



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

<b>GROUP</b>	
<b>EXHIBIT</b>	

Agency / Organization

Title

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

WMATA INCIDENT AT L'ENFANT PLAZA \*

STATION, WASHINGTON, D.C. \*

JANUARY 12, 2015 \*

\*

Docket No.: DCA-15-FR-004

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: HENRY WELSH

Washington, D.C.

Wednesday,  
January 28, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: RICHARD DOWNS, JR.  
Survival Factors Investigator

## APPEARANCES:

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

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

STEVE BLACKISTONE, J.D.  
Office of Communications  
National Transportation and Safety Board

KIMBERLY BURTCH, Senior Program Analyst  
Office of Transit Safety and Oversight  
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

DENTON ROURKE, Operations Manager  
Office of Emergency Management  
WMATA

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

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Henry Welsh:		
By Mr. Downs		6
By Mr. Rourke		18
By Ms. Burtch		28
By Mr. Blackistone		29
By Mr. Gordon		33
By Mr. Downs		34
By Mr. Hawkins		37
By Mr. Blackistone		40
By Mr. Rourke		42
By Mr. Gordon		42
By Mr. Downs		44
By Mr. Blackistone		50

I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. DOWNS: Today's date is January 28, 2015 and the  
3 following is an interview conducted -- an interview being  
4 conducted in reference to an NTSB investigation, number DCA-15-FR-  
5 004 which relates to an accident involving a heavy smoke release  
6 and train evacuations that occurred in and near the L'Enfant Plaza  
7 Station of the WMATA Metro Rail System here in Washington, D.C. on  
8 the afternoon of January 12, 2015.

9 This interview is being conducted with a member of the  
10 District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Services Department as  
11 conducted by the NTSB Survival Factors Technical Working Group of  
12 the investigation.

13 My name is Richard Downs, Jr. and I'm a Survival Factors  
14 Investigator with the NTSB in which I also serve in the role as  
15 the Survival Factors Technical Working Group Chairperson. I will  
16 preside over this interview which is being recorded for the record  
17 in which a transcript may also be compiled of the recording as a  
18 permanent docketed record of the interview.

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

22 MR. WELSH: Henry Edward Welsh, III, Battalion Fire  
23 Chief, District of Columbia Fire Department.

24 MR. DOWNS: Thank you. And, Chief, and are you  
25 accompanied in this interview today by anyone?

1 MR. WELSH: No.

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

7 MR. ROURKE: Good afternoon. I'm Denton Rourke. I'm  
8 with WMATA's Office of Emergency management. I am the Operations  
9 Manager.

10 MS. BURTCHE: Hi. Good afternoon. Kimberly Burtch with  
11 the Federal Transit Administration's Office of Transit Safety and  
12 Oversight.

13 MR. HAWKINS: Good afternoon. Derron T Hawkins, Deputy  
14 Fire Chief, DC Fire and EMS, Homeland Security Division.

15 MR. BLACKISTONE: Steve Blackistone, National  
16 Transportation Safety Board Office of Communications.

17 MR. GORDON: Joe Gordon, National Transportation Safety  
18 Board Investigator-In-Charge on the L'Enfant Plaza incident.

19 Before we get started with the interview, just to let  
20 you know, the purpose of the NTSB investigation, we're -- you  
21 know, we're out to enhance safety, looking for process  
22 improvements, not here to assign any fault or blame. And  
23 Mr. Downs spoke about the transcript that would be made off of the  
24 recording. NTSB cannot offer a guarantee, any confidentiality or  
25 immunity from any legal action. And with that, we'll start with

1 the interview.

2 MR. DOWNS: Thank you.

3 INTERVIEW OF HENRY WELSH

4 BY MR. DOWNS:

5 Q. And as my first question for the witness, would you  
6 please describe briefly for us, your role or involvement in this  
7 event?

8 A. Okay. Let me review my notes.

9 Q. No. That's just -- sir, we're just looking for what  
10 role you were here in the event. We're showing you as the Recon  
11 Group Supervisor; is that correct?

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. Very good. That was the incident I was looking for.

14 A. I'm sorry. Recon Group -- I was assigned to the Recon  
15 Group when I arrived on the scene.

16 Q. Very good. Thank you. And next question, could you  
17 please describe for us in your own words what occurred on the day  
18 of the event relative to your actions and involvement at the  
19 L'Enfant Plaza Station starting at the time that you first got  
20 your call?

21 A. I was working on January 12th. Approximately 3:30, we  
22 received a call. I was at the fire house at 16th and U, straight  
23 northwest, Engine 9, Truck 9. We immediately responded to the  
24 scene. When I arrived on the scene, I was assigned to the Recon  
25 Sector along with Engine Companies 18, 1 and Tower 3. They were

1 already on the scene. As I got out of the buggy to get dressed,  
2 the first thing that I remember hearing is that we -- at that  
3 time, that there was a train stuck in the tunnels over our radio  
4 on the topside.

5           Shortly after that, as I was proceeding down, I heard  
6 the Recon Sector -- the Recon Group supervisor that was in charge  
7 at the time saying that they were entering the tunnel and that the  
8 power was down. I immediately tried to contact them and right as  
9 we hit the bottom of the steps of the escalator, I could hear  
10 trains running. I immediately ran to -- through the station and  
11 as we hit, the upper level was full, but also, the lower level was  
12 just as full.

