



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: RAVI PATEL

WMATA Headquarters
Jackson Graham Building
Washington, D.C.

Tuesday,
April 14, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MICHAEL FLANIGON
Railroad Accident Investigator

The interviewee was afforded an opportunity to review this transcript for accuracy. Corrections and clarifications are shown in ~~strikeout~~/underline in the text.

APPEARANCES:

MICHAEL FLANIGON, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

RICK NARVELL, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

LOREN GROFF, Ph.D., Transportation Safety Analyst
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. FLANIGON: Okay. My name is Mike Flanigon,
3 F-l-a n-i-g-o-n, with the National Transportation Safety Board,
4 and today is April 14, 2015. We're interviewing Mr. Ravi Patel,
5 P-a-t-e-l; and your first name R-a-v-i?

6 MR. PATEL: Yes, sir.

7 MR. FLANIGON: Who is -- are you also a double A
8 mechanic?

9 MR. PATEL: Yeah, I'm a double A ~~mechanic~~Industrial
10 Control Technician (ICT).

11 MR. FLANIGON: Double A ~~mechanic~~ICT responsible for a
12 variety of things. We'll get into what you do in the interview.
13 I just want to confirm you understand we'll record the interview
14 and provide you a transcript.

15 MR. PATEL: Yes, sir.

16 MR. FLANIGON: Okay, good. I'll let the other people
17 here with me introduce themselves, starting with Loren.

18 DR. GROFF: Loren Groff, L-o-r-e-n, G-r-o-f-f, NTSB.

19 MR. NARVELL: Rick Narvell, N like in Nancy-a-r-v-e-l-l,
20 with NTSB.

21 MR. FLANIGON: Okay, great.

INTERVIEW OF RAVI PATEL

22 BY MR. FLANIGON:

23 Q. Well, let's start with, if you can just kind of explain
24 what you do as a double A ~~mechanic~~ICT, how long you've been with
25

1 WMATA, and where you work and what your typical job duties are.

2 A. I'm in WMATA; it will be 3½ years almost. I was in a
3 support group, considered ~~in a controlled~~industrial control
4 technician's group, which is called an ~~ICD-ICT~~ group ~~scene~~ at
5 WMATA and the plant maintenance department. We do support the
6 system-~~wise~~wide mechanics where we were maintaining equipment.
7 If they might get stuck somewhere in the controls we can provide
8 the support for them to fix it through this technology with the
9 PLCs and all kind -- HMI and all of them. We do support -- we're
10 more so on the PLC side and HMI side and all of them.

11 Q. Okay. You mentioned PLC, that's Papa-Lima-Charlie. Can
12 you explain what that is?

13 A. I'm sorry. PLC is a Programmable Logic Controls.

14 Q. Okay. And that would be a device on equipment to, to --

15 A. PLC is on the new -- yeah, equipment only to --

16 Q. -- operate it, okay. So, in the 3½ years you've been
17 here, you've come in after -- there were a slew or a number of
18 serious accidents, Fort Totten collision being the most -- well,
19 the most significant or certainly the highest profile. And, so in
20 the 3½ years you've been here, what kind of changes have you seen,
21 if you've seen any, with regard to safety? Is it getting better,
22 getting worse, staying the same?

23 A. It's getting better because a lot of the roadway
24 training in all them, in my opinion, I'm just staying in my
25 opinion, roadway training in all them has been changed a lot of

1 things, you know, getting more area refreshment courses and kind
2 of stuffs for the roadway safeties.

3 Q. So that's a plus on you?

4 A. Yes, I would say.

5 Q. Any negatives on anything that isn't getting better?

6 A. I don't know at this point.

7 Q. No, okay. And how would you kind of describe your
8 working relationship with your peers, with other mechanics and
9 folks you work with day-to-day?

10 A. Well, very cooperative people. If we work on a team we
11 would call us for support, you know, they provided in detail
12 something with various tasks or what they did or something like
13 that, you know, so we just follow up and try to help them out to
14 resolve the issues. So, I think this is a little all right with
15 me is to be work with other people and that -- personally, myself,
16 I don't have too much problem with other peoples to work with.

17 Q. Um-hum, good.

18 A. So, I didn't see anything that can be mentionable.

19 Q. Yeah. And how about supervision and management, your
20 relationship with them?

21 A. In my opinion I say everybody to good morning and hello
22 and hi and all of them, so I don't know for talk to my supervisor.
23 Generally we report to our supervisor. Our supervisor gave us to
24 the task and then it comes from the commands top to bottom, bottom
25 to top, like that, so.

