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

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Agency / Organization

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Title

Interview Transcript for Neal Warren

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
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WMATA INCIDENT AT L'ENFANT PLAZA	*	
STATION, WASHINGTON, D.C.	*	Docket No.: DCA-15-FR-004
JANUARY 12, 2015	*	
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Interview of: NEAL WARREN

WMATA Headquarters
Jackson Graham Building
Washington, D. C.

Tuesday,
April 14, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MIKE FLANIGON
Railroad Accident Investigator

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

APPEARANCES:

MICHAEL FLANIGON, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

MR. FLANIGON: My name is Mike Flanigon, F-l-a-n-i-g-o-n. I'm with the National Transportation Safety Board. It's April 14th, 2015. We're interviewing Mr. Neal Warren, N-e-a-l, W-a-r-r-e-n, who is an assistant superintendent with WMATA. And this is in regard to the January 12th arcing incident at L'Enfant Plaza. With me is --

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

MR. FLANIGON: Before starting, I just want to confirm you understand we'll record the interview and provide you a transcript.

MR. WARREN: Yes, sir.

MR. FLANIGON: You say yes? Okay.

INTERVIEW OF NEAL WARREN

BY MR. FLANIGON:

Q. Let's start with just a little bit about your background, how long you've been with WMATA, how you came to be there, and what you do in your current job, okay?

A. I started with the Authority in 1981, almost 34 years, coming up on 34 years, ~~2 weeks~~3 months away from 34 years. I was hired as a general equipment mechanic, and shortly after that, I did -- had a variety of duties, maintaining the mechanical equipment in the rail stations and the bus facilities. But I think, maybe, within a year of me being hired, I accepted a position, what was called then a pneumatic control technician.

And the pneumatic control technician, at that time, maintained the tunnel ventilation system. So, I have a lot of experience on tunnel fans. At one time, when the system wasn't as large as it is now, there were only about two people who did -- inspected all the tunnel fans throughout the entire system. Now, there's probably more to the dozen people who do it. And, you know, we were very conscientious about what we had to do. I felt we did a good job. And later on, after that, about 8 years as a mechanic, I was -- got an opportunity to get a platform job as a first line supervisor. So, that was about right around 1989. I came in '81; in '89 I became what's now called the grassroots supervisor or the first line supervisor. And started there, did that probably up until 2012, maybe, and then I became an assistant superintendent. So, I've had a lot of experience as a mechanic. I've had a lot of experience as a supervisor. And, I guess, I'm kind of fresh at an assistant superintendent. That's been 3 years as assistant superintendent.

Q. So, as an assistant superintendent, you have supervisors who report directly to you, is that how it works?

A. That's correct. Three supervisors report to me. I have three areas. One is West Falls Church, one is Alexandria, and one is Metro ~~Services~~Center. So, that's referred to as Virginia and D.C. Region. So, basically, three supervisors that report to me. And they have approximately 11 to 12 employees that report to them. So, my role is to manage supervisors directly, and then

they manage their mechanics directly.

Q. Well, since 1981, there's a lot of changes in the system. 1981 -- the system first went into service in the late '70s, mid-'70s?

A. Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: '76.

A. I was going to say '75-'76.

BY MR. FLANIGON:

Q. So, you've seen the extensions, the new stations.

A. Just about all of it.

Q. Plucked in the middle of the lines --

A. Yes, sir.

Q. -- and then the whole silver line thing.

A. That's correct.

Q. There's also been a lot of ups and downs with regard to safety and over the years some significant incidents. And around the time of Fort Totten, 6, 7 years ago, whatever it is now, there was a whole series of accidents that I think --

A. Correct.

Q. -- probably was made a big -- had a big impact on WMATA. And so, I wanted to ask you if you could talk a little about the changes you've seen in the last 6, 7, 8 years with regard to safety of operations, safety of the workplace. What's changed, if anything has changed, and what's good, what's bad, what's better. What's your take on it?

A. Okay, in the last 6 or 7 years, I think Metro has made some good adjustments in order to try to correct some of the problems that we've had with safety. Some of the things that occurred since, like you say, since Fort Totten, they've been able to manage the operation of the trains better, giving the train operator's more decision-making in making sure that the trains are operated safely.

I know recently, I understand we're going back to ATO, but that was probably -- that was a decision made only after they felt comfortable with going back to ATO. I know they wouldn't make a decision like that without making sure that we had everything at our disposal to make the system more safe. So, I think that was one of the things.

