disabled train was on the right-hand side.

12 A. Yes, that's correct.

13 Q. Okay.

14 BY MR. DOWNS:

15 Q. Okay. So okay, so now we're clear in that this is
16 actually not the southbound tunnel to the Pentagon. This is a
17 diverging tunnel that goes to Waterfront --

18 A. Oh, okay.

19 Q. -- that you were directed down. As you went down about
20 100 feet and you turned around and came back --

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. -- and then you looked over and you saw a stopped train

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. -- with passengers. Okay. Now we're clear. What did
25 you do at that point?

1 A. I met with Battalion Fire Chief Welsh.

2 Q. Who was there at the train?

3 A. Yes, he was there. He's the Battalion -- he was in
4 charge of recon.

5 Q. So make sure I understand, there was just three of you
6 that went down this tunnel 100 feet at first and then came back
7 and then you joined up --

8 A. No, the whole recon team went down this tunnel.

9 Q. The whole -- all nine of you?

10 A. Yes. Yes.

11 Q. You worked your way 100 feet down. You then came
12 back --

13 A. Um-hum.

14 Q. You looked over and you saw the train --

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. -- which is now identified actually the back end of the
17 stopped train in the tunnel.

18 A. Okay. I'm not sure whether it was the back end or
19 whether it was the front.

20 Q. You're not sure. You just saw a train --

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. -- and you saw firefighters at the train?

23 A. It was roughly 800 feet away from the platform.

24 Q. 800 feet.

25 A. Roughly. I'm not -- I can't --

1 Q. That's your thinking --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- at the time.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. It could be 500 feet. I'm not sure.

7 Q. Could you -- could you see -- could you see the platform
8 from where you were at the --

9 A. Yes, we could.

10 Q. -- back of the train?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. So you could see the platform down a ways. Okay. What
13 did you do then?

14 A. I met up with Battalion Fire Chief Welsh.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And I -- I guess I took over -- command to him because
17 at that point I was in charge of recon. When he came down he was
18 in charge of recon, and I advised him of what was done prior to
19 his arrival.

20 Q. You advised him what was done prior to his arrival.

21 A. Yeah. Well, as far as set up, blue light station,
22 contact notes OCC.

23 Q. That's what you did.

24 A. And I told him we proceeded down the tunnel that we was
25 told to go down and then we met up with him. Then we started

1 assisting the passengers off the train.

2 Q. So at that point you joined up with that fire crew and
3 assisted the passengers?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. So there's the fire crew that was there that you saw at
6 the train plus your nine roughly.

7 A. Okay. Yes.

8 Q. And you teamed all up and effected the evacuation of the
9 passengers.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. How did you do that?

12 A. The train was level to a walkway, a 22-inch walkway.
13 Passengers stepped off the train onto the walkway and we provided
14 lighting for them and also assisted them if they had trouble
15 walking.

16 Q. Would it be a correct characterization to say you spread
17 yourselves out along the track bed --

18 A. Yes. We did that.

19 Q. -- to shine your light --

20 A. Exactly.

21 Q. -- along the walkway? Would that be --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. -- an accurate description?

24 A. Exactly.

25 Q. Very good. And what did you do then?

1 A. Then we utilized some E-tech carts. We had one
2 gentleman that was confined to a wheelchair and we assisted him,
3 put him on the E-tech cart to evacuate.

4 Q. How did you do that? In other words, where was this
5 gentleman on the train and --

6 A. He was on the back end of number two -- of the train.

7 Q. The back door of the train?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. The end door of the train.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. And the E-tech cart is sitting where?

12 A. At the end of the -- the E-tech carts in the Metro are
13 set, placed at both ends of the platform.

14 Q. Okay. I mean, the E-tech cart when you saw it there at
15 the train was it right adjacent to the end of the train?

16 A. No, what we did was we went back, pulled the E-tech
17 cart --

18 Q. Oh, your crew went to the station and --

19 A. Well, it was not so much my crew --

20 Q. -- got the E-tech?

21 A. It was a combination of everyone.

22 Q. A bunch of firefighters went down --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- back to the station and retrieved the E-tech cart?

