



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: DION BAKER

WMATA Headquarters
Jackson Graham Building
Washington, D.C.

Monday,
April 13, 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. No corrections were received.

APPEARANCES:

MICHAEL FLANIGON, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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

RICK NARVELL, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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

JAMES MADARAS, Safety Officer
Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), Local 689

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1 I N T E R V I E W

2 MR. FLANIGON: Okay, my name is Mike Flanigon, F-l-a-n-
3 i-g-o-n, with NTSB. We're interviewing Mr. Dion Baker, B-a-k-e-r,
4 on April 13th, 2015, and this is to develop background for the
5 investigative hearing into the L'Enfant Plaza arcing smoke
6 incident that occurred January 12th.

7 And I want to confirm that you understand we'll record
8 this interview and provide you a transcript, Mr. Baker.

9 MR. BAKER: Yes, I understand.

10 MR. FLANIGON: Okay, great.

11 And I'll go around the room and ask everybody to state
12 and spell their name and what organization they're with.

13 MR. NARVELL: Rick Narvell, N, like in Nancy, a-r-v,
14 like in Victor, e-l-l, Human Performance Investigator with NTSB.

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

16 MR. MADARAS: James Madaras, M-a-d-a-r-a-s, with Local
17 689.

18 MR. GORDON: Joe Gordon, G-o-r-d-o-n, with the NTSB.

19 MR. BAKER: Dion Baker, B-a-k-e-r, Train Operator for
20 WMATA.

21 MR. FLANIGON: Great. Thanks.

22 INTERVIEW OF DION BAKER

23 BY MR. FLANIGON:

24 Q. How long have you been a train operator, Mr. Baker?

25 A. June will be 9½ years.

1 Q. Nine and a half years. And did you work for WMATA
2 before that?

3 A. No.

4 Q. No? So you came right in --

5 A. Oh, well, yeah. I was a bus operator for a year --
6 almost a year and a half, then went to the class to be a train
7 operator.

8 Q. Okay, great. And thinking back over the last 5 or 6
9 years since the Fort Totten accident and actually a whole series
10 of unfortunate accidents, what are some of the changes that you've
11 seen at WMATA, if you've seen any, with regard to safety?

12 A. A decline in safety.

13 Q. A decline?

14 A. Decline, a decline in safety. For example, when I first
15 became a train operator, they used to clean the tunnels, power
16 wash the tunnels, I guess, to get rid of the brake dust that
17 builds up. They don't power wash the tunnels anymore and it seems
18 like the policies are just lip service as far as for safety.

19 Q. So maybe some examples of lip service policies?

20 A. Like, they came up with a rule for train operator before
21 servicing the station, you have to put your head out the window 5
22 seconds before opening the doors. That's just a rule on top of a
23 rule that they already had several years before that's still in
24 their policy and procedures.

25 When you're taking the train out the yard, you're

1 supposed to do an interior and an exterior inspection and the
2 train is not supposed to leave the yard with any discrepancies.
3 And then you have trains out there leaving the yard with
4 discrepancies even after the operator reports it. You'll have
5 trains out on the main line in revenue service that car equipment
6 that they have out on the lines for any incidents, calling in the
7 same car numbers 3 and 4 days straight that aren't being fixed.

8 Q. Okay. How would you characterize your working
9 relationship with your peer employees?

10 A. You mean as far as with management?

11 Q. Peer would be other train operators.

12 A. Oh. It's good. I pretty much get along with everyone.

13 Q. Yeah. And how about manager or supervisors and that
14 kind of next --

15 A. I pretty much get along with everyone.

16 Q. Yeah, yeah, get along with them pretty good? Do you as
17 a train -- do you personally feel any pressure to take safety
18 shortcuts to fix problems or keep trains moving?