And then, the other thing that we've done is implemented a lot of training like the railway protection plan where, you know, we understand the safest way to be out in the right-of-way in the tunnels, and the procedures that the Control Center has about when people are in that right-of-way, on the roadway, what they should do and the things that they can't do. We've developed some of the cardinal rules. And I think the layers like that have protected the employees and the operators and prevented a lot of accidents.

Q. In terms of running the trains, keeping them on time, keeping the various systems working, that's clearly -- you know, that's kind of your core mission, if you will.

A. ~~Uh-huh~~Correct.

Q. Sometimes there's a little tradeoff or a little tension between safety and keeping everything on schedule, on track, on time. How do you see that balance? Do you think it's the right balance? Is it -- are there shortcuts sometimes that shouldn't be taken to keep the trains on time? Or are people overly cautious and what's --

A. You know, that is a good question. I think there's a good balance right now. But we are still working. It's still a work in progress trying to get that done. And one thing that I've noticed is that the way things operate during the day, a little different than the way things operate during the night because of what our functions are. So, in other words, at night when the Track Department is doing most of their work, you know, the focus changes a little bit from during revenue hours. So, I would have to say that I think, overall, Metro is doing a good job balancing that, because, you know, it takes quite a bit to keep everything moving during the day, keep our passengers safe, and provide good service.

And then, sort of revert at night, and then the focus is on maintenance, getting the Track Department access to the track so they can make their repairs and do those things and all -- try to get all that done before the revenue -- before the stations open the next morning. So, I think there's a good balance, but there's still some work to be done, because I know at

some point, in some cases, the safety may feel that some jobs are not being performed correctly, but, you know, they're always out there now. They're very involved in what we do with all the escorts that we do with the contractors that are working on Metro property. So, there's a lot of activity goes on, especially during the night. So, I think the balance as far as what they do and the way they see things is pretty good right now.

Q. Are you aware of a close call reporting system or near-miss reporting system at Metro?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you get any kind of data from that system that helps you see where problems might be that you might need to address?

A. Right. Well, there is data that is entered into the system. But most of that data's -- it trickles down to us as managers. We have meetings and we discuss things that the other employees want to share with us, but I would say probably as a whole, we could probably share that information a little bit better between each department. Sometimes, you know, some of the information's shared system-wide.

We get our emails from the general managers there that share information with us about what we can do as an organization to be safe, but I think sometimes there might be some information that might not be as important that other, smaller groups can share, the fire department and the Track Department and plant maintenance. Because I think we all are out there doing the same

things and working on the equipment, but we could probably share some of that information a little bit better.

Q. How about a safety hotline? Do you know anything about that?

A. Yeah, there's a safety hotline. I'm familiar with it. I've never used it, but I'm familiar with it. I know some people who have called it, but --

Q. Do -- let me ask it this way. If people are working in your area of responsibility have identified something they think is a safety issue, how can they bring it up?

A. We have monthly safety meetings. And anytime something is an immediate safety issue, the first line supervisor can bring it to my attention and we'll address it, maybe put out emails within the department to make everybody aware of it. But normally, in our monthly safety meetings, we bring up those issues; address any old safety issues, and then any new items that employees have encountered.

And there's been some good feedback from, you know, the employees who come along with the first line supervisors and myself. And then, after that meeting, I take that information to the meeting that I have with my superiors, and then the information is shared within the whole department. But there've been some good lessons learned from some of the safety meetings.

Q. How often would you say the supervisors who work for you, and how often do you get out into the field as people are

actually doing work outside the shop areas and spend any time with them?

A. Well, the first line supervisors, we always try even though sometimes it's not easy. We try to get out every day. As a first line supervisor, you really ought to be out every day with your employees, interacting with them, trying to help them get better. And, you know, making sure that the work is -- that you ask them to do is being performed.

The preventative maintenance and the corrective maintenance that we do, you have to be in touch with what's going on out there. So, that's for -- say, for example, in my case, the three supervisors that work for me, I expect them to be out there every day. And then, I go out, myself, because I'm covering three areas. I do go out, especially when we got a special project or something that we're working on and something that's urgent, and it's affecting revenue. Could be something as simple as them being able to wash buses up at Northern Bus Garage.