1 Q. Do you, do you feel like there's any pressure on you to
2 take shortcuts, safety shortcuts to fix problems?

3 A. No. I wouldn't say so far anything like that yet.

4 Q. And do you feel free to raise safety issues with either
5 your peers or your managers?

6 A. I think most of time -- I will say it this way, every
7 morning meeting, we have safety meeting, and we discuss certain
8 things for here and there and if something comes out, you know,
9 just mention it about or I haven't got so far any reportable or
10 anything so far yet, but how to work there safely and all them,
11 get each section by supervisor or some MSRP (Metro-Rail Rules and
12 Procedures Handbook) -- it was SOP or follow the rules, things
13 like that. So, some discussion comes out of that, so we try to
14 follow that way.

15 Q. Yeah. So, at those meetings or bond, you know,
16 individual sorts of communication, do you feel, feel like -- do
17 you feel free to raise your hand and say, hey, I think there's a
18 problem with this or that or the other thing?

19 A. I think I missed something on that.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Can you repeat, please?

22 Q. Sure. Do you, do you feel comfortable that you could
23 raise an issue, safety issue?

24 A. Oh yeah, if I see something -- yeah, I see something I
25 can say something.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. At least I can mention to my supervisors.

3 Q. Okay, good. And do, do things like that usually get
4 taken care of or are there sort of ongoing open concerns, either
5 you have or your colleagues have?

6 A. I really did not have that kind of issues that I raise
7 and there is already something like that in my opinion or what I'm
8 -- the thing -- majority, like minor safety issues comes out,
9 either they're resolved by following the rules in case we forgot
10 or something, or see that somebody, a coworker or supervisor tried
11 to explain how to proceed on the ways in all them, so at this
12 moment I did not go through that file yet, so I want to see myself
13 it, so.

14 Q. Yeah, and actually we, we asked to talk to people that
15 weren't particularly involved. Yeah, yeah, we're more interested
16 in kind of background as opposed to the specifics of, of the fire,
17 yeah.

18 A. Sorry.

19 DR. GROFF: It's okay.

20 MR. FLANIGON: Yeah.

21 DR. GROFF: WD-40.

22 BY MR. FLANIGON:

23 Q. Okay. And, are you familiar with a close call reporting
24 system or near miss reporting system that WMATA has?

25 A. Yes. We have the -- new information came out, I think

1 it was last year or something, gave us all meeting information,
2 call numbers and everything from the managements, for little
3 stickers and everything.

4 Q. Okay. And how about the safety hotline, are you
5 familiar with that?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Yeah. So do you feel like it's a safe place to work?

8 A. In my opinion, when I work in ~~the (indiscernible) other~~
9 ~~industries and all them~~, I have like a lot of ~~(indiscernible)~~
10 training and all, you know, kind of training and all, this one
11 (WMATA) has much better training and safety than what I had seen
12 on a past (indiscernible) in other industrial workplaces.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. So, I would think this is a little better on the safety
15 wise.

16 Q. Good, good, that's good to know. As you, as you do your
17 work out in the field taking care of equipment, does your
18 supervisor ever come out and visit you in the field, observe your
19 work, give you feedback on what you're doing?

20 A. Yeah, some kind of project or something ~~they we~~ try to
21 check out and check safety watch also, see what we did or are they
22 doing it all the safe ways or not. Yes, sir, once in awhile
23 they'll visit, including superintendent, assistant superintendent,
24 they constantly visit, yes.

25 Q. Yeah. How often would you say you see a supervisor or a

1 assistant superintendent?

2 A. In the work-wise, at least every one project maybe one
3 time at least, I believe.

4 Q. So, is that once a week, once longer or --

5 A. The supervisor I saw him every day and every morning.
6 We did safety meeting and start with the day. Superintendent send
7 us an email something or contact the supervisors and go for like
8 follow up, whatever it is and all those too. The work-wise we
9 will work something especially, and they visit us and check safety
10 and check certain things, yes, that's when I can say that.

11 Q. Yeah. So, I'm trying to get at when you're, you know,
12 after you have your morning meeting and head out --

13 A. Right.

14 Q. -- to do, you know, go out and about on the system, how
15 often would you see a supervisor out in the field once you've left
16 the shops? Once a week, twice a week, once a month?

17 A. Well, once I'm out from the meeting in the morning I
18 come back and originally they'll either contact us or either --
19 we're in the same building so we generally see every day, two or
20 three times a day a supervisor. He call us or either we send an
21 email or, you know. Going out either -- again, we are kind of a
22 support group, so it depend on where we got call from and how the
23 supervisor manages the crew to send people out.