19 A. No, because I'm not going to take no shortcuts. If I'm
20 not safe, then the customers ain't safe. And I have kids I want
21 to go home to at the end of the day, so --

22 Q. Okay. And how about raising safety issues? Do you feel
23 comfortable, free to raise safety issues with WMATA?

24 A. Me personally?

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. Yes. I do know of operators or other employees that
2 aren't. It's a distrust for management. It seems like everything
3 is discipline instead of -- I remember also, it used to be the
4 frontline supervisors, if you did something or it seemed like you
5 weren't operating correctly, they would get on your train and have
6 a conversation with you, and that would be the end of it. If it
7 still was a problem, then they would send you back to training.
8 Now it just seems like it's discipline. You get written up, you
9 get suspended and/or terminated.

10 Q. Okay. Are there any of those kind of consequences for
11 train operators that might have train delays? Is that a --

12 A. The delays more come from the discrepancies with the
13 trains --

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. -- such as a MOL, motor overload, which means it's a
16 problem with the braking system, which you're not supposed to take
17 a train out of the yard if you have MOL. But, of course, I guess
18 because of revenue, they're out there on main line. Or a door
19 problem, they would -- and the funny thing about it is, part of
20 the training is to learn how to fix the doors if you have a door
21 problem or something like that. Central Control will have you
22 wait in your cab while they either find a supervisor or car
23 equipment somewhere on the line to come, offload train while
24 you're still sitting in your cab, and have them check the train
25 out. And it's like we have to get recertified every 2 years on

1 the same stuff and, to me, it's just a waste. You could have the
2 problem resolved faster if you let the operator do their job and
3 it wouldn't be such a delay.

4 Q. Okay. Are you aware of any near miss or close call
5 reporting system at WMATA?

6 A. The only program we have -- it's a good one -- is WMATA,
7 the Local 689, and Department of Transportation just started a
8 program maybe 2, going on 3 years ago, a close call program. The
9 interesting thing about that is you have some employees trust the
10 program and want to report, and then you have a lot of other
11 employees, because they don't trust management, they're hesitant
12 to report anything.

13 Q. Okay. And -- let's see -- how about the safety
14 reporting line? Do you know anything about that?

15 A. I know a little bit about it.

16 Q. Hotline, I think it's called.

17 A. Yes, the safety hotline. A lot of employees I talk to,
18 they won't use it.

19 Q. No?

20 A. They don't -- they just don't trust it. They won't use
21 it.

22 Q. They don't feel it's confidential or they don't feel
23 that it does any good or why?

24 A. Well, I think everybody, or a lot of employees,
25 especially in the transportation department, are scared of

1 retaliation. So instead of even wanting to deal with the
2 retaliation aspect of it, they just won't report. They figure
3 it'll get back to their superintendent or assistant
4 superintendent, which it'll get to a supervisor, which --

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. -- they don't want to be uncomfortable or want a problem
7 with management, so --

8 Q. Yeah. Have you ever been retaliated against for
9 reporting things?

10 A. Me personally, no.

11 Q. No? Okay. Would you feel free to speak up if one of
12 your train operator peers or even a supervisor/manager was not
13 following safe work practices?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Yeah? You wouldn't feel any hesitation?

16 A. Uh-uh, not at all.

17 Q. Good. Do you think this is a safe place to work?

18 A. It used to be a whole lot safer; I can say that. I
19 think, just my opinion or my perception of it, safety is on a
20 decline, and it's like it's snowballing and if something isn't
21 done, then you all might be back here again interviewing because
22 of another fatality or something.

23 Q. Switching gears a little bit, have you as a train
24 operator received any kind of training on emergency incident
25 command or what's called NIMS, National Incident Management

1 System, how an emergency is managed basically?

2 A. Maybe 3 or 4 years ago.

3 Q. Yeah?

4 A. It's -- I know I had some training on it, but it's been
5 a long time. It's been a while.

6 Q. Okay. And in an emergency, who's in charge? Who's the
7 incident commander?

8 A. Oh, the on-scene commander? It would be Transit or the
9 person that's at the site first until Transit comes, and then
10 they're the on-scene commander.