That's something that affects the Authority as a whole. And that's why I sometimes will get involved myself and be out there seeing that the work is getting done, projecting -- being able to communicate with the managers in the facilities, letting them know the status of the work, and you know, making them -- because they're our customers, so we want to make them stay aware of what's going on.

Q. So, what would you think -- how often does that happen

for you? Are you out once a week, once a month?

A. I would say at least twice a week.

Q. Twice a week.

A. Yeah. And then, for the first line supervisors, it varies, but it should be in contact with some employee every day for the first line supervisors.

Q. Is there any way that you -- how do you convey that or how do you kind of make sure that happens with your supervisors?

A. Well, I have -- normally, in the morning I contact them and we review our -- what's called a backlog in MAXIMO, and then that backlog, that gives us a -- let's us know what work orders have been called in. And each work order has a priority level. So, that's what we really rely on. And sometimes it could be an email that might come from one of the general managers or the director of our department. It could be an email. But we also rely on the MAXIMO, looking at the tickets, and then determine the priority of those tickets.

So, I'm in -- I look at the backlog in the morning, see what -- if there's anything that occurred from one of the other shifts, the evening shift or the night shift. Sometimes we've had things that occurred that require immediate attention the following day. Sometimes it carried over from the evening shift to the night shift, and now those type of maintenance issues need to be carried over right into the day shift, when we respond off of the information that we were provided from the previous shift.

And, you know, we just understand what things need to be addressed immediately.

We get a call saying there is a train stuck on a lift, and we know that that's something that requires immediate attention. But, if it's an exhaust fan in the cleaners' room, and, you know, that's not as much of a priority as something like a train stuck on a lift.

Q. So, in that morning call, that's kind of developing a plan for the day so to speak?

A. That's correct.

Q. And I think the original line here was how do you make sure that they are out and about, meeting with people out in the field?

A. The first line supervisors?

Q. Yeah.

A. I stay in contact with them, get updates. I ask them to give me an update, you know. Once you get there, assess the situation, give me a call back, give me some feedback. Let me know it was resolved, and then we can understand --

Q. So, those are the hot items when you'll say to your supervisors, I want you to go pay attention to this, go see what they're doing, go find out what the problem is.

A. That's correct.

Q. Okay, gotcha. Good. Do the people you supervise or you, yourself, receive any training in incident command system, or

it's also called the National Incident Response System? And that's what is used for emergency responses, like the --

A. L'Enfant Plaza.

Q. -- L'Enfant Plaza incident. Usually involves multiple agencies like the fire department, police --

A. Right.

Q. -- and so forth.

A. Everybody, including myself, is at what's called first responder. Now, in that class, they teach you about how you respond in an emergency. You identify who's the on-scene commander, and there's a protocol, of course, you know, but you have to follow the protocol to see how you could assist in an emergency. But you are basically following the instructions of the on-scene commander. So, we have responded to emergencies, but we deal with it as whatever role plant maintenance could play in that emergency. That's what we try to fill.

Q. Who gets that training?

A. All plant maintenance employees have -- should have had first responder training. But it's primarily for managers, supervisors, and for the employees, most of them have had it, but we've always asked that the guys -- the lead mechanics in the facilities, like if you work in a rail yard or if you're in a bus facility, you should have the first responder training and HAZMAT training also, because you might respond to a spill, say, for example, a fuel spill in a facility. And that person would have

some training to, you know, give him some ability to know who to call, how to address an issue like a -- you know, could be as simple as a fuel spill or could be a big emergency, fire, just like a fire emergency.

Q. That's good. Good information. Are you familiar with the Tri-state Oversight Committee, the TOC?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And do you see them on the property from time to time?

A. Yes. I have, and we've met with them to do some of their inspections. Also had follow-up and corrective actions that they recommended after they've completed some of their inspections. So, normally we would meet with them, do the inspection, and try to -- if they identified something right there and we can correct it, you know, right on the spot, we try to do that. But then, from that comes a report and then we take care of the corrective actions that were recommended by the Tri-state Oversight Committee. We turn our reports in to the senior managers so they can file that information and have it for future reference.

Q. And when was the last time that they were out doing any kind of inspection or visit with you?

A. Let's see, we did one about 3 months ago at the Columbia Heights Metro Station with Tri-state Oversight Committee, before the turn of the year, back in November or early December, I believe.