25 A. Well, I'm not sure they went back, but the firefighters

1 -- we treated the E-tech cart, brought it up to the train.

2 Q. And rolled it up to the train.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. Did they -- where did they stop it relative to
5 the train? Was it right next to the train?

6 A. It was -- it was I guess about end-to-end.

7 Q. Right up against the train? Okay.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And you had this wheelchair person who's right inside
10 the railcar at the end door.

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. How did you help that person out?

13 A. I believe we put him in the basket.

14 Q. In a -- in a Stokes basket?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And pulled him up -- laid him in the basket and we
18 just --

19 Q. Handed him down to the E-tech cart?

20 A. Well, the E-tech cart actually sits almost as high as
21 the --

22 Q. Fairly high cart.

23 A. Yeah. It's folded when you first receive the cart.

24 It's folded. Once unfolded it's almost the same height, roughly
25 40 inches --

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. -- as the railcar.

3 Q. So it was easy to be able to hand that person --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. -- off onto the cart.

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. Okay. What did you do then?

8 A. I was basically supervising what was being done.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. And still providing light for the rescuers to see what
11 they was doing.

12 Q. Was there only one patient, that one patient placed on
13 that cart or were there multiple patients?

14 A. There was -- I believe I saw only two patients.

15 Q. Two.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay. And then what happened? Did that cart get rolled
18 off?

19 A. It rolled off and was handed off to other firefighters
20 and to evacuate them out of the station.

21 Q. Did they roll him back to the platform, is it your
22 understanding?

23 A. I stayed there to try and --

24 Q. But your understanding is they would have --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- rolled him back to the platform to evacuate him --

2 A. Exactly. Right.

3 Q. -- out of the station. Very good. Okay. What did you
4 do then?

5 A. Continue rescuing the --

6 Q. Doing what you were doing.

7 A. I was rescuing the passengers on the train, providing
8 light and assistance based on (indiscernible).

9 Q. And you did that until the last passenger got off?

10 A. Exactly.

11 Q. Okay. And then what did you do?

12 A. At that point once all of the passengers was off the
13 train we stepped out of the tunnel and went back to the platform

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- to await further instructions.

16 Q. Okay. And you indicated you were on SCBA when you first
17 came down into the tunnel.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Did you go off SCBA at any point?

20 A. Once the smoke started to dissipate, yes.

21 Q. Roughly when was that when you saw the firefighters at
22 the back end of the train and joined up with them to help with the
23 evacuation?

24 A. Roughly when we went down the tunnel that we was
25 directed and the smoke started to dissipate then we --

1 Q. So you were good to go without air at that point?

2 A. It -- as I say, we were in the tunnel. We walked down
3 the tunnel we was directed to. We walked down and once the smoke
4 dissipated that's when we came off of air.

5 Q. So you had your bottles still but you simply turned off
6 the air supply?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. -- and left the mask hanging --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. -- as you would normally do in your duty role?

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. Very good. Okay. That's my questions for the moment.
13 Let's pass it off to our next questioner.

14 BY MR. ROURKE:

15 Q. Denton Rourke from Metro. I'm just going to ask you
16 some general Metro training questions that we're asking everybody,
17 and then we'll talk more specifically about L'Enfant.

18 So just from your perspective can you describe for me
19 the D.C. -- the Metro training program?

20 A. Can you be a little bit more specific?

21 Q. Any kind of Metro training you do either with Metro or
22 at your company level, the battalion level, anything at all?

23 A. No, we do it at the company level --

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. -- the battalion level.

1 Q. And can you describe that for us a little bit, give some
2 basic, you know, give some description of what you do?

3 A. We actually do questions and answers in the firehouse
4 and actually go down into the tunnels to point out where the fans
5 are located, E-tech carts, the walkways, the no clearance portions
6 of the tunnel.

7 Q. Um-hum. All righty. Have you ever participated in, and
8 if so when was the last one, a full-scale drill, maybe in the
9 middle of the night, Sunday morning, something like that?

10 A. I can't recall. I have participated in them but I can't
11 recall exactly how far -- how long it was. I was -- we just did a
12 Metro drill a couple months ago down in the afternoon in the
13 tunnel on in our company.