11 Q. Okay. Transit --

12 A. The police.

13 Q. -- refers to the WMATA Police Department?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. So whoever there first then transitions to
16 police?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. That's -- okay. In looking at your management, have
19 they ever observed you doing your work?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And did they give you any kind of feedback helping to
22 clarify anything or point out anything?

23 A. In my record, I have only one thing in my record and
24 that's an AWOL. I missed a run on my day off overtime. Other
25 than that, I don't have no safety violations or anything.

1 Q. Good for you.

2 A. So I never ran a red signal, never had doors off the
3 platform, anything like that.

4 Q. Okay. And how often would you say you see a supervisor
5 or manager when you're out operating trains?

6 A. They're on the line in different sections or sectors.
7 One, two -- I usually see four or five a day during any given --

8 Q. Okay. Pretty frequently then?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Yeah. Okay. And are you familiar with the Tri-state
11 Oversight Committee?

12 A. I heard of them, yes.

13 Q. You've heard of them. And how often have you seen them
14 on the property, any of their personnel?

15 A. Unless they had some type of identifying clothes, I
16 haven't.

17 Q. You haven't? Okay.

18 A. I'm not saying that they haven't been there, but it's --
19 you have a lot of contractors, a lot of different people on the
20 property. I wouldn't be able to identify them --

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. -- unless they had some type of identification.

23 Q. No interaction with them, then --

24 A. No.

25 Q. -- where they identified themselves or any of that?

1 A. No. Not with me personally, no.

2 Q. Okay. All right. And how would you characterize the
3 functionality of the radio system, WMATA radio system?

4 A. Very poor.

5 Q. Very poor. And why do you say that?

6 A. When we had a analog system, the analog system worked
7 better than this new digital system. It seems with the digital
8 system, if you're on a channel and it's too many people, the
9 conversation comes out garbled or blurred out. The handhelds,
10 they time out, so you have to cut them off 20, 30 seconds and cut
11 them back on to get reception. It's a lot dead spots on the lines
12 where you have no communication at all. And all of the car series
13 don't have digital radios. Like the 5000s, you might have a few
14 digital radios on the console in the 5000s. The 6's, the 3's, the
15 2's have them. It's poor. It's poor.

16 Q. Do you have both a handset and a console or --

17 A. Well, yes. You're issued a handheld at the beginning of
18 your shift and you got to turn it in at the end of your shift.
19 Depending on what car series that you're operating out of, you
20 might have two radios. Like I said, most of the 5000s, the
21 console radios are -- they haven't been upgraded.

22 Q. Okay. And the handhelds are digital?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. As a train operator, do you have the authority to
25 slow or stop the train if you think it's unsafe to proceed?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And are there negative consequences to you as a train
3 operator if you delay the train?

4 A. It's a intimidating factor there. But also one of their
5 policies, 3.1.1, the operator has the last say-so in a situation
6 for the safety of the passengers, which includes myself. So I
7 don't feel I can be intimidated if you have this policy in place,
8 so --

9 Q. Okay, good. Have you as a train operator, have you ever
10 participated in a scenario involving a hazardous condition such as
11 smoke in a tunnel or a station?

12 A. Yes. There's --

13 Q. And tell us about it. What happened?

14 A. I don't know if it was an insulator on fire. I think
15 Clarendon, track 1. You have the wood ties. One was on fire
16 Saturday, as a matter of fact, coming out -- well, outside the
17 portal from -- what station is that -- from Ballston. Outside,
18 before you went into the tunnel, is it was a cross-tower smoking
19 or burning there. That was recently, Saturday.

20 Q. So that was a real event?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Oh, okay. I was asking about a training scenario.

23 A. Oh. I haven't had a training scenario.

24 Q. No?

25 A. All I have is real ones. They seem to be quite

1 frequently.

2 Q. Yeah. Yeah. Well, glad you got through that okay.

3 And you mentioned having received some training in the
4 emergency management functions. What other kind of emergency
5 training have you received for dealing with emergencies, like
6 smoke, like any kind of bad thing that could happen out there?