Q. Changing gears a little bit, the radio communication, the radio system, how does that work, in terms of quality?

A. Right. I think it -- we just went through some recent changes with the radio system where some of the radios we were using analogs, they'd phase out. Everything now is digital, and some of the -- I think the channel format, basically, has changed. But I think for the most part, the radios work pretty good. I really, in my opinion, the issue might be the reception in some areas of the system.

I know, because some areas of the system, you don't have any problems whatsoever using the radio. But in some other areas, I guess -- I'm not in communication, but it has a lot to do with the antenna and, you know, the reception and the repeater and that type of thing. So, overall, give it a B, I guess, maybe a B-minus. But there's some work to be done specifically getting reception in those areas where you can't communicate with OCC on the radio.

Q. Good. In the -- kind of getting into the fan maintenance area, in the vent shaft, in particular, this is referring to the vent shaft that was out from L'Enfant Plaza Station near where the arcing occurred --

A. Right.

Q. -- there's a smoke detector in that vent shaft. Do you know where that alarms to when it detects smoke?

A. In the vent shaft? Okay, it should alarm back to the

kiosk, but it also to OCC.

Q. Would that go to the controller or would it go to the Maintenance Operations Center?

A. You know, I'm not exactly sure about that. I know that they get an alarm down there through the kiosk. My thinking is that it goes directly to OCC.

Q. And we've heard a little bit about a QA program here, quality assurance. Does the quality assurance program look at fan maintenance?

A. They've been out on a few inspections for -- they've come out, asked us to provide a crew to demonstrate how a PM is performed. QA has been out, I know it's, like, in the last year or so, because I remember coordinating something with them for the K Line. They wanted to see some of the fans operate in that area. They identified the fans and the guys that represent that area and do the tunnel plan inspection. Met with them and just went through the whole process of how they would perform a PM. And then, we -- that location was in good shape.

Q. And that was last year sometime?

A. Yeah, last year, yeah.

Q. Prior to January 12th, were you aware of any problems the maintainers were having getting the one box on the checklist where the rail controller remotely exercises the fan?

A. Well, not from me, the record, because I don't do that function, but I know occasionally, you hear the mechanics would

say that sometime they have -- it's difficult for them to get the cooperation that they would like to have. And I try to let everybody know that when the Operation Control Center has a situation like a single tracking or trains are backed up, it may ask the guys sometimes to call back, you know, in other words, "I'm real busy right now. Call me back in 15 minutes. Call me back in a half hour or so." But to them, it's just like milk and honey, I guess. To them, they're just trying to get through the process of testing the tunnel fans.

And at the Operation Control Center, they're trying to make sure that, you know, the train's on time, the trains are moving. They might have a problem with a person gets sick on a train, and then they may not understand that that really creates a situation where they have to address that issue and maintain the system the best they can. And the tunnel fans, you know, very much important part of the system, but they may be asked to pump call back ~~for~~ in a short period of time. So, I don't experience that, but I know sometimes I get some feedback from some of the mechanics saying that they had to wait until Operation Control Center could test the fan for them. It's been like that for a while.

Q. One of the gentlemen we talked to said his strategy was to pick the time he called to ask where he thought they'd be the least busy.

A. Right.

Q. Is that anything that is kind of shared as a strategy for others?

A. Yes. 10:00 to 2:00 is supposed to be really the window, after rush hour and before rush hour is basically the time of day they have to operate fans. But even -- sometimes, even within that window, there could be some things that occurred, may slow that process down. But, I guess, in order to do your job as a person who's responsible for maintaining the fans is -- so you have to understand what's really going on and be patient, you know, to get your job done.

I try to encourage the guys who are responsible for that, but just, if you have a situation like that, there are some other duties that they can do while -- you know, in lieu of going to remote test on the fans. When they go in the fan shaft, they can do other maintenance. They can look at their checklist. There are a lot of things that you can do to service the equipment that supports the fan until you get the opportunity to do the remote test. The remote test is a small part of the test. It probably takes 10 minutes. But they can -- there are a lot of other duties that they could do in lieu of that.

Q. So, in terms of production, what's your expectation that the technician -- or I guess it's two technicians, right, that usually work as a team?

A. Yeah.

Q. What do you expect them to accomplish in terms of fan

maintenance in a day?