13           Q. Full of?

14           A. Smoke, all the way through the platform. When we got to  
15 the platform, the trains were running on the Green and Blue Line,  
16 if I say that correctly, Green and Blue Line and --

17           Q. Chief, why don't we differentiate the upper and lower  
18 level?

19           A. Lower. Sorry. The lower level that --

20           Q. Lower level of the station.

21           A. I went to the lower because there was -- I could hear  
22 the trains and there was significant smoke. I got down. I looked  
23 to the right, started to go to the right and then I noticed we  
24 went -- my aide and I, we went that way to make sure there was  
25 nobody that way and then as I turned back, I noticed that there



1 was construction. Which I immediately, when I saw the  
2 construction panelings, that's where I assumed probably would --  
3 where the problem was.

4 We got down there. There was not a problem. In that  
5 time, about at least two or three trains came through. We  
6 reported to the upper level and I was on Track 1 side and right as  
7 we got there -- excuse me -- I went to -- I noticed police  
8 officers on the Track 2 catwalk. So when I hit the -- we stepped  
9 down from the catwalk down, onto the track. Well, I'm sorry. I  
10 need to go further back.

11 When we were at the -- sorry about that -- the lower  
12 level, I repeatedly tried to use my radio on the platform and it  
13 did not work. I went to VRS and as soon as it went, I went to key  
14 the mic (ph.) trying to get a hold of the recon unit, it honked  
15 out. When I got to the platform of the other -- the upper tracks,  
16 the -- was still -- I was getting nothing, no communication either  
17 way.

18 Track 1 -- so anyway, I was on Track 1, jumped, got down  
19 onto the track and crossed over because now, looking at it, you  
20 could see the people exiting. And so it was logical that the  
21 train was on that side. Could not see the train from the  
22 beginning of the tunnel.

23 Q. Looking down the tunnel bore?

24 A. Looking down it you could not see the train. Proceeded  
25 down --

1 Q. Was that because of smoke or was --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- it just darkness?

4 A. Smoke. It was fine -- it was that close in front of  
5 you. It wasn't light smoke. It was heavy smoke.

6 Q. Very heavy smoke.

7 A. And on that note, all four tunnels had the same amount  
8 of smoke.

9 Q. So you couldn't tell what was what in any of the tunnels  
10 in terms of a train location or if there was a fire source?

11 A. Correct. So as we made our way down, there was nothing  
12 but switching stations right there. There was no way to walk down  
13 the catwalk because the people were coming off. There was a group  
14 of officers and then the people were steadily in that line. That  
15 line --

16 Q. People evacuating from --

17 A. Evacuating the train.

18 Q. -- the train? Coming out of the tunnel bore?

19 A. Yes. Right as we got there, they were just coming out  
20 right as we got there. So we made our way through that track bed  
21 which was mostly switching area. Conditions were very dark, very  
22 smoky. Got to the train and made contact with Rescue 1. And  
23 talked to the officers there and evaluated the situation. And at  
24 the time we were evacuating the train and the people were, I would  
25 say at the time, it was 100 yards that they were navigating over

1 that 22-inch-wide catwalk with all the obstacles out to the  
2 platform.

3 Q. So Rescue 1 was already at the railcars by the time you  
4 located the railcars yourselves?

5 A. That is correct. So we were the next unit there.  
6 Battalion 4 was the next unit.

7 Q. Please continue.

8 A. So basically, at that time, while they were evacuating  
9 the train, we had the recon -- I mean, I'm sorry -- the evacuation  
10 area. We had that whole area where they were walking. Some Metro  
11 employees were still helping us out when I got to the tunnel, so I  
12 -- when I did get to the tunnel, I got a station -- a train  
13 supervisor to contact OCC on their radio and I made him -- he came  
14 on the track with me. He didn't go as far as I did, but he at  
15 least was right there when they confirmed that the power was down.

16 So basically, we had those people walking on a 22-inch  
17 catwalk with no support. There was -- they were on -- they were  
18 there and we were monitoring them. A couple people, we had to  
19 hold against the wall and get them out. A couple people, we had  
20 to -- some people were starting -- as the process was going on,  
21 we'd get the people that just didn't feel strong enough. We would  
22 bring them down, put them on the track and then escort them off  
23 with men.

24 As this was all playing out, the Recon Unit started to  
25 arrive and the first one was Engine Company 18, I believe, with

1 their officer who was the -- at the time, the supervisor. And  
2 then eventually, Engine 1 made it back and Engine 2 and I believe  
3 they went in the same tunnel, but nobody was evacuating at the  
4 time. And they went down Track #1.

5 Q. Towards Waterfront?

6 A. The Green Line?

7 Q. Yes.

8 A. Would that be the Green Lines? Yes. So they made their  
9 way back and --

10 Q. And that was for purposes of determining if anybody had  
11 gone down that way or was coming up from that tunnel?

12 A. They were looking for the train.

13 Q. They were also looking for the train?

14 A. Absolutely. There was no -- they had no -- you'll have  
15 to talk to them to see if -- what information they got, whether  
16 they were told it was the tunnel or the track, but they were  
17 looking for the train just like we were.