7 A. That would have been 9 years ago. They used to have --
8 it's like a wooden turn style where they would have a car on it,
9 and it used to be able to move and they would fill it with fake
10 smoke and have, like, dummies on it for a training scenario. But
11 I don't think they've used that in years.

12 Q. Uh-huh. And you went through that training?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Was that kind of all of the train operators going
15 through that or --

16 A. At that time, around 9 years ago, yes.

17 Q. Okay. All right. And getting back to what you can do
18 as a train operator, do you have the authority to turn off the
19 train ventilation system on your own initiative?

20 A. Now, yes.

21 Q. Now, yes.

22 A. Now, yes. They changed that policy. You don't have to
23 ask for permission no more, I guess, since the incident in
24 January.

25 Q. Yeah. Okay. Kind of walk us through what's involved in

1 doing that.

2 A. You have to key the train down, go to the auxiliary
3 panel, use the crew door key to turn it to the off position, and
4 then drop the environmental control circuit breaker and keep it
5 keyed off in the off position, depending on the car series. If
6 it's a 5000, it's usually 30 seconds to a minute. All the other
7 cars, it's usually 20 to 30 seconds.

8 Q. And then that shuts it down?

9 A. That shuts it down and the whole consist. And once you
10 clear the area, you can just hit your EV circuit breaker and it
11 should bring it back on.

12 Q. Okay. So I'm going to guess that most WMATA train
13 operators have gone through this mental exercise since January
14 12th. But if you encountered heavy smoke in a subway, what kind
15 of -- what do you see yourself doing?

16 A. First, stopping the train, reporting it to central,
17 cutting the EV off, and waiting to hear what the instructions are.
18 If the instructions are safe, then I will follow them. If I feel
19 they're unsafe, I will report back to them why I feel it's unsafe,
20 since they're looking at a screen in the room and I'm actually at
21 the scene, and go from there.

22 Q. Yeah. Okay. If you had to access WMATA equipment from
23 the outside, how would you go about doing it?

24 A. You mean from outside from the train?

25 Q. Outside the train, correct.

1 A. Well, of course, make announcements, key the train down,
2 use the crew door key to open one of the doors, step out on a
3 ledge to get to whatever -- wherever the equipment is.

4 Q. That's how you'd get out, but I'm thinking more of, you
5 know, from someone like a firefighter. How would they get into
6 the train if they needed to?

7 A. Well, they have -- I believe, 2 years ago, they have a
8 switch on the side of the trains on the outside now. I don't what
9 incident happened for them to put them on there, but it's just
10 like a plastic knob they can turn clockwise or counterclockwise
11 and it will open that door for them to be able to get on or off
12 the train.

13 Q. Okay. And which door is that? Is that the center door
14 or the end door?

15 A. Yes, the center doors.

16 Q. The center door. Okay. I think that's all I have.
17 I'll turn it over to my colleague over here.

18 BY MR. NARVELL:

19 Q. This is Rick Narvell from the NTSB. Dion, just a couple
20 of questions here.

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. First of all, what's a crude oil key?

23 A. Crew door key? It's a barrel-shaped like key. You
24 could use it for the auxiliary panel. Certain doors on the train
25 door use them for -- usually the operator has it, Transit Police

1 has one, I believe the fire department has one, and the car
2 cleaners.

3 Q. Okay. Safety committees, have you ever participated or
4 attended any kind of safety committee meeting or --

5 A. I attend the one that they have in the divisions. They
6 have safety meetings in the divisions, usually one the third week
7 of the month. I attend the DOT close call safety meetings.

8 Q. Do you go -- I mean, so is this a regular --

9 A. Once a month.

10 Q. Once a month, you go?

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. Okay. And are there notes or minutes produced as a
13 result of these meetings?

14 A. Yes. What that is, if an employee call in something,
15 it's discussed between the union, management, DOT, and then it's
16 sent up to the deputy general manager of operations to make a
17 decision on that situation, and either it's a new policy or -- for
18 example, signs went up outside of going into the shop reminding
19 operators to do their safety stops, stuff like that, so they can
20 take the train in the shop safely.