14 Q. Um-hum. Have you ever been to the Metro Training
15 Facility out at Pennsy Drive, Carmen Turner?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. How long ago was that do you think?

18 A. I can't recall.

19 Q. Um-hum. You said you were first due on this alarm?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Are you normally first due? Is 18 normally first due at
22 L'Enfant Plaza?

23 A. No, it isn't.

24 Q. Do you normally run that box alarm?

25 A. I can't say. I'm not regularly assigned to 18.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. So I can't say if that's (indiscernible).

3 Q. Okay. So I want to talk for a minute about your
4 conversation with the Metro personnel at the end of the platform.
5 Can you just go through that for me?

6 A. Sure.

7 Q. And what they said to you in the --

8 A. They just said smoke is coming down this tunnel.

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. And they said that they confirmed that. And --

11 Q. And -- I'm sorry, go ahead. Did they say anything about
12 a train being in there?

13 A. I don't recall.

14 Q. And then you said you activated the ETS button and you
15 picked up a phone?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Did anybody answer?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And what was that conversation all about?

20 A. They put me on hold.

21 Q. Uh-huh.

22 MR. DOWNS: They put you on hold?

23 MR. BUTLER: Yes, sir.

24 MR. DOWNS: How -- can you just run through that
25 conversation?

1 MR. BUTLER: There was no conversation. They just put
2 me on hold.

3 MR. DOWNS: How long were you on hold? Roughly, best
4 guess?

5 MR. BUTLER: A few seconds, maybe, I don't know.

6 MR. DOWNS: A few seconds.

7 MR. BUTLER: Yeah.

8 BY MR. ROURKE:

9 Q. And then so did they ever come back to you or anything?
10 Or did you abandon that?

11 A. I just abandoned the phone call.

12 BY MR. DOWNS:

13 Q. Was that your expectation that they would put you on
14 hold? In other words, have you used these phones before?

15 A. Never used the phone before, no.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. When I was -- I mean, we tried that. I did tell them
18 that the -- I did de-energize the third rail. I gave them the
19 track number. That's when they put me on hold.

20 Q. Okay. So to make sure what we're understanding is --

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. -- you picked up the phone, dialed the number or
23 whatever.

24 A. Um-hum. Yes.

25 Q. Somebody did answer.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. You gave them information?

3 A. I told them I was Sergeant Butler with D.C. Fire
4 Department. I de-activated the blue light station and I gave them
5 the track number and then that's when they put me on hold.

6 Q. Okay. And how long were you on hold?

7 A. I guess a few seconds.

8 Q. A few seconds? And you were frustrated and you hung up
9 or --

10 A. Well, I mean, it was an emergency situation that I was
11 in.

12 Q. You had other things to do rather than wait on --

13 A. Yeah, yeah.

14 Q. -- wait on hold.

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. I see. Go ahead.

17 BY MR. ROURKE:

18 Q. I think you answered this since the chief wasn't there
19 yet who was in charge of those recon units in that case. I was.

20 Q. You were. Okay. And when you all started -- you
21 started down the tunnel on that side, smoke dissipated, and then
22 you realized that --

23 A. I guess (indiscernible) it dissipated itself.

24 Q. Right. You knew you --

25 A. And we think we may be going down the wrong tunnel.

1 Q. Right. And then did everybody go back together?

2 A. I believe so. I mean, I can't recall.

3 Q. Um-hum. You mentioned that you left a firefighter on
4 the mezzanine because of?

5 A. I wasn't sure the radios.

6 Q. Why? Why? What do you mean by that?

7 A. I had two firefighters on 16 so in case we got too far
8 down in the tunnels we was going to do -- we were going to try and
9 establish -- I was going to relay my messages to the firefighter,
10 relay it on channel 16 and the firefighter above was going to
11 relay it to the chief.

12 Q. I guess what I'm -- my question would be is that
13 something you do on every call? Why did you do it on this
14 particular call?