18 Q. Just like you.

19 A. (Indiscernible) --

20 Q. And they happened to go that way and you went the other  
21 way?

22 A. Well, I think that even the squad -- and I can't speak  
23 for the squad, but they probably saw police on that side and  
24 that's where -- that would have directed them that way. That's  
25 how it happened for us.

1 Q. I see.

2 A. But also, I believe if the squad came in, and I would  
3 have to check, the elevator. They come in through the elevator,  
4 so it might have been on that side. So -- and then basically, we  
5 used anybody that came back from that group just to keep  
6 monitoring those people. And what else? Call for assistance,  
7 call for the E-tech carts. Prior to the E Tech cart arriving, the  
8 squad came off with an unconscious person, one of the firefighters  
9 looked at me and said he's got to go and up he went. He put him  
10 on his shoulder and went. They got him out to the platform and  
11 took him straight up.

12 Q. Was that firefighter disabled by respiratory distress or  
13 was that an impact injury of some sort?

14 A. And I'm sorry. The firefighter made the rescue of the  
15 unconscious --

16 Q. Of the --

17 A. -- female.

18 Q. Of a civilian?

19 A. Yes. It was -- yes. I got it that it was unconscious  
20 and the E-tech carts weren't down yet or any of that stuff.

21 Q. So there's a hand carry up to the surface?

22 A. Yes. Shoulder. Yeah. And then we had one additional  
23 patient having a seizure that was transported off the E-tech cart  
24 and one additional handicapped person who was at the front door,  
25 the bulkhead door and he was basically there the whole time,

1 sitting, you know, in that spot right there with that door open,  
2 waiting for, you know, rescue and I advised him that we would get  
3 to him as soon as -- you know, he was talking to me the whole  
4 time. And so those three were taken off by the E-tech carts and  
5 everybody else was evacuated through the catwalk.

6 Q. All of your squad that you were with were SCBA equipped  
7 and using the equipment or no?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Would operating in a smoke environment have required  
10 SCBA?

11 A. You'll have to ask them. I mean, I used mine as the  
12 gauge to --

13 Q. Well, that was my --

14 A. -- these people --

15 Q. -- to you. You and your crew used SCBA or no?

16 A. We had them on. I did not have my bottle on.

17 Q. You did not?

18 A. But I did have my mask on.

19 Q. You --

20 A. Apparently the squad, when they opened the door and the  
21 people were coughing, they took theirs off.

22 Q. So you had your bottle on, but you just didn't have your  
23 mask on --

24 A. Correct.

25 Q. -- and using at the time?

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. And that was for purposes that the smoke was thin enough  
3 at that point?

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. And it wasn't really warranted?

6 A. That if I can manage it, they can manage it and they're  
7 -- if I can't manage it, there's no way they could walk down the  
8 catwalk.

9 Q. Got it. Okay. Thank you. Did you -- when you were  
10 evacuating the folks down the catwalk, did you happen to see if  
11 any of the folks fell from the catwalk?

12 A. No one fell. I --

13 Q. No?

14 A. -- did not see anybody fall.

15 Q. Nobody fell, to your knowledge?

16 A. To my knowledge. Sorry. Yes. A couple almost, but  
17 nobody.

18 Q. Yeah. We had earlier -- the reason for my question, we  
19 had early testimony to the effect that people were having some  
20 difficulty working their way down the catwalk. Was that your  
21 observation also?

22 A. Absolutely. In a sense, I wished we -- there were ones  
23 who were very easy to identify that you didn't want them on the  
24 catwalk. The problem was, you'd get some on the catwalk and then  
25 realize -- and the third rail was right there, so it was kind of

1 like, you had to just wait and get them through. One particular  
2 one right at the beginning, I had to come up and hold her and grab  
3 her by the hip and take her all -- you know, all the way to the  
4 platform.

5 Q. So it was a case by case, if a person you visually felt  
6 was going to fall, you'd assist them -- either assist them or help  
7 them down to the track bed and walk them out?

8 A. Or they said something to us. But even that was --

9 Q. Or they would ask for help?

10 A. Correct. Even that was -- it was still -- I mean, it  
11 was still better for them and -- to go on the catwalk because once  
12 with the switching -- it was just -- took so long to get them --

13 Q. Too many rails to navigate through?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. I see.

16 A. There was a couple diabetics that said I can't do this  
17 and when we got them out through the track.

18 Q. And you just walked them out carefully through --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. -- the rails?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay. Very good. You mentioned that the catwalk is  
23 right there along with the third rail?

24 A. On that side right there, there was a stretch of it,  
25 yes.



1 Q. So there's a third rail in the -- on the same side as  
2 the -- of the track as the catwalk?

3 A. I believe so.

4 Q. You believe so.

5 A. Yeah. I mean, I --

6 Q. You're not sure?

7 A. Well, I remember looking down, saying something to  
8 myself about it as I was holding a lady.

9 Q. And you didn't want to take any chances, you stayed  
10 clear of it?

11 A. I was running rail, third rail and I was in between it.  
12 So no, I wasn't clear of it. I wasn't -- it was --

13 Q. But you stayed clear of it?

14 A. Yes, yes. I didn't touch it. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. When the folks were evacuating, make sure I'm  
16 following this correctly, you had already received confirmation  
17 that the power -- third rail power had been shut off?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And nonetheless, you still stay away from the third  
20 rail --

21 A. Absolutely.

22 Q. -- just to be safe? And WSADs and such were installed  
23 by other fire crews at that point, did you happen to notice?