21 Q. Okay. You mentioned to Mr. Flannigan about some
22 discrepancies on these trains.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Can you give us a little more insight as to -- I believe
25 one thing was about the numbers, the car train numbers. Was that

1 -- would you consider that a discrepancy?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Okay. Can you tell us what -- when you talk about
4 discrepancies, then, what do you mean by that?

5 A. A discrepancy is a problem with the train, like a MOL,
6 motor overload.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. On the console it's a button for that, and if it's red,
9 it'll give you a heavy brake odor and sometimes you will have to
10 cut the trucks out on that car. It'll have to be taken out of
11 service. The trucks will have to be cut out because it'll start
12 smoking --

13 Q. Right.

14 A. -- from the brakes.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. You might have where you've recycle your doors, a door
17 that won't close, where they'll have you go to that door, cut that
18 door out to make sure it's kept close. I have even seen trains
19 leave the yard with the propulsion cut out on the car. So that
20 affects that car only, but, still, some of those discrepancies, I
21 believe to the policy, they shouldn't leave the yard for revenue
22 service.

23 Q. That was what I was going to get to next. Have you ever
24 seen or were aware of a specific discrepancy or discrepancies that
25 were not -- would have required a train to stay in the yard, yet

1 it went out?

2 A. Those three things.

3 Q. Those three things specifically?

4 A. Specifically, yeah.

5 Q. Is this recent?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. This year?

8 A. This month, this past week.

9 Q. So those things go out although they should not be going
10 out?

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. Propulsion, MOL?

13 A. Well, propulsion, that was probably 3 or 4 months ago.
14 But the MOLs, a door being cut out, that's every day. That's an
15 everyday occurrence. Like I said, I even -- car equipment even --
16 it was a train out there that had the overspeed alarm going off
17 around 30 miles per hour. Car equipment had his notepad out and
18 when he contacted central, he gave them the dates, and in 2 weeks'
19 time, that same car was still out there on the lead. And he was
20 like, are you all going to ever take it off the line for it to get
21 fixed? So, I mean, it's an everyday thing. I guess revenue
22 service is more important.

23 Q. Well, I was going to get to that one too. Does revenue
24 service trump safety?

25 A. It seems like it. It definitely seems like it.

1 Q. And you as a train operator, you would report these
2 things and then to, what, supervision?

3 A. I will report it to the tower before taking the train
4 out the yard and ask them for another train. I'm not taking the
5 train out with those discrepancies.

6 Q. That's you personally?

7 A. Me personally.

8 Q. But apparently other trains have gone out with these
9 discrepancies in violation of the policy?

10 A. All the time.

11 Q. Okay. One last question for now is, Mr. Flanigon asked
12 you about the TOC, the Tri-state Oversight Committee. Have you
13 ever seen people here from FTA, the Federal Transit
14 Administration?

15 A. I seen them a couple weeks ago. I believe they was in
16 West Falls Church Yard when I seen them.

17 Q. And how do you know that they're from FTA?

18 A. Well, they had their clip boards and jackets on and they
19 was very observant of everything that was going on in that
20 division.

21 Q. Did you interact with them at all?

22 A. No.

23 Q. You just knew that they were from FTA?

24 A. Yeah. Well, I knew they were some type of agency.

25 Q. Okay. Okay, great. Thank you. That's all I have for

1 now.

2 BY DR. GROFF:

3 Q. Loren Groff, NTSB. And just a little more questions on
4 the safety committees. You mentioned you participated in the
5 division committee; is that right?

6 A. Yes. Each division once a month. It would be the
7 superintendent of that division and any employees that is
8 volunteering that want to participate in it. They'll have a
9 safety meeting for like an hour, from like between 10:00 and
10 11:00, to discuss, I guess, any abnormalities they might see while
11 they're operating the train, sometimes suggestions or ideas of how
12 to make things safer, things of that nature, and go over some of
13 the policies and procedures.