A. In a day? There's no reason at all why they shouldn't be able to do at least two complete systems. And when I say complete systems, I mean the -- say, for example, the fan shaft, the two associated vent shafts that work with that fan shaft. So, that's really a total of six locations. And some of that can be done prior to that 10:00 window and that 2:00 clock window, because you don't need permission to go down and lubricate dampers in a vent shaft. The vent shaft is in the station for the most part. The part where you need Central to do a -- to complete your test, is the remote test down in the fan shaft, which is in between the two stations.

So, I try to allow the guys to understand when they get in those situations where they can't get a test or whatever, go to the vent shaft, and do your maintenance there. The vent shaft has a lot of associated equipment in it that works with that fan shaft. And you can do your maintenance in the vent shaft and then take another opportunity to go do the fan shaft. So, that's what I -- you know, I try to share that information with guys from my experience when I was a mechanic, that that's a good way to make your day flow instead of just sitting, you know, waiting to -- when they tell you to call back.

Because sometimes that can turn -- 15 minutes can turn into a half hour and then, you know, half hour can turn into an hour. In my opinion, you know, that's -- it's counterproductive

to kind of sit and wait just to get a phone call from Central. So, I always try to let the guys understand that there are a lot of other things you can do. And then you get back later on in that afternoon and get that test done.

Q. Do you have any troubles meeting that productivity goal, two fans a day?

A. For the most part, no. Most of the guys are able to get it done. The guys who do it, they've learned the system. They've learned their routes, and they should be able to get at least two, if not three or four. It depends on -- you know, the system is made up, you know, very unique, so say, for example, down this Metro corridor, what we call Metro Center corridor, everything was bunched up. The fans are real close together.

Some of them only 2 or 3 blocks apart. So, they might be able to get a few more. You go over to U Street, the E Route corridor we call, from ~~Malvern~~ Mr. Vernon Square to ~~Charlotte~~ Shaw to U Street. And those are only city blocks.

But if you go up on the red line, everything is stretched out. It's 2 miles, 3 miles apart. And then the other things that determining fact is whether or not the fans at the, what we call, at the top of the shaft. Some of them are at the top of the shaft. Some of the fans are located at the bottom of the shaft. Like, FA-13 up in between Bethesda and Medical Center is a very deep shaft. So, if you go there, it's going to take some time in order for you to complete that maintenance. However,

if you go to one of the other ones that's not real deep and the fans are located at the top of the shaft that really affects the length of time that you have to take in order to do the maintenance.

Q. Thank you. Are you familiar with WMATA's Systems Safety Program Plan, SSPP?

A. The site specific work plan?

Q. Systems Safety Program --

A. Oh, Systems Safety Program, okay. Yes. That's something that's available to us on the Internet where we can go in and record incidents or accidents that might have occurred.

Q. That might be SMS.

A. Oh, okay, right.

Q. SMS.

A. Systems Safety -- what was the acronym?

Q. Systems Safety Program Plan, SSPP. And it's kind of WMATA's overall safety program in a written format.

A. Right, I understand. I've read some of it, but I'm not totally familiar with the entire program.

Q. How do you see your responsibilities and your position in light of WMATA's overall safety program? We'll just call it the safety program.

A. Okay, yeah, well, we do what we call safety conversations. Everybody -- well, all the managers are required to do safety conversations with the employees. And those are

drawn from real experiences that we have with some of the employees. We take the opportunity to have a little mini-stand-down and just talk about something we observed and how we can make the employees work safer. You know, it may be something as simple as putting on your safety glasses when you're using a grinder. You know, most of the mechanics know that, but sometimes, people will take, you know, forget about things that they're supposed to do and lockout-tagout and things like that.

So, we have a program, a safety observation program. And we always talk about that with the employees. A lot of the first line supervisors -- and they do have safety or toolbox meetings. You know, especially, when we have a job that you know, is going require some -- there's a level of difficulty with the job, so you want to have a safety toolbox meeting to discuss a specific job, and, you know, how you're going to work on the job and how you will do it safely. So, that's part of something that we do whenever there's a requirement for it.

Q. Do you have any -- as a manager, do you have any safety goals or safety metrics that you're supposed to keep an eye on and report out on and get evaluated on?

A. That's correct. The injury reports and I think the departmental goal is 1.3 injuries. I don't know the exact figure for it. I'd have to get back with you on that. It's something that senior managers maintain, but we have a calendar -- some of the departments have calendars so they can keep a rolling track of

how many days they've been able to go without injury. So, in other words, when that program was started, I noticed that a lot of guys were taking a lot of pride in being able to look at the calendar and say, "Okay, we're up to 250, 250 days without accidents." And so, that was one tool that was used. I thought that it was paying off some dividends.