24 A. WSAD was not installed until Truck 3 got down there.

25 Q. When you --

1 A. Truck -- I'm sorry. Truck 4.

2 Q. When you went down the tunnel, is your protocol  
3 stipulate that you do a hot stick test?

4 A. The hot stick was performed and before we enter the  
5 track bed, there is supposed to be a WSAD. That group was not  
6 there. So there was not a WSAD in place when we were on the  
7 track.

8 Q. And do you have any idea why that hadn't occurred yet  
9 or --

10 A. There was no WSAD there. The crew had gone up the Green  
11 Line --

12 Q. Had gone --

13 A. -- had the WSAD.

14 Q. Had gone up to Green Line. Okay.

15 A. Right.

16 Q. All right. Well --

17 A. So I was the first one on the track with my -- because  
18 the squad came up the catwalk.

19 Q. Right, but --

20 A. And the --

21 Q. -- Rescue 1 was already down at the railcars.

22 A. They were on -- they entered through the catwalk onto  
23 the train and the recon was on this catwalk and they didn't cross  
24 over until like, I think -- yes.

25 Q. I see. Okay. Well, that concludes my questions for the

1 moment. Let's pass it on to our next question.

2 BY MR. ROURKE:

3 Q. Denton Rourke, Metro. Were you -- you were dispatched  
4 on the first alarm?

5 A. That is correct.

6 Q. And how long do you think it took you to get there, do  
7 you know?

8 A. I think it said -- I was -- came out at 8:25. I think  
9 we arrived on the scene at -- I'm sorry -- 1525, so like 15 like  
10 38, 39.

11 Q. And you said --

12 A. But that -- you can check that with the record, I'm  
13 sure.

14 Q. And you said the first thing you heard over the radio  
15 while you were still topside was a report of the train being in  
16 the tunnel?

17 A. I believe so, yes.

18 Q. Do you know who that was from?

19 A. I believe it might have been our Metro liaison, but I  
20 cannot confirm that. Or hopefully the tape can confirm.

21 Q. Um-hum. Did you have a face-to-face with the incident  
22 commander before or was that all on the radio or by SOP?

23 A. Radio.

24 Q. I'm going to ask you just a few questions about Metro  
25 training in general and then we'll talk about -- more about

1 L'Enfant. Can you -- and these are just basic questions I'm  
2 asking everybody. Can you describe the DC Fire Department Metro  
3 Training Program for me?

4 A. Can I describe it?

5 MR. DOWNS: To the best of your recollection.

6 MR. WELSH: We retune the -- do radio tests, review  
7 SOGs, do inspections. We've -- we're always -- we always  
8 encourage our employees anytime they're on a -- in a Metro  
9 facility for medical local, to make sure they do a walk around.  
10 Anytime promotions are up, Metro's very big because Metro's --  
11 there's a thousand questions they can ask in a promotional exam.  
12 So when -- during promotional time, Metro's hot.

13 We -- again, the full scale Metros, you know, the  
14 incidents that we used to do at 1:00 or 2:00, I don't think we've  
15 done them and I think we've maybe done one this year, not all four  
16 shifts. But we -- we're -- our people are in the system a lot and  
17 we encourage them, just like learning your district and learning  
18 your buildings. It's the same as Metro. When you're in there,  
19 don't just stand around. Learn something and get something out of  
20 it. So --

21 Q. All right. And one of my questions was about a full  
22 scale exercise. You said that you -- it's been several years  
23 since you've participated in one?

24 A. I don't think I've been to one in a couple years, but  
25 there have been some.

1 Q. Have you been to the Carmen Turner Emergency Response  
2 Training Facility?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. How long -- when was the last time you went out there?

5 A. I can't say for sure.

6 Q. What -- have you had any Metro specific incident  
7 management training?

8 A. Not that I'm aware of.

9 Q. Can you just briefly tell us what kind of incident  
10 management training did you get?

11 A. The incident command through --

12 Q. Through the department.

13 A. But also, through National Fire Academy, the class and  
14 everything.

15 Q. You talking about the NIM stuff?

16 A. Not just NIMs, but incident command --

17 Q. Okay. Um-hum.

18 A. -- incident control and command.

19 MR. DOWNS: What series courses? Do you remember? 100,  
20 200, 400?

21 MR. WELSH: I mean the one that you go to the school for  
22 2 weeks.

23 MR. HAWKINS: Was it (indiscernible) alarms  
24 (indiscernible) --

25 MR. WELSH: (Indiscernible) alarms --

1 Q. Well, they have 2 or 3-week long classes at the Fire  
2 Academy --

3 A. Right. Right.

4 Q. So you've been to a couple of those, okay.

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Last year, did you attend joint supervisor training last  
7 year at Carmen Turner? This would have been a program where you  
8 would have been in with police officers, rail people and bus  
9 people and fire department people to talk about incident  
10 management. It was a 1-day class --

11 A. No.

12 Q. -- and they did a tabletop at the end. Thanks. And do  
13 you guys have a specific Metro worksheet --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- for Metro incidents? Thanks. Can you just -- I know  
16 you were the Recon Officer on this particular one, but can you  
17 just give me a -- just a brief description of what is your alls  
18 overarching procedure for managing a Metro incident and what is  
19 the role of the Metro representative in that?