15 A. I wasn't sure. That's why.

16 Q. And why were you not sure? What's your history with the
17 Metro radios? Let me put it that way to you.

18 A. Well, this is the first time I ran a box of this
19 magnitude with Metro.

20 Q. Um-hum.

21 A. I was just being safe. That's all.

22 Q. Okay. You're not assigned 18 normally. Were you on
23 overtime? Or was that your regular tour?

24 A. That was my regular tour. I'm regularly assigned to
25 Truck 6.

1 Q. Okay. A week before there was an incident in L'Enfant
2 Plaza where there was some radio issues. When you worked this day
3 on the 12th at 18 were you aware that there were -- previously had
4 been any radio issues there?

5 A. No, sir.

6 Q. I want to talk a little bit about third rail power. Can
7 you just describe for me briefly in a perfect situation the
8 process for third rail power management on an emergency incident?

9 MR. DOWNS: Do you mean like shutoff or whatever?

10 MR. ROURKE: Um-hum. Yes.

11 MR. BUTLER: Okay. I pulled the crawlspace down at the
12 incident. I hit the blue light station. Contact OCC. Confirm
13 that the power was down with a -- what's called a voice on and
14 then get permission from the Chief that's in charge of the
15 incident, permission to go onto the rail.

16 BY MR. ROURKE:

17 Q. Track bed you mean.

18 A. Tracks, yes.

19 Q. Anything -- Metro tells you the power is off. What do
20 you -- do you do anything then?

21 A. I'm not going to take their word for it. I'm going to
22 shut the power. That's what I did. I just shut the power off
23 myself.

24 Q. Using -- what else can you use? Is there anything else
25 you can do?

1 A. We have what's called a hot stick just to confirm that
2 the power is actually off.

3 Q. Okay. Good.

4 A. Then we go.

5 Q. And was that used --

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. -- do you know? Who did that?

8 A. I'm not sure. It was someone from the truck company.

9 Q. Um-hum. Thank you. That's all I've got right now.
10 Thank you.

11 MR. DOWNS: Next questions?

12 BY MS. BURTCH:

13 Q. I'd just like to clarify the question that you asked
14 previously about the -- was it the OCC communication that you
15 contacted OCC?

16 A. Yes, ma'am.

17 Q. And were you -- how did that communication go?

18 MR. DOWNS: That's -- it's that blue light --

19 MR. BUTLER: Yes.

20 MR. DOWNS: -- phone, right?

21 MR. BUTLER: Yes.

22 BY MS. BURTCH:

23 Q. So there's a phone next to the blue light that you can
24 pick up?

25 A. Well --

1 MR. DOWNS: Well, every --

2 MR. BUTLER: It's a grayish gray box.

3 MR. DOWNS: Okay.

4 MR. BUTLER: You open the box up -- and there's a -- I
5 believe a red button with a phone and there's a map with the track
6 section on what's going to be de-energized once you hit that
7 button.

8 MR. DOWNS: And so we have it for the record, these blue
9 light emergency phones are in the tunnels.

10 MR. BUTLER: Yes.

11 MR. DOWNS: -- every 800 feet is it?

12 MR. BUTLER: No more than 800 feet.

13 MR. DOWNS: 800 feet. And every phone station will have
14 a track third rail shutoff button, correct?

15 MR. BUTLER: Um-hum. And I think also it has maybe two
16 or maybe four blue light stations because it's a crossover.

17 BY MS. BURTCH:

18 Q. So then you call OCC using a phone?

19 A. Yes. Uh-huh.

20 Q. It's adjacent to it?

21 MR. ROURKE: There's a phone in every box.

22 BY MS. BURTCH:

23 Q. In the box.

24 A. Um-hum. Yes.

25 Q. Okay. And this was -- you called and had somebody pick

1 up and then were put on --

2 A. Well, no, no, no. When they -- someone picked up --

3 Q. Yes.

4 A. -- and I explained to them --

5 Q. Right.

6 A. -- who I was.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. And I explained who I was, told them what I just did and
9 I gave them the track number.