14 Q. So your regular participation in that is related to
15 being a steward; is that right?

16 A. I'm -- I try to participate every month. Sometimes I
17 can't.

18 Q. Yeah, sure.

19 A. But, yeah, that's pretty much regularly.

20 Q. Can you say just maybe on average, your experience of
21 how often people come there to share safety concerns?

22 A. You can have a meeting, you might have three people.
23 Sometimes -- because they have them in the break room, so it
24 depends how the work is set up. If I'm a New Carrollton operator,
25 I will go on break at West Falls. So the West Falls operators

1 will go on break on New Carrollton, which means your vehicle is at
2 your home division across the line. So people try to get
3 something to eat and they take their break right there.

4 Q. Okay. And just in your experience, has there been any
5 change in the participation, good or bad, over the last, let's
6 say, couple of years in participation in that?

7 A. I think some good ideas have come up. I haven't seen
8 any of them in writing being -- but I couldn't speak on the
9 meetings that managers have. I don't know if they brought the
10 ideas up or, you know, it just stayed confined to that safety
11 meeting at that time.

12 Q. And you mentioned that there's sort of a general maybe
13 mistrust or fear of retaliation. Is that -- were there specific
14 events that led to that or is it just sort of something that's
15 been that way for a long time?

16 A. I believe the gap really started widening maybe 5 years
17 ago. You can talk to other operators or you'll hear other
18 operators overtalking and it's like I don't want to be bothered
19 with that; I'm not getting suspended; I can't afford to get
20 suspended right now. Or, what good is reporting it if they're not
21 going to do nothing about it? So it's a big mistrust between the
22 frontline employees, and even some of the frontline supervisors,
23 with management. So --

24 Q. I've heard a little bit about a discipline -- is it
25 disciplinary matrix --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. -- something new? Can you tell me what your experience
3 has been with that, what you know about it?

4 A. Well, like I said, the only thing I have on my record is
5 AWOL and that's -- it was overtime work and I failed to call the
6 division.

7 Q. Well, I didn't mean your --

8 A. Oh, okay.

9 Q. -- I didn't mean personal experience being disciplined,
10 but like what you know about it, what do you hear about it, and --

11 A. Yeah. To a lot of frontline employees and operators,
12 it's pretty severe. Some offenses leads up to termination. They
13 have one -- I think it's insubordination. I believe that carries,
14 like, a 20 or 22-day suspension. So if you're having a
15 conversation with somebody in management and they feel you're
16 being disrespectful, what really defines disrespect, you know?
17 And so, people will shy away from something like that. Because
18 like I said, somebody being suspended 20 days or 22 days, that's 4
19 weeks of pay. They have other violations on it. I know I've
20 reviewed it, but I can't remember everything.

21 Q. Certainly.

22 A. It's a few pages, though.

23 Q. But it details sort of the variety of disciplines that
24 could be --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- could be given out? Okay. All right. That's all I
2 have for now. Thanks.

3 BY MR. MADARAS:

4 Q. James Madaras, Local 689 safety officer. Dion, I just
5 have a couple of questions. If there are so many dead spots, you
6 know, with the radios, why don't the operators constantly report
7 the outages?

8 A. They report it every day. If you all have one of the
9 radios, you can listen to any line, you'll hear it all day.
10 You'll hear a operator say, "Central, be advised my lead car is,"
11 like, I'll say, "5049. All I have is a handheld radio. Can you
12 repeat your message? I didn't receive it." So, it's reported
13 every day, all day.

14 Q. Okay, thanks. And do you think that there is
15 apprehension by employees to address or report safety concerns for
16 fear that it results in some type of discipline or is there
17 another reason why?

18 A. Well, that and they feel they report, report, report and
19 nothing ever gets done. So they're just like, well, I'm not going
20 to report it no more. So it's pretty much those two things,
21 either discipline behind it or, like I said earlier, lip service.

22 Q. Okay. And have you ever been down to central control to
23 see what they do down there while the trains are moving?