20 A. Our overall --

21 Q. You know, like you --

22 A. For the same exact --

23 Q. For a Metro box on, yeah, just in general.

24 A. Well, I mean we have different SOPs for station box, as  
25 well as the tunnel box. Normally our tunnel box is if we have an

1 incident in the tunnel. We have units go into one station and  
2 then at the other secondary station or we could even use exit CFs  
3 for that if there's not an immediate one, like this one probably  
4 would have been.

5 Station box, we send in a different assignment because  
6 we're dealing with just the station. I mean, it's to mitigate the  
7 emergency, to -- the recon -- the job of the recon is to find out  
8 what the problem is and then send the resources and take care of  
9 the problem.

10 Q. And what's your understanding, Chief, of the role of the  
11 Metro -- of Metro in that command process?

12 A. Any time I can use them, I do. Any time they come to my  
13 buggy, I usually -- in the station, I always use them, so they're  
14 a big part of it.

15 Q. Thanks. How about, you talked a little bit about  
16 radios. Can you talk a little bit more about the radio issues you  
17 dealt with?

18 A. Again, on the lower platform when I was trying to get a  
19 hold of recon and I was trying to get a hold of operations to let  
20 them know that I did not have the recon sector at the time that  
21 they were making the way on the track. I got (indiscernible) out  
22 and I don't believe anything that I transmitted repeated out.

23 Then, when I went to the next -- the upper level, same  
24 exact thing happened on the platform. As I made my way back to  
25 the train in the tunnel, at first, I wasn't getting anything out

1 or I wasn't hearing anything really. And then, as the incident  
2 progressed in the tunnel, I could communicate.

3 Q. So the radio got better down by the train?

4 A. Correct. But it still wasn't -- I wasn't able to  
5 confirm what was getting out and what was not getting out.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. And that could also be the magnitude of the response.

8 Q. There was some media reports that a week earlier, there  
9 had been an incident at L'Enfant and there was some radio issues  
10 there.

11 A. I don't have firsthand knowledge of it.

12 Q. Right. Do you know -- did you have any information  
13 beforehand that there was a radio issue at L'Enfant Plaza?

14 A. No.

15 Q. All right. Let me get down to -- so when you got to the  
16 platform, there was some transit police officers down there?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And what kind of communications did you have with them,  
19 if any?

20 A. They were hurting. They were coming out. They were  
21 done and I think I talked to the -- I want to say the rail  
22 manager, which your --

23 Q. Not a policeman, but a rail guy?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Got you. Okay. And where was he at then?



1           A.    He was on the Track 2 side of the platform and I believe  
2 I asked him -- or he might have been on the track at that point.  
3 And I asked him to come with me and he came in and I said I need  
4 to know this is all down and you're telling me it's down and he  
5 said yes. And at that point, that was -- we were there.

6           Q.    You think that's after the other companies had gone in,  
7 18 and whoever?

8           A.    18 stated on the radio that they were making entry into  
9 the tunnel and that they had hit the stations.

10          Q.    So they did that -- that was before you got up there?

11          A.    Absolutely.

12          Q.    And you were able to see across and saw people at that  
13 point?

14          A.    I saw people on the catwalk.

15          Q.    When you met up with the police officers, did they --  
16 how was that -- did they have anything for you or --  
17 information-wise?

18          A.    I did not -- I don't believe I talked to a police  
19 officer. They were crouched down and coughing and hacking and  
20 they were coming out. I do believe they talked to Squad 1 though.

21          Q.    And you -- we talked about a CBA already. And so when  
22 you made your way from Track 1 over to Track 2, there was already  
23 people on the safety walk evacuating?

24          A.    On the safety walk, yes.

25          Q.    Do you know if any -- did this -- did you have any

1 conversation with the squad if anybody had evacuated in that  
2 direction before they got down there? Had it already started, do  
3 you know? Had anyone started the passenger evacuation before they  
4 got there?

5 A. I don't know. I can't -- I assume it was -- from the  
6 reports, that Squad 1 had opened that door and that's what started  
7 the evacuation.

8 Q. Did you notice on your working your way down there, any  
9 air flow in any direction? Did you ever notice it or is there  
10 something you would --

11 A. I called twice to try to get -- to say to get the fans  
12 on.

13 Q. And that's stuff that didn't go through?

14 A. I don't know.

15 Q. And when you got down there, the -- what doors -- did  
16 you notice what doors were open already?

17 A. The rear side.

18 MR. DOWNS: The rear, very rear car door?

19 MR. WELSH: Yes.

20 MR. DOWNS: The end of the car?

21 MR. WELSH: Yes.

22 BY MR. ROURKE:

23 Q. The bulkhead door?

24 A. No -- yes. The bulkhead was open, but we were not  
25 evacuating off of that. It was off the side --

1 Q. Side door.

2 A. -- to the catwalk.

3 MR. GORDON: Let's do a prop, I think would help us.  
4 Train was traveling southbound, so this would be the rear bulkhead  
5 door that was --