10 MR. DOWNS: And that's inside the box.

11 MR. BUTLER: Yes.

12 MR. DOWNS: As a reference you have it right there to
13 tell you where you are.

14 MR. BUTLER: Yes. Correct.

15 BY MS. BURTCH:

16 Q. And do did you get any affirmative response from them as
17 in understood?

18 A. Well, they said let me put you on hold. And I waited a
19 few seconds and like I said I --

20 MR. DOWNS: So you gave them the information.

21 MR. BUTLER: Yes.

22 MR. DOWNS: They immediately said we're going to put you
23 on hold.

24 MR. BUTLER: Yes.

25 BY MS. BURTCH:

1 Q. Okay. They didn't say I understand or any other
2 dialogue?

3 A. They said hold on. They did say hold on, yeah.

4 Q. Hold on and put you on hold and you went on hold.

5 A. Yeah. I went on hold for a few seconds and then, you
6 know --

7 Q. You hung up and --

8 A. And proceeded down into the tunnel.

9 Q. You had other things to do. I see.

10 MS. BURTCHE: Thank you. That's all I have.

11 MR. DOWNS: Chief, any questions?

12 BY MR. HAWKINS:

13 Q. Okay. Derron Hawkins, D.C. Fire and EMS. I have
14 several questions for you. The first one is regarding
15 communications. And you mentioned that I guess based on your
16 knowledge and experience you decided to leave a firefighter and
17 switch over to a line of sight channel just in case.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. So can you explain to me our procedures, D.C. Fire and
20 EMS procedures as it relates to communication, being an
21 experienced problems. Were this Metro incident a high-rise
22 incident we have procedures in place.

23 A. Would you like me to start with -- I guess I kind of
24 accountability.

25 Q. No. That's the next question about communications.

1 A. Oh, okay. Well, as far as communication you hear a
2 honking sound when you are out of range from our communication.
3 That never happened. So making -- we remained in contact and I
4 was able to translate my messages up to the Chief on the street
5 level.

6 Q. Okay. When that happens, if that fails, is there
7 anything else that we would do?

8 A. We would have what's called a VOS system, and what that
9 is we go to what's called, I guess, the analog. We switch over to
10 the next -- if we were operating on channel A3 then you switch
11 over to channel A4.

12 Q. Okay. You mentioned line of sight. Was that part of
13 the, you know, communication? You know, I'm just trying to see --

14 A. It's possible.

15 Q. -- you know, if we have cited communications problems --

16 A. Well, that's --

17 Q. -- there's a chance, how do we --

18 A. -- part of our Metro SOPs is that.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I did that as a safety precaution.

21 Q. Okay. Regarding accountability, can you explain kind of
22 the levels of accountability in the D.C. Fire and EMS Department?

23 A. Okay. We have a level one, level two, level three
24 accountability. Metro called for a level three accountability
25 meaning we have only one, no more than two control points, entry

1 into an incident.

2 Q. Two control points you say?

3 A. No more than two.

4 Q. No more than two.

5 A. No more than two. And prior to entering in the entrance
6 you have to leave your what's called accountability tag.

7 Q. It's an ID tag.

8 A. ID tag, correctly. ID tag with what's the third level
9 accompany list in charge of accountability. And so by us being
10 the first ones there we leave our ID tags on the seat of the
11 officer and the accountability officer of the third when she comes
12 she comes past and pick those up. And then we have accountability
13 so we know who's already down in the tunnel. And once we come
14 back we come back and get those tags and if someone doesn't get
15 their tag that means --

16 MR. DOWNS: Go look for them.

17 MR. BUTLER: Go and look for them, yes.

18 BY MR. HAWKINS:

19 Q. Okay. And you mentioned level two?

20 A. It's like the entrances that begin.

21 MR. DOWNS: If you don't remember, that's fine.

22 MR. BUTLER: Yeah. I know it. I know it. I just am
23 trying to recall it.

24 BY MR. HAWKINS:

25 Q. Okay. That's fine. So regarding -- you talked about

1 some of the training you had in Metro.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And you made reference to some inspections and they was
4 part of an F Action force and regarding Metro incidents that you
5 actually responded to. So based on all your experience with
6 Metro, do you think that you have the knowledge and skills to
7 respond to a Metro incident?