So, the majority of the employees here at Metro want to, you know, do a good job, and be safe. And like everybody says, go home to your family with all your fingers and toes. I think that that's the culture that we have in our department that lets the employees understand that, you know, you got a job to do, but at the same time, you know, it's important that you do it safe.

And, you know, everybody is -- benefits when work is done safe. Even the smallest little injury. We had some small minor injuries, but even that is something that people notice. A guy, you know, might have twisted his ankle or sprained his back. So, for the most part, we understand that those are not very serious injuries, but even things like that are noted by the other employees and the guys within the work groups. They notice that also.

Q. So, how are you doing on those metrics? And has your group --

A. Plant maintenance -- normally, if I had those figures, I believe that we're one of the lowest, so we had very few injuries. We had a few recently, but I think our numbers are still low

compared to other departments system-wide. You know, Director of Plant Maintenance, Mr. Borman he takes a lot of pride in being able to, you know, display that. That, you know, we as a department plant, and EQMT and BMSS, that work -- the injury numbers are down for the most part compared to a lot of other groups. We do try.

Q. You just threw out some acronyms there BMSS, bravo, mike, sierra, sierra, that's a department?

A. Yeah, it's building maintenance.

Q. Building maintenance. And what was the other one?

A. And equipment maintenance.

Q. Okay, EQMS --

A. Yeah, EQMT, which is what I'm in --

Q. Echo, queen, mike, t, as in tango.

A. Right.

Q. I'm thinking of the transcriber here.

A. I understand.

Q. And the other one, going back, I made a note here, MAXIMO, how do you spell MAXIMO?

A. M-A-X-I-M-O.

Q. And that's the maintenance management system.

A. Yes, that's the system we use to monitor all maintenance, preventative and corrective maintenance activities with a lot of detailed information on logs, and you want to run reports on a certain facility that will identify an area that

could be a potential problem, and you can use MAXIMO to gather that information.

Q. So, the MAXIMO system, if I'm understanding how it works, and correct me if I'm wrong, but if, for some reason, your schedule for fan maintenance fell behind schedule, that would start automatically pinging you in MAXIMO, is that --

A. Yes.

Q. So, that morning call would be, "Hey, we're behind" --

A. Yes, we have a --

Q. -- on the fans at such and such a location.

A. That's correct. We have a manager, Mr. Johnson who works over at Carmen Turner Facility who sends out a report on labor compliance, PM compliance. The PM compliance report is sent out once a month. But it does -- it's used still to help the supervisors keep track of when they are, say, for example, behind or didn't complete a PM for that month. You know, whereas the goal is to have all PMs completed in a 30-day calendar period. So, you know, maybe a PM or two wasn't completed.

Mr. Johnson would normally send out his report. And from that report it identifies any PMs that were not completed for that calendar -- that month. But most of the time, everybody's in the 95 percent completion rate. So, at the end of the month, it might be a matter of going back and catching two or three PMs with -- we try to make sure that all the fire life safety equipment is inspected within that month, tunnel fans, anything related to fire

life safety.

Q. Last question for now, anyway, when you transitioned from mechanic to supervision, and then up into management, how did you learn to be a supervisor?

A. Well, Metro -- I will say, Metro has a very good training class. You know, when I became a supervisor, I was through sent to training, introduction to be a supervisor. I can remember one of them that always sticks with me is, "So, you want to be a supervisor." That type of training is offered to employees who are stepping up to supervision to teach you the basics and the ground rules you need in order to manage people, how to motivate people.

And, you know, it was helpful to me, so I participated in several of those classes. I learned from the senior managers that were already in those roles and it made a difference. You know, I had to travel around the Beltway a little bit, but it did make a big difference helping me become a supervisor learning from the other managers.

Q. Is that program still around?

A. Yeah, it's even got better. They have more classes that I've seen some of the newer supervisors get some better opportunities than I had when I was becoming a supervisor back in 1989. Boy, that was a long time ago, wasn't it? But, yeah, the classes that they have available now are better. They got a lot more computer classes, you know. Everybody understands, you know,

we've evolved as a country and as a world, as far as how much people use computers. And the guys who are becoming supervisors now are given opportunities that, you know, were very limited to me back in 1989.

MR. FLANIGON: That's all I have for now.