6 MR. WELSH: Correct.

7 MR. GORDON: -- open?

8 MR. WELSH: That's where the handicap person at the  
9 whole time.

10 MR. GORDON: And this rear door toward the back over on  
11 the catwalk side --

12 MR. WELSH: Right.

13 MR. GORDON: -- which, as you're looking at the rear of  
14 the train would have been your right-hand side --

15 MR. WELSH: Yes.

16 MR. GORDON: -- was where they were evacuating?

17 MR. WELSH: Yes.

18 MR. DOWNS: Was the center door along the catwalk open,  
19 do you happen to know?

20 MR. WELSH: I do not know. Lieutenant Kuhn was right on  
21 that door and he ended -- they ended up evacuating out of another  
22 door and he kind of became a crossing guard. But after that, it  
23 was like, if we open up any more, then there's no way to do -- he  
24 would let this group go, then jump off, let this group go. And so  
25 there were two doors. I don't know if it was a little later. It

1 wasn't right from the beginning.

2 BY MR. ROURKE:

3 Q. And so that brings me to my question about how you guys  
4 controlled the evacuation so you didn't get trampled, you did?

5 A. We -- first off, the people were just unbelievable.  
6 They -- everything was moving, so we kept it moving. I thought  
7 about opening up -- like I -- I thought about opening up the -- on  
8 the track side and I figured that they might start jumping out.  
9 Then you've got the broken hips, the knees and everything else.

10 I was using a gauge of the handicap man also was talking  
11 the whole time. So there was air in. There was flow. He was  
12 probably blocking some of it, but he was talking the entire time  
13 and it was moving. It was moving and it was working. Kept  
14 thinking of alternate plans and everything I tried to think of  
15 didn't seem like it was going to help, the, you know, rescue  
16 train, any of that. We were already committed. There was no --  
17 there wasn't any of that option at this point.

18 Q. And so you evacuated from what's the back of the  
19 train --

20 A. To the front.

21 Q. -- to the front of the train and then back to the  
22 platform. You went from the back --

23 A. I'm sorry.

24 Q. -- of the train to the front.

25 A. We went from the back to the front. Any priorities got

1 pulled up further and got taken off.

2 Q. And you said that people were unbelievable. There was  
3 no -- you have any panic or screaming and yelling, anything?

4 A. Letting people go in front them and all.

5 Q. I think that's what I've got right now.

6 MR. DOWNS: All right. Ms. Burtch?

7 BY MS. BURTCH:

8 Q. So --

9 MR. DOWNS: Identification please.

10 Q. Kim Burtch. Your -- as the Recon Unit, you went in  
11 first, but you didn't actually -- you did provide some assistance  
12 in the egress or the evacuation?

13 A. I am to recon -- when I get to the Recon Group, I'm  
14 supposed to be in charge of it.

15 Q. So they're there --

16 A. However, they had already made entry before I got there.

17 Q. So you're -- are you aware of how they accessed the  
18 trains as far as door, emergency door entry? Were they able to  
19 clearly --

20 A. The recon group never -- they got -- they were at the  
21 train, but they ended up helping in egress where the squad was on  
22 the train.

23 Q. So there were already emergency personnel on the train?

24 A. Correct. Squad 1 got to the --

25 Q. Got you.

1 A. -- train first. That's all I had. Thank you.

2 Q. Chief, questions now or do you want to defer?

3 MR. HAWKINS: I'm going to defer.

4 BY MR. BLACKISTONE:

5 Q. Thank you. Steve Blackistone with NTSB. I wanted to  
6 dig a little bit deeper into the timing, how things happened. So  
7 the recon group, Engine 18 and Truck 7 and --

8 A. Truck 3 and Engine 1.

9 Q. Truck 3 and Engine 1, they were ahead of you, they went  
10 down the green line and --

11 A. They went into the same tunnel.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. It was the same exact tunnel and they came in on this  
14 side and --

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. -- this -- they went that way to find the train.

17 Q. Yeah. So when you got to the train, Squad 1 was the  
18 only crew that was there.

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. Did you have any concept of the time, about how long  
21 they had been there or did you think they had just gotten there  
22 and just barely got the doors open or were they --

23 A. I think it was all just about working at the same time.  
24 I don't know. That the whole line of the catwalk was full by the  
25 time I got there, if that helps.

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. Meaning that we weren't backed up or anything, so it was  
3 just starting.

4 Q. So it was just -- yeah. It was just starting.

5 A. Or they just got the door open. The first group was  
6 just coming off so they could walk quicker and then it was just  
7 right about there.

8 Q. Yeah. Now presumably --

9 A. Because nobody was in the platform before I started  
10 working my way down --

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. -- I think.

13 Q. That's -- yeah. That's a good sort of subjective handle  
14 on the timing of it all. So they get on the train and presumably,  
15 they start with the first car they come to, the car that's on the  
16 north end, work on clearing that out and then move down each of  
17 the six cars successively. So it would have taken -- I'm -- my --  
18 so would it have taken them longer to get to the people on the  
19 sixth car, the south most train --

20 A. Absolutely.

21 Q. -- than the -- do you have any idea how long that whole  
22 process took?

23 A. Thirty, 40 minutes.

24 Q. Thirty to 40 minutes.

25 A. Is that -- yeah, probably.

1 Q. The reason I ask is because I'm sure you too have seen  
2 complaints in the media about how long it took the fire department  
3 to get to some --

4 A. Right. Just because they couldn't see us doesn't mean  
5 we weren't -- right, we weren't there, but --

6 Q. Or -- yeah, you -- maybe you didn't get to the people on  
7 the sixth car, but that's because you were in the first car and  
8 the second car.