8 A. Yes, I do.

9 Q. Okay. So that's --

10 A. I mean, I feel comfortable with this incident here that
11 I did (indiscernible).

12 Q. Okay. And one more final question, so the catwalks,
13 what was the condition of the catwalk there?

14 A. Well, they're made of concrete and catwalks in the Metro
15 system are 22 inches wide.

16 Q. No. I'm saying what was the conditions? Were they
17 dark? Could you see the catwalks or -- during the Metro incident?

18 A. Once we started evacuating the passengers there was
19 visibility.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And the smoke had dissipated at that point. We were
22 just using the lights so they can see where they was walking.

23 Q. Okay. So you said lights. Was it a truck company that
24 brought portable lights or was it (indiscernible)?

25 A. Oh, we had our own personal hand lights, and that's what

1 we was using to shine on the walkway.

2 Q. I have no further questions.

3 MR. DOWNS: Mr. Tebo?

4 BY MR. TEBO:

5 Q. Good morning. Sergeant Joe Tebo, Tri-state Oversight.
6 One question and I'll back up just a little bit, when you were
7 given direction to enter the tunnel do you recall the Metro
8 employee who gave you the direction? Were they in uniform? Were
9 they in street clothes? Can you --

10 A. Well, there happened to be about four or five Metro
11 employees at that point. I'm not sure exactly who -- everybody
12 was just pointing and saying it was down this tunnel here.

13 Q. Do you think if it had been an MTPD officer or a police
14 officer you'd recall?

15 A. It wasn't an MTPD.

16 MR. DOWNS: It wasn't a transit police officer.

17 BY MR. TEBO:

18 Q. It's okay if you can't recall.

19 A. Yeah. I can't recall this.

20 Q. Okay. Very good. You mentioned that when you first
21 made entry because of the smoke conditions, you guys had masks up?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. But then once it started to dissipate you doffed your
24 masks and then recognized that you were in the -- heading the
25 wrong way, made -- utilized a crossover when you spotted the

1 disabled train, right?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And correct me if I'm wrong. And at that point once you
4 realized oh, we've got to cross over, the train's over here and
5 you made entry over there, at that point you met with the
6 battalion chief and then there was an exchange. And then you
7 began to assist as need with evacuation. Did you ever mask up
8 again?

9 A. No, we didn't.

10 Q. Okay. And that's all for me. Thank you very much, sir.

11 BY MR. JOE GORDON:

12 Q. Joe Gordon, NTSB. Did you -- after you arrived at the
13 incident train, the train that was stopped in the tunnel, did you
14 have anything to do with the entry into the train with opening the
15 doors, or were those already open?

16 A. Already opened.

17 Q. And people were starting to evacuate?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. You mentioned the conversation with OCC when you
20 picked up the phone in the box. That's -- there's no dialing of a
21 number. When you pick up that phone is it automatically --

22 A. I dialed zero, I believe.

23 Q. Okay. So there is zero and that puts you through to
24 OCC?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. And you said that you stationed the firefighter
2 back on the platform for direct line of communication.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. But you were able to communicate to street level --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. -- with the incident commander?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. Throughout the entire incident, any time you
9 tried to transmit, you were able to or --

10 A. Only because if I didn't transmit it was maybe because
11 somebody else was talking at that time.

12 Q. But you -- it never honked out --

13 A. No, it didn't.

14 Q. -- when you tried to --

15 A. No.

16 Q. -- speak to street level. Okay. At any time with your
17 conversation with Metro employee at the station or when you made
18 the call to OCC, did anyone ever mention a plan to possibly move
19 the train that was in the tunnel back to the --

20 A. No.

21 Q. -- station platform?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay. So once you got there on scene you didn't feel
24 any delay to take the power down and get to whatever the incident
25 was, be it the finding the smoke or starting to evacuate the

1 train? There was no delay for any kind of plan that you may have
2 heard to move the train?

3 A. I didn't hear any internal plans to move the train.

4 Q. Okay. Okay. No further questions.

5 BY MR. DOWNS:

6 Q. Thank you. Sergeant, let's digress a little bit here
7 and tell us about your personal work history. How long have you
8 been with the department, what you started out as, your promotions
9 over the years, that kind of thing? I'm not looking to split
10 hairs on dates or anything. Just give us a quick rundown.