24 A. Yes. They have, I guess, like projectors. They have it
25 on the big screen, the system.

1 Q. I mean, more specifically, have you been trained on --

2 A. Oh, no, I haven't been trained doing it.

3 Q. So the only real perception that you have or
4 understanding is just the visual visit that you had?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. There's never been any specific training?

7 A. No training.

8 Q. Okay. Do you know why the close call system was put in
9 place?

10 A. I believe it was put in place to give employees a way to
11 report safety without fear of retaliation or feeling that it's
12 going to go to this department and their manager going to find
13 out, something they could feel confident in, that it would remain
14 anonymous where it wouldn't be no retaliation.

15 Q. Okay. And when you talked about the safety meetings at
16 the division, do you go to the Local Safety Committee meetings --

17 A. No.

18 Q. -- LSC meetings?

19 A. No, this is just in-house in the division.

20 Q. Toolbox-type meetings?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And why don't you go to the Local Safety Committee
23 meetings?

24 A. I don't even know about them. I don't know what date
25 they're held on, the location of them.

1 Q. That's all I have. Thank you.

2 BY MR. GORDON:

3 Q. All right, thank you. Joe Gordon, NTSB. You mentioned
4 the trains leaving out of the yard sometimes with discrepancies
5 with -- have you ever been instructed -- so you get on your train,
6 you're doing your pre-trip inspection, you find an issue, and then
7 you've reported it. Have you ever been instructed to leave the
8 yard with that train or were asked to leave the yard with the
9 train?

10 A. Yes. Until the time I get my landline, tell them I'm
11 not taking the train out. You know the policy, as well as I do; a
12 train is not supposed to leave the yard with that discrepancy.

13 Q. So then have you heard other, I mean, other operators do
14 the same thing, report issues and be -- get that same response to
15 take the train anyway?

16 A. Yep.

17 Q. Okay. You mentioned earlier some of the procedural
18 changes that have come into place since the January 12th accident.
19 From your perspective, are those -- have those changes been
20 adequate to alleviate some of the safety issues, some of the
21 concerns that --

22 A. Well, the EV, being able to turn off the EV, the
23 operator, without permission, that's the biggest one with the
24 changes so far, which I think people feel good about that. They
25 don't have to have permission to cut that off. Yeah, that's

1 pretty much the only one.

2 Q. Okay. Reports of smoke -- and I'm sure, you know, like
3 you said, the smoke incidents are common. Can you just kind of
4 walk us through you're operating, you come up on smoke, you know,
5 be it in a tunnel or anywhere on the system, what steps you take
6 and, you know, how you report that and what steps you take after
7 that?

8 A. You see the smoke. You stop your train and contact
9 central. Central will ask you for a chain marker or the location
10 of where you see it. They'll ask you is it safe to proceed
11 through it. Depending on your answer, you would continue on or
12 you would stop your -- or they'll hold your train there, then
13 they'll look for a supervisor to come and investigate. On the
14 other side of the track, they'll ask the operator of that train to
15 do a track inspection on that side or to drop the supervisor off
16 to -- for the fire extinguisher, or whatever, to try to put the
17 fire out or dissipate the smoke.

18 Q. Okay. So track inspections to try to identify the area
19 where the smoke's coming from --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- is that ever done with passengers on the train? I
22 mean, they --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- get a report of a smoke event ahead of you and then
25 they'll ask you to do a track inspection?

1 A. After. Well, if it's ahead of you, they'll try to get a
2 supervisor there --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- I guess, to report to them their findings. And once
5 that problem or situation is over, then they'll ask you, since
6 you're coming through that affected area, to give them a track
7 inspection, I guess, to make sure that the situation is corrected.

8 Q. Okay. Just to kind of verify what the --

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. -- supervisor said? Okay.