24 Q. So, I'm still trying to get at, once you're outside the
25 shop how often would a supervisor visit you at a fan shaft or at

1 another shop where you're going to fix a pump or -- does that
2 happen?

3 A. Well, it did happen, I mean, it does happen too, but
4 generally he call us for status before see what's going on and a
5 couple hours to check us out to see if need additional help or see
6 where we starts or see if we can make it happen or come back on
7 time, more like that.

8 Q. Okay. Okay. Have you -- you mentioned the RWP
9 training. Have you gotten any, any training on the -- what's
10 called the Incident Command System, and that's how when there's an
11 emergency like the smoke incident or a train accident, how the
12 emergency is actually managed by the different agencies that show
13 up. Have you gotten any training in that type of system?

14 A. Can you mention any other ways?

15 Q. Say again?

16 A. Can you mention it a little bit more in other ways?

17 Q. Sure. It's called the Incident Command System and --
18 so, when -- we can use the L'Enfant Plaza as an example. There's,
19 there's an incident and it's going to require different agencies
20 and different parts of WMATA to come to deal with it, fire
21 department, medical, police, operations, maybe maintenance.
22 There's something called an Incident Command System on how that's
23 managed, did you get any training on how that system works?

24 A. Yeah, in my opinion I would think that was a fire drill,
25 like just get out from the building, something like that, that

1 kind of training, we got some. (Mr. Patel recalled later that he
2 received Metro-Rail Emergency Training (MERT)).

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. But on the detail-wise --

5 Q. Have you ever had to respond or be involved in any kind
6 of incident like that where the fire department came or the police
7 came and had to kind of manage a scene?

8 A. At the work?

9 Q. At work.

10 A. No, sir.

11 Q. Okay. All right. Are you familiar with the Tri-State
12 Oversight Committee?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. And have you ever seen any of their personnel in the
15 field? Have you ever met any representatives from the Tri-State
16 Oversight Committee or seen them at your workplace?

17 A. I'm kind of new, actually, and I'm a second-level
18 speaker and am an immigrant and sometimes I don't remember faces
19 and names easily, you know, so I would just not give you the right
20 answers on that. Because I see it I don't know, you know --

21 Q. Okay. You can't recall anyway?

22 A. Right.

23 Q. You don't recall meeting them in the field, is that
24 correct?

25 A. I guess so, yeah.

1 DR. GROFF: Yeah, that's fine.

2 BY MR. FLANIGON:

3 Q. Yeah, that's fine.

4 A. Because it has taken me like 10 minutes to figure out
5 your three names. Frustrating ~~(indiscernible)~~to me, you know, so

6 --

7 Q. Okay. And changing gears here a little bit. How would
8 you characterize the functions of the WMATA radio system?

9 A. Characterize means -- what are you trying to ask, can
10 you explain a little bit more?

11 Q. Sure.

12 DR. GROFF: How well does it work.

13 BY MR. FLANIGON:

14 Q. In your experience how well does it work?

15 A. In my opinion it worked pretty much everywhere. I
16 believe where I went actually. If -- I'm like again, I'm not
17 hundred percent familiar with the systems yet, I'm not hundred
18 percent everywhere yet in 3 years, so really where I actually
19 attend problem with whoever is ~~(indiscernible)~~roadway worker-in-
20 charge, he was always contacting and I didn't see any problems on
21 where he maybe just walk over there and make a call or walk over
22 here and make a call. So, he --

23 Q. It has worked for you, is that what you're saying?

24 A. Yeah, really where I work, in my opinion, like I said,
25 wherever I work within a tunnel and the radio systems, you know,

1 it was working, so.

2 Q. Okay. All right. So, now I'm going to ask you about
3 fans. You were -- doing the preventative maintenance on the fans
4 is one of your jobs, do you do that?

5 A. I'm not doing any PMs or anything. We are supporting to
6 the people who do the PM and troubleshooting or something, they're
7 not fixing on it. We are support group up top of the whole entire
8 systems of the ~~management~~, maintenance groups in the plant,
9 mechanics maintenance. So, if they have trouble in not only fan
10 shaft but any equipment in all them and they cannot figure out as
11 in the control circuits or something like that.

12 Q. Oh, okay.

13 A. So we can provide initial control circuits or something
14 like that. So, we're kind of monitoring the control circuits,
15 like to make sure it stops working or make sure the stop button is
16 working.

17 Q. Okay. So, so, we spoke with Joe.

18 A. Joe is doing more PM work, yes.

19 Q. And he does the PMs.

20 A. Right.

21 Q. Yeah, he explained that. So, you don't do what he does
22 exactly?

23 A. Right.

24 Q. So, if he has a problem with the PLC he'll call you?

25 A. PLCs or any other control issues or anything like that.

1 Q. Okay. So, how, how -- how do I want to phrase this?
2 How often do you have -- are there problems with the PLC boards on
3 the fans?