9 A. Correct.

10 Q. And I -- when -- do you know what exactly they were  
11 doing when they would enter a car? They --

12 A. No.

13 Q. They would, I guess, try and do sort of quick and dirty  
14 triage and see (indiscernible) --

15 A. Right. I just don't have a -- I mean, I don't have an  
16 answer firsthand.

17 MR. DOWNS: That would be a question, Steve --

18 MR. BLACKISTONE: Yeah.

19 MR. DOWNS: -- for the next --

20 MR. WELSH: Yeah.

21 MR. DOWNS: -- witness or so.

22 BY MR. BLACKISTONE:

23 Q. Yeah, but they didn't, they (indiscernible) --

24 A. I mean I'm sure that's what it was.

25 Q. Yeah.



1 A. It was a quick assessment.

2 Q. They weren't telling you what their method was --

3 A. Right.

4 Q. -- or anything like that, so -- but then they were  
5 escorting people to the north end of the car and then --

6 A. Right.

7 Q. -- onto the catwalk, as you said. So it took some  
8 significant period of time --

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. -- to clear the whole train.

11 A. Thirty. I would say 30, but again, time is very hard --

12 Q. I know.

13 A. -- in those incidences.

14 Q. I know.

15 A. Seemed like longer than that.

16 Q. I'm very aware, so --

17 MR. ROURKE: Did they walk everybody through the train  
18 to the last car?

19 MR. WELSH: Yes, except when the other part -- I -- then  
20 you'll have to check from Squad 1 where the other door was open  
21 on.

22 MR. ROURKE: Thanks.

23 BY MR. BLACKISTONE:

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. Because me trying to figure it would only have gotten in

1 their way as far as getting them off the train.

2 Q. And you stayed pretty much at the --

3 A. Rear.

4 Q. -- berth -- the rear of the train.

5 A. Because that area, that was the significant danger now  
6 was keeping them on the catwalk.

7 Q. On the catwalk across the track bed. I think that's all  
8 my questions for now. Thank you.

9 BY MR. GORDON:

10 Q. Joe Gordon, NTSB. So when you said that you could --  
11 you would notice that some of the people would need help staying  
12 up on the catwalk, you stayed track bed level and put your arm up  
13 to them and helped guide them out?

14 A. [No audible response.]

15 Q. Okay. And you mentioned a Metrorail guy, white shirt.

16 A. White shirt, I believe.

17 Q. Can -- any feeling that he was possibly train crew  
18 member?

19 A. I think they're called -- I could be wrong -- train  
20 supervisor. Is that a title?

21 MR. ROURKE: We have -- we call -- supervisors, yeah.  
22 (Indiscernible) supervisors are called or rail supervisors.

23 MR. WELSH: Rail -- I'm sorry. Rail supervisor. I  
24 think that's what it was.

25 Q. Was there -- did you ever hear any plan to back the

1 train that was in the tunnel up to the platform --

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. -- back to the platform? So --

4 A. Meaning that, an organized plan from us?

5 Q. Right.

6 A. No.

7 Q. Did you ever hear any plan from anybody, Metro, anything  
8 that hey, we'd like to try to back this train up?

9 A. No.

10 Q. So from the time you got there, Engine 18 had already  
11 activated the ETS?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And power's down, now we're talking about evacuating  
14 people no chance of moving the train back. That's all I have at  
15 this time.

16 BY MR. DOWNS:

17 Q. Thank you. Chief, I'm going to digress a little bit to,  
18 can you give us a little bit of your job history, how long you've  
19 been on the job, your promotional sequence, that kind of thing?

20 A. Twenty-nine years on the job this month completed. Came  
21 on in 1986, got promoted to sergeant in '91.

22 Q. Came on as a firefighter?

23 A. Firefighter. Sorry. Yes. Got promoted to Sergeant in  
24 1991, became a Lieutenant in '95, Captain in '99, Chief in '08 and  
25 had been 4 years -- 3 years administrative. The rest of the time,

1 operational.

2 Q. Very good. I think we've covered quite a bit today  
3 regarding your role in the event and I'm going to go right to what  
4 we call an opportunity to express to see if you might have any  
5 retrospective thoughts; kind of hindsight thoughts, knowing what  
6 you know now that you would like to share with the professional  
7 emergency response community. Would you do anything differently  
8 in terms of the event that might have helped in terms of  
9 addressing some of the challenges that occurred?

10 A. Well, the task we had was to protect those people,  
11 getting them out right there. So I could have done it 20  
12 different ways, but I didn't see any better way to do it or any  
13 safer way. The five or six different things that didn't go right  
14 right off the bat of location, manpower, every other little thing  
15 that doesn't go right which would make the whole incident much  
16 better, how do you fix all those at one time? I mean just like a  
17 firefighter death. There are literally six things that don't go  
18 perfect or didn't go right.