11 A. I became a firefighter in 1992. I have 23 years with
12 the department. Started out at Engine 32, Truck 16.

13 Q. As a new recruit firefighter.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Then I made my way as a technician. Technicians are the
17 ones that drive the fire truck as to responsibility.

18 Q. Roughly what year was that?

19 A. I can't --

20 Q. I'm taxing your memory here.

21 A. Um --

22 Q. How long were you a firefighter for, five years or
23 something?

24 A. I was a firefighter about 16 years.

25 Q. Just a regular firefighter?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And that includes being a technician.

4 Q. It includes being a technician. Very good. Go ahead.

5 A. Then I moved to the ranking sergeant and I've been a
6 sergeant for six years.

7 Q. Six year.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. And with Engine 18 all the time?

10 A. No. I'm assigned to Truck 6.

11 Q. You're assigned to Truck 6 --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. -- but on that particular day you worked on 18?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Very good.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can we go off record real quick?

17 MR. DOWNS: Off the record.

18 (Off the record.)

19 (On the record.)

20 MR. DOWNS: Stand by. Back on the record.

21 BY MR. DOWNS:

22 Q. Sergeant, describe for us the sergeant position. Is
23 that a floating position? Do you work as assigned on a given day
24 or whatever?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. And this particular day you were -- happened to be
2 assigned to 18.

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. Thanks for the clarification. Go ahead, continue with
5 your work background.

6 A. Oh, that's pretty much complete.

7 Q. That's it? Okay.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And you've gone through all of the training programs in
10 terms of WMATA and such?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. And I think we touched on it earlier, training
13 activities with WMATA, a full-scale drill. Have you attended one
14 of those recently?

15 A. It hasn't been recently, but I have attended the drills.

16 Q. And is that the drill down at Carmen Turner, or is that
17 a drill in a tunnel somewhere?

18 A. In the tunnel.

19 Q. In a tunnel. Do you remember how long ago that was
20 roughly? A while back maybe?

21 A. A while back.

22 Q. Very good. Okay. Did you happen to make any notes of
23 this event, personal notes?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Do you have those notes?

1 A. Oh, no, sir. No. They're just mental notes.

2 Q. Mental notes.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. Well, we'll get to that in a moment. Emergency
5 access doors on Metro cars, let's touch on that a little bit.

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Have you received training on that?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. Okay. Tell us about the emergency access doors. We're
10 talking about getting from the outside of the car into a car to
11 evacuate people.

12 A. We have what's called a double x barrel key.

13 Q. Barrel key, okay.

14 A. Yes, sir. Those.

15 Q. And that's in the Metro bag?

16 A. Yes. And at the kiosk -- I mean, I'm sorry, not the
17 kiosk but at the Knox-Box.

18 Q. The Knox-Box.

19 A. Yes. And when we entered the tunnel there's usually a
20 Knox-Box to the right of the tunnel. We have a key to access that
21 and we have keys to gain access into most of the areas inside the
22 Metro and stuff where like maybe three areas.

23 Q. Okay. So if you're up to a railcar that needs to be
24 evacuated what do you do to access the doors?

25 A. Well, before we do anything we're going to make sure

1 that the power's down and it's safe to approach the train.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. I guess from both ends due to -- I'm not sure if you
4 (indiscernible). We have what's called a pickup shoe.

5 Q. Pickup shoe, okay.

6 A. Yeah, it touches --

7 Q. So you stay clear of the pickup shoe.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. Go ahead.

10 A. Yes, sir. We utilize the I guess what's called the
11 bulkhead door.

12 Q. Bulkhead. That's at the very end of the train.

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. And that's the door that we used for the evacuation and
16 we use door number one -- I'm sorry, not one -- two, one, two,
17 three, four I believe.

18 Q. So that would be -- there's three doors.

19 A. That's the middle door.

20 Q. So there are three doors on the side of the railcar.
21 That's the middle door?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Okay. And you would access that door in order to open
24 the train car?

25 A. I believe door number eight or either door number three.

1 Q. Wait. Don't worry about the door numbers. It would be
2 the center door --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. -- of the three doors that you would go to to get into
5 the railcar?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Okay. How would you open the door?