4 A. In my opinion and my experience has been PLC for a long
5 time, besides the Metro, as with this, I don't see too much
6 problem on the PLC boards or something like that. The majority of
7 the ~~(indiscernible) cord some EMF~~ --power spikes, electric noise,
8 EMF or something like that can ~~be sometime~~ happen. Just rebooting
9 like the computer, it can be process that can be good and start
10 back immediately, and so majority signaling back from it. They
11 tried to put in all line so they can monitor more closely as well,
12 I believe.

13 Q. So rebooting fixes it a lot, a lot of times?

14 A. Yeah. Majority time it's fixing.

15 Q. Yeah, okay. And the -- when, when the fans are
16 exercised remotely as part of the PM from the control center, that
17 signal goes to the PLC board, do I have it right?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. When -- the PLC board is kind of the brain --

20 A. Yes, yes.

21 Q. -- that says I got a signal in --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. -- to make this happen, now I'm going to send a signal
24 to make it happen?

25 A. Yes, yes.

1 Q. Okay. Okay. All right, so --

2 A. It does remotely receive the pulses, whatever command
3 they send it from the ROCC and according to that PLC execute the
4 output for the auxiliary supplies, whatever it is.

5 MR. FLANIGON: Okay. Well, that's good. I think that's
6 all I had. I'll ask my colleague over there if he --

7 BY DR. GROFF:

8 Q. Loren Groff, NTSB. So, you said your work is supporting
9 the others when they do -- when they -- when they're doing PMs and
10 they find problems and need additional assistance, right? How,
11 how does a job come to you, is it something like every, every day
12 you come in and they say here's the list of things to do or how
13 far in advance is the work planned out, or does it usually have to
14 happen very quickly, if that makes sense?

15 A. If ~~(indiscernible)~~ has we got any field calls of this or
16 anything like that then we will support immediately if we was
17 available and like that; and if not there is some other work to
18 do, like some project going on, some studies going on, you know,
19 some like research going on, what we can do or not, you know, to
20 make improvement or something. We can discuss certain things.
21 Sometimes with engineering, you know, we'll pull out some manual
22 and try to learn something, you know, make sure to see what we had
23 tried to do the follow the standard that were created by
24 previously, random metro started or whatever it is, so, that's
25 what I think.

1 Q. Okay. So, occasionally you'll be faced with an issue
2 that something is malfunctioning or failed and you have to move
3 quickly, but then you've also got some things that take longer, a
4 longer period of time.

5 Do you have -- do you feel like you have enough time to do
6 the work that's assigned? Are you, are you rushing to get the
7 work done or is there -- in general are there enough people to do
8 the work and the schedule allows you to get the work done?

9 A. Are you talking about call-wise or are you talking about
10 other support-wise or --

11 Q. Either way, just in general.

12 A. In general we support ~~every~~air handling equipment, not
13 only the fan shafts, the train washes or train lifting, you know,
14 the ~~(indiscernible)~~air handler needing power rooms or switch gear
15 room and like that in all them, so --

16 Q. So, what --

17 A. -- we have wide support~~s~~ and equipment~~s~~ ~~and to~~the
18 system wide.

19 Q. So, it sounds like they kind of use your skill wherever
20 they can.

21 A. They maximize the days, it maximizes all skills, I would
22 think so.

23 Q. Right. Do you have an idea of how many other -- how
24 many other people there are that are doing the similar sort of
25 work that you're, that you're doing?

1 A. Yeah, only 10, I think 10 people only.

2 Q. Throughout the whole system.

3 A. Throughout the system, so we support entire system by
4 these 10 peoples.

5 Q. Are you generally -- feel like you're sort of rushing to
6 keep up with 10 people that's spread around or do you
7 (indiscernible) --

8 A. No, we get enough time and they can understand in what
9 we're finding. We get help from the engineering as well as, we
10 get help from everybody, so. It's like -- it's not rushing,
11 rushing or anything unless there's a rail issue situations comes
12 out for maybe like run down for parts or something, you know.
13 It's not rush. We never get in rush or pushed for work for
14 something like that, but we do push for a little bit for safety
15 ~~and~~ for all the people, we do that.

16 Q. Sure. Does that -- have you ever had experiences where
17 somebody said, you know, you've got to -- we'll have to get this
18 fixed quickly because we've got to get operations back moving
19 again or have you ever had any experience like this?