11 You talked a little bit about peer-to-peer. So if you
12 see someone doing something unsafe out there, you feel comfortable
13 approaching them and bringing it to their attention. Do you see
14 others, other, you know, workers, train operators or anybody,
15 WMATA employees out there doing the same thing as far as, you
16 know, kind of the buddy system and looking out for the --

17 A. Well, you have some. You might have a few out of a
18 whole lot of people. Me, personally, I try to push the close call
19 program. I'm telling them, though, you got to report it, you
20 know. If they do or not, you know, that's -- they know about
21 that. But I try to let them know -- I mean, you want to go home
22 to where came to work safe, right?

23 Q. Right.

24 A. So why not report it?

25 Q. Absolutely. Okay, one last question. When you're out

1 there operating, maintenance employees, you know, roadway, do you
2 see -- are you surprised by those guys and how close they are to
3 the track very often or do you get notification that the guys are
4 going to be out there?

5 A. Sometimes. Most of the time -- well, they do give
6 notification because they have to give permission, and central
7 will make an announcement. How frequent the announcements,
8 depends on who the controller is. I have ran up on personnel not
9 knowing that they were at that location. That could have been
10 because I was on break, came back, central didn't make the
11 announcement. Or it could have been from the radio --

12 Q. Right.

13 A. -- not having no radio communication, and that's a scary
14 thing.

15 Q. Right. But there is no procedure in place right now so,
16 like, if you were to come back from a break, that you check in
17 with the controller to find out if there are any roadway
18 workers --

19 A. You could ask.

20 Q. -- in your route?

21 A. Well, you could ask them. You can tell, central, it's
22 train, I'll say, 900, track 2, leaving New Carrollton. Can I get
23 the wayside update, personnel wayside? And usually they'll give
24 you a update where personnel is located.

25 Q. But that's not a requirement; that's something you would

1 take --

2 A. No.

3 Q. -- on yourself?

4 A. That's just -- yes.

5 Q. Okay, I have no further questions.

6 BY MR. FLANIGON:

7 Q. Yeah. Well, thanks. I just had one kind of follow-up
8 here. You mentioned visiting OCC and that was not part of any
9 formal training you got on how OCC works or -- is that right?

10 A. I'm not sure if training still do it. I know when I
11 came through training class, they used to take people down in OCC
12 so they could see how -- the bigger picture of how everything
13 operates. You can go down there from time to time, get buzzed in,
14 just to look; not really be hands on, just to see how it's set up.

15 Q. So the initial -- when you first became a train
16 operator, is that what you're talking about, when they would take
17 you to OCC and explain how it goes?

18 A. Um-hum.

19 Q. But not subsequently in --

20 A. I'm not sure how they do the training now. The training
21 department has been turned over to somebody else that's in charge
22 of it now, so I think the policies are real different now.

23 Q. But in terms of your training, when you came on board,
24 you got an introduction overview --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- of OCC --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- you got to visit? And then you go through a periodic
4 retraining or recertification?

5 A. Yes. Every 2 years, you have to be recertified as a
6 train operator.

7 Q. And the every 2 years, you don't go to OCC?

8 A. No.

9 Q. No. Okay.

10 A. That's just a hundred-question test and a
11 interior/exterior recovery. You have to go main line, reverse
12 ends --

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. -- just operation of the trains.

15 Q. Does it cover any emergency procedures?

16 A. Just where the, like, emergency doors and the emergency
17 door release for like the fire department or a customer --

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. -- for the outside.

20 Q. Okay, that's all.

21 MR. NARVELL: This is Rick Narvell. I had a question on
22 recertification, but Mike already addressed that, so I have no
23 further questions.

24 MR. BAKER: Okay.

25 DR. GROFF: Yeah, no more questions for me.

1 MR. MADARAS: No more.
2 MR. GORDON: Nothing further.
3 MR. FLANIGON: Okay. Very well.
4 MR. BAKER: Well, thank you, gentlemen.
5 MR. FLANIGON: Thank you, sir.
6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you. Thanks for coming.
7 MR. FLANIGON: Appreciate your time.
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 Dion Baker

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-FR-004

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: April 13, 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.



Karen M. Galvez
Transcriber