8 A. With the -- it's a key.

9 Q. Is that a barrel key?

10 A. Yes, sir. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. So your training has prescribed for you either to
12 go to the end bulkhead and use your barrel key to open that door.
13 Is that correct?

14 A. That's right.

15 Q. Just to make sure I understand. Or on the side of the
16 railcar you would go to the middle door and use your barrel key as
17 well.

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. There's a little, apparently a little key lock there?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Okay. And that's the only two doors that you're aware
22 of that you would use?

23 A. Well, for safety-wise those are the best doors to use.

24 Q. The best doors because --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- to avoid the pickup shoe?

2 A. Correct.

3 Q. Very good. Is there any other way to open that middle
4 side door of the railcar?

5 A. From the inside, yeah. Yes.

6 Q. From the inside. Well, we're going to get to the
7 inside. But from the outside?

8 A. Hmm.

9 Q. Were you aware that there's a pull handle, a release
10 handle, for example?

11 A. Yeah. I'm pretty sure I read about it, you know?

12 Q. It didn't jump out to you?

13 A. It didn't jump out to me at the time.

14 Q. Now, at this time. Okay. Very good. In terms of
15 inside the railcar how does one open the doors?

16 A. Well, each door has as what's called I guess a red
17 handle and it releases the -- one of the sliding doors.

18 Q. One of the two panels --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- on a given door.

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. So every door, all six doors on the inside of the
23 railcar, the side doors --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- have a door handle release?

1 A. I want to say, you know, I'm pretty sure it is, but I'm
2 not 100 percent sure.

3 Q. Okay. Very good. Thank you. That concludes that
4 question. Let's see. I'm going to pass it on to further
5 questions on my right?

6 BY MR. ROURKE:

7 Q. Sergeant, I just want to go back to the conversation you
8 had with the Metro employees on the platform.

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Did any of them say to you there was a train in the
11 tunnel with passengers on it?

12 A. No, they didn't.

13 MR. ROURKE: I think that's all I've got. Thank you.

14 MR. DOWNS: Ms. Burtch?

15 MR. BURTCH: No.

16 MR. DOWNS: Chief, any questions?

17 MR. HAWKINS: No, I have no further questions.

18 MR. DOWNS: You're okay?

19 MR. TEBO: Yes, sir.

20 MR. JOE GORDON: No further questions.

21 BY MR. DOWNS:

22 Q. Very good. Sergeant, we're winding this down, and I
23 always like to give an opportunity to our witnesses to express
24 what we call retrospective thoughts, kind of in hindsight.
25 Knowing what you know now, not that you did anything wrong, is

1 there anything that you might be able to think about that you
2 would have done differently in order to kind of make the process
3 go a little easier, granted this, I think you were saying before,
4 correct me if I'm wrong, this was a major event, first major event
5 on WMATA that you've been to, the biggest event at WMATA?

6 A. Yes, it is.

7 Q. Great. And were there anything -- is there anything
8 that you might think of that you would do differently in order to
9 make the job a little easier, go a little smoother? Can you offer
10 anything, any thoughts for the professional firefighting
11 community?

12 A. I believe my crew acted well in this incident, so I'm
13 confident on how I conducted myself and on how they conducted
14 themselves.

15 Q. So you wouldn't do anything slightly different in the
16 future if you had a similar event?

17 A. Probably not.

18 Q. No. You're good? You're good?

19 A. I mean, there's always room for improvement, so but --

20 Q. Right. But nothing jumps out at you. How about the
21 radio snags that were expressed?

22 A. Well, like I said, I didn't experience any radio snags.
23 I was anticipating maybe radio snags, so --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- that was my anticipation.

1 Q. So that was not a big deal for you --

2 A. No, it wasn't.

3 Q. -- in this particular event. Very good.

4 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Well, that concludes my thoughts. If
5 there's no further questions that concludes the interview. Thank
6 you.

7 MR. BUTLER: Thank you.

8 (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: WMATA INCIDENT AT L'ENFANT PLAZA
 STATION, WASHINGTON, D.C.
 JANUARY 12, 2015
 Interview of John Butler

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-FR-004

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: January 29, 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.

Teresa Holevas
Transcriber