BY MR. GORDON:

Q. Joe Gordon, NTSB. I appreciate what you've given us so far there. I'm going to probably concentrate a little bit more on the ventilation fans, just because, you know, that's kind of my area of interest with this. But when you explained to Mike a little bit about the MAXIMO log and that makes more sense to me now. It's kind of a program to help you keep track and know more of a planning tool --

A. That's correct.

Q. -- to know where you need to go and where you need to go quickly.

A. Right.

Q. We've heard a lot about the AIMS data. And are there troubles that are recorded like an event -- is any of that recorded on the AIMS data? Like, if you had a fan that was on local control, left on local control, is that something that's recorded on that AIMS data?

A. Yes. Yeah, when a switch is moved from that remote position into local, AIMS records that information. It really should be something that probably should generate a ticket. I'm

not sure if they do on every occasion when -- you know, because there's a lot going on out in the system. But a lot of times, it should generate some type of work order so somebody can go out and investigate and make sure that the selector switch is in the correct position that gives Central the control over it.

Q. And so, there's never an acceptable reason that a fan would be left on local control.

A. That's correct.

Q. Like, if there's not someone there working in that location at that time --

A. That's correct. The protocol would be somebody should have called, notified Central that they're going to take control for maintenance reasons or whatever; they're going to operate the fans in a local mode. And then, once they complete the task, then they can restore the switch back to remote, returning control to OCC.

Q. You mentioned the night work that's being performed, and I think that's primarily off-peak hours so, 10:00 to 2:00 --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- is what you guys consider to be out -- that's 10:00 in the evening until 2:00 in the morning?

A. Well, yeah. Actually, after revenue on the weekdays is around 1:00 -- 12:00; 1:00 they start preparing for work. And then on the weekends, the system is open until 3:00 a.m. So, the window's a little bit -- but it doesn't -- it closes at 3:00, I'm

sorry, the system closes at 3:00 a.m. and opens at 8:00 am. So, there's about a 4- or 5-hour window each night for maintenance activity.

Q. And that's when you guys take advantage of that window to try to get your work done in?

A. That's correct.

Q. So, do you have more of your manpower scheduled for that out-of-service time for the time that the system's down?

A. In our department, it's probably -- let's see, it's probably, maybe, a dozen guys on the night shift who primarily do most of their maintenance on the drainage pumping system, just because they're -- a lot of them are wayside, that it requires for them to -- they found out that they can be more effective doing their maintenance and repairs during non-revenue hours.

And unless we are doing -- have a special project or something lined up, there are a lot of things that occur that require us to work at night. It all depends on, you know, what it is, the nature of it, and whether or not it requires us to gain access to the roadway. But we primarily -- the percentage of people on night shift compared to everybody else, it's kind of small.

Q. Now, we've heard some discussion about sometimes the ventilation fans will be used to exhaust diesel fumes. So, if they've got equipment working in a tunnel, they may take local control and -- is that something that happens very often?

A. You mean, if they -- you say, if somebody needs to run a fan at night to remove diesel fumes? Well, I think over the years, we've tried to enforce and encourage people to, if they need a fan to operate to remove smoke, call the appropriate number, and let Central activate the fans. It's actually better like that, because a lot of people -- some of the folks, say, like in the other departments, might not quite understand what -- when you operate it locally, the vent -- the associated vent dampers remain open.

And if you're trying to, you know, remove smoke; you want Central to have control over the fans, because when they activate the fans, the associated vent dampers closed. In other words, they're more effective when Central operates, because the dampers are designed -- the fan and vent dampers are designed to work as a tandem or unit. So, we prefer that they allow Central to activate the fans.

Q. All right, that's a good point about the dampers, as well. So, the monthly PMs that are done do you -- is it your job to review those to see that they're being done and that they're following the correct procedures when they're doing those?

A. For the most part, the first line supervisors are responsible for signing the document after it's brought back from the mechanic. But then, at the end of the month, I normally will ask them to provide me with -- not all of them, but give me a document from each area so I can review that document and

understand that, you know, we're performing it the same way from all three groups that’s, you know -- the primary responsibility for reviewing the documents, signing the documents, and getting it filed away is for the first line supervisor.

Q. And has there -- have there been any changes to the procedures as far as the testing, the ventilation fan testing procedures since the January 12 accident?