20 A. In short of this period of the time of the work, I did
21 not think anything like that happens to me anyway, so.

22 Q. Yeah, that's good.

23 A. Unless I put 30 years in it might be there somewhere.

24 Q. So far you haven't had that, well, that's good. We
25 talked a little bit about the safety programs and things. If you

1 were to -- you said you don't have any -- you don't feel any
2 problem reporting anything you see. Who would you tell first, did
3 you say your supervisor?

4 A. Yes. We generally talk first in the meeting and the
5 supervisors and all of them in the morning meeting, like tool box
6 meeting, safety meetings first. They start with that, something
7 we experienced day before. Like yesterday I went from somewhere
8 else, an example, and I may end up with something, you know, I see
9 something, so I just mention --

10 Q. So, you -- the next -- typically then if you saw
11 something that seemed bad in some way, the next morning you'd
12 bring it up?

13 A. In my opinion, giving an example, like if you're
14 somebody in a tunnel and he see the door was locked, it's not
15 locked properly or might be banging or something, so you just
16 mention it and open the work order for the next person, either a
17 lock or locksmith or somebody, you know, take care like that.
18 That's just example.

19 Q. Okay. Does anybody ever feedback to you, say, oh yeah,
20 that thing you reported we took care of it?

21 A. Yeah, they have -- they generally do the email or call
22 back.

23 Q. Oh good. Thanks.

24 A. And when they need to find a location they call us also,
25 hey, my guy didn't find the location, send your guys to look at

1 the situation.

2 Q. So if they need more information --

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. -- they'll contact you?

5 A. Yeah.

6 DR. GROFF: All right. Rick, go ahead, go ahead. I'll
7 pass.

8 MR. NARVELL: Oh, okay.

9 BY MR. NARVELL:

10 Q. Rick Narvell with the NTSB. Ravi, I just had a couple
11 of questions. Mr. Flanigon asked you about the safety hotline
12 that you were aware of and also the close call reporting system.
13 Have you ever used them, meaning, have you ever called the safety
14 hotline or filled out paperwork for the close call yourself since
15 you've been here?

16 A. No, not at all, because I'm working a day shift as well
17 as supporting a different situation, it may be here or there, so,
18 it never been happen or anything like that either so far.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. But it's a good program that I see so far myself in my
21 opinion.

22 Q. All right. And if you saw something that would warrant
23 calling the hotline or --

24 A. Or calling a safety?

25 Q. You would have no problem doing that?

1 A. No, I don't think so.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. I don't want to put somebody's life on jeopardize, or my
4 life on jeopardize, I have to take care of my families.

5 Q. I'm with you, okay.

6 A. So, I don't want that.

7 Q. Okay. That's fine. My last question is, again, you've
8 been here just a little over 3 years. What do you see, if
9 anything, that causes you concern in terms of any kind of a safety
10 issue or a deficiency or a problem? And there may not be anything
11 there, but do you see anything that causes you concern?

12 A. So far what I work is in pretty much in control and
13 programming or read a panel diagram and programming logic controls
14 and something like that in all them, so.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. So, some kind of stuff that I want to be mentioned in
17 something in user friendly or ~~HMR~~ human interface (touch screen)
18 on something I can do that one, but I did not see anything that I,
19 I really -- I didn't go -- I didn't face anything like that so far
20 yet because of my job work is a little bit different than what
21 you're asking me, I believe.

22 Q. Okay. Last question. Mr. Flanigon asked you about the
23 Tri-State Oversight Committee or the TOC. How about have you ever
24 seen or were aware anybody from the Federal Transit Administration
25 or FTA on the property here?

1 A. This is my first experience and first time I'm seeing
2 you guys, so, I --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. I did already mention in the beginning of like when he
5 was outside, so.

6 Q. Okay. The answer would be no?

7 A. Again, like I said --

8 Q. That you're aware of. If you don't know that's fine.

9 A. I mean, I don't know, but like I said, I'm an immigrant
10 and I'm a different second-level speaker and I don't remember a
11 lot of English names easily, for example --

12 Q. That's okay.

13 A. -- plus face.

14 Q. That's fine.

15 A. I really don't know. Even when I see them I don't know.

16 MR. NARVELL: Fair enough. All right. Okay. All
17 right, thank you. That's all I have.

18 DR. GROFF: That's all.

19 MR. FLANIGON: Nothing. Okay. Anything you wanted to
20 add before we wrap up?

21 MR. PATEL: No, thank you very much.

22 MR. FLANIGON: Okay.

23 MR. PATEL: For all your cooperation.

24 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

25

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 Ravi Patel

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-FR-004

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: April 14, 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.

Elizabeth M. Cochran
Transcriber