A. We've made a few adjustments to try to improve the reliability of the testing. I think the managers took some steps to put what we call, like, a QC or quality check. And what they're saying is that, you know, that can be something that they can note that in addition to examining the paperwork and making sure it's filled out properly, they physically went out to the location and did an inspection with the mechanics. And we recommended they do a tunnel fan or they can go to a station.

But we would prefer the critical equipment like a train lift or tunnel fan or drainage pumping station where they do the maintenance, and we get an opportunity to do what's called a quality check.

It's just recently, I think everybody knows that the documents have to be filled out, filled out properly, all the areas of inspection have to be inspected. And if you find a problem, you have to generate a work order for that problem right at the same time.

Q. And that probably leads me to my last question on that.

What kind of priority does a vent fan -- so, if the control operator in the OCC gets a message that they've got a fan that's not functioning or, you know, want local control and they're getting this message, what kind of priority does it take to get out and correct that location?

A. It should be done right away. I mean, you know, the issue of a fan not being able to be controlled from Central or a fan not operating from Central, it's something that's got to be addressed; hopefully, you want to find those things when the guys are doing their inspection. Because, you know, it's -- a lot of things can happen in a 30-day period. So you go there one month, everything's working good. The next month, you got a fan that won't run in one direction. So, when that's noted, or when they are notified of that, then it should be addressed right then, if possible.

If not, then the work order's generated and then we have a group that's within our department, the industrial control technicians, and I think one of them may have been here earlier this morning. In other words, if the general equipment mechanics get to a point where they, you know, can't resolve the problem right then, they can ask for additional help from the industrial control technicians and have a, sort of like a special course that they can bump it up a notch and troubleshoot the equipment a little bit further. And most of the time, they can resolve the problem.

Q. So that's -- I mean, it's worked on until it's fixed.
A. That's correct.
Q. It's not something that's left behind.
A. That's correct.
Q. All right, thank you. And my final question, then I'll pass it back over to Mike. Mike asked you about the TOC, the Tri-state Oversight Committee and if you've seen them out on the property. How about the FTA, the Federal Transit Administration.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Have you --
A. Yes, sir. I've sometimes I ask myself, now, which one is which. But, yeah, we've been out also with some of the inspections on with the FTA, and both are pretty thorough and they want to, you know, see what we're doing. And they also want corrective actions.

We've been, you know, for the most part finding issues like housekeeping and that type of thing that we have to get better as a department and we understand that.

Metro is growing. I think we're going through some growing pains with all the activities that go on with the upgrade -- while we're trying to upgrade our system. You know, this is causing some issues where, you know, we have to deal with equipment and things being out of place. So, the FTA and Tri-state has tried to help us recognize some of those things, and, you know, get better. We understand what we need to do.

Q. How often would you say that you've seen the FTA out with your department?

A. I think their inspection was -- this year, they have one, you know, at one of our stations out on the K Route, I think we did the Clarendon Station recently with the FTA, and then, like I say, Tri-state Oversight Committee was late last year at one of the E Route stations.

MR. GORDON: All right, thank you. I'll pass it back over to Mike.

BY MR. FLANIGON:

Q. Just one thing to clarify, in talking about the window for remote fan operations from 10:00 to 2:00, I understood that to be daytime, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

A. Yeah, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Before rush hour, which is -- starts right at 5:00 up to 10:00. And then 2:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. in the evening, because it's rush hour to get folks home, so it's basically during the period when they're focusing on getting our passengers, was considered rush hour up to 10:00, they really don't respond or would prefer that we not respond to doing our maintenance on the tunnel fans, of course, unless it's an emergency. That would change that scenario, but the routine maintenance that we perform is done between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

Q. And fan maintenance, for the most part, is during day shift. Do I have that right?

A. Yes. Most of it's done day shift. Sometime when we have an annual, we'll set it up for a crew to come in on the weekend and maybe complete an annual. Because, say, if you might have a shaft with a total of six fans in it, in order to perform an annual on it, it takes, you know, the entire day, at least, to complete that annual PM when you go in and lubricate everything and do some general cleaning, amp the motors for correct amperage and check the motor control sill, things of that nature. So, it'll take a little longer.

MR. FLANIGON: Okay, that's all I have.

MR. GORDON: Thank you.

MR. FLANIGON: So, we're all done. I will thank you for your time.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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. APRIL 14, 2015 Interview of Neal Warren
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.

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Wendy C. Cutting
Transcriber