19 Look, again, not wasting time, but find, you know, the  
20 train, getting more units down just quicker can always help. You  
21 can -- that can never go wrong. I do think that the bright spot  
22 or some of the bright spots was also the triage and treatment and  
23 transport. Getting people in and out worked very well. The  
24 evacuation worked very well. I mean if it didn't work, we would  
25 have had to come up with other plans --

1 Q. Once it got started.

2 A. Right. Right. But if there wasn't -- you know, if  
3 there was another opportunity out there, I couldn't see it. The  
4 next bed shaft was too far the other way. It didn't make sense.  
5 What we were doing, we made it work and it's very hard to -- it's  
6 easy to armchair quarterback, but -- with even your own stuff, but  
7 I don't know what else we could have done.

8 Again, the only thing, if I gotten the ones that weren't  
9 that able off the catwalk would have made it a lot faster,  
10 possibly opening up a door in each -- you know, it would only be  
11 on one side though because you couldn't have done it on each car.  
12 Might have been, you know, a better -- more -- and more fireman on  
13 the train just as a peace of mind.

14 Q. To kind of --

15 A. They see --

16 Q. -- calm the crowd a little bit --

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. -- until they --

19 A. And again, the mask thing off, that's on us, but they  
20 didn't have -- they felt the same way, so --

21 Q. I see. Did you happen to notice, was there any triage  
22 going on on the train platform itself or was it all topside?

23 A. I don't know.

24 Q. You didn't --

25 A. Because by the time I came out of the tunnel, not that I

1 was relieved to make sure that there were not 300 people there,  
2 but that was all clear.

3 Q. So --

4 A. Everybody was gone.

5 Q. So you didn't see any triage when you were in the  
6 proximity of the platform itself?

7 A. Well, I came out delayed, but what I mean is they  
8 weren't -- it wasn't like I got there and now, the 300 people had  
9 now moved to here. They were up and out of the station.

10 Q. Up and gone.

11 A. Because -- and I'm sure there was, you know -- the  
12 platform was full too.

13 Q. The platform itself was full?

14 A. Yes, absolutely. Of smoke.

15 Q. Of smoke.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. All right. That's my thoughts and my questions for now.  
18 Any further questions down the line here?

19 BY MR. HAWKINS:

20 Q. Yeah. I have a question for you. Derron Hawkins with  
21 DC Fire. Chief Welch, you mentioned that initially, you link up  
22 with Engine 8, your Recon Group, you went -- you linked up with the  
23 Rescue Squad 1 first, initially?

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. At what time did you link up with Engine 18 and the rest

1 of the recon group, Engine 1 and Truck --

2 A. Engine 18, I think they -- I believe they felt that they  
3 had passed the incident and they advise 1 and Tower 3 that they  
4 were going back. So Engine 18 came back first and did a  
5 face-to-face with me and I basically put them in right there at  
6 the evac on the track. And then later on, Engine 1 came back and  
7 Truck 3, but I don't -- I never made face-to-face with Truck 3.  
8 And I believe they had an injured crew member where two people  
9 left the system.

10 And so they came in, basically were -- they got in the  
11 line of assisting with the evacuation on the track. So they  
12 weren't -- it wasn't -- the whole unit didn't come back at once.  
13 It was sporadic.

14 Q. In terms of time, minutes, kind of gray area?

15 A. Minutes.

16 Q. This is a question about training. You made reference  
17 to some of the training. You talk about SOGs. Can you, in terms  
18 of your knowledge base as it relates to Metro Tran, how do you  
19 feel in terms of your skill set when it comes to Metro incident  
20 training?

21 A. My skill set?

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. As a incident commander? Good. I mean normally I'm not  
24 in recon. Normally I'm up topside. So I feel confident in the  
25 incident command system. And inside, I mean I still remembered

1 everything I knew from back in the day and --

2 Q. Right.

3 A. But normally our special ops chief goes down and we stay  
4 up top.

5 Q. So regarding inspections, you mentioned inspections. Do  
6 you -- what is your -- in terms of how many inspections, are they  
7 improving what we've done? I know we did inspections before, but  
8 in terms of this incident, what do you think inspections --

9 A. How do you -- the right way to say this after we have a  
10 major fire where somebody dies, we go around the neighborhood and  
11 do smoke detectors.

12 Q. I'm talking about as it relates to the radio -- you  
13 know, inspections in the Metro Station.

14 A. Well, I'm saying, so as soon as this happened --

15 Q. Right.

16 A. -- we were absolutely more diligent and we're out there  
17 checking the systems, but we were checking the new radio systems  
18 from right when we started them into Metro's. I mean we were  
19 doing that.

20 Q. Can you recall a Metro incident other than this one  
21 where there was an AR and something really stood out in the AR,  
22 after action report, as it related to that incident, something  
23 that really jumped out; lack of or something we did well or needed  
24 improvement?

25 A. I mean we have the crash.



1 Q. Which?

2 A. The crash right --

3 MR. DOWNS: Fort Totten?

4 MR. WELSH: Right. That was a huge after action report.

5 BY MR. HAWKINS:

6 Q. Was anything that jumped out about that that we could  
7 have done or anything that we --

8 A. No.

9 Q. -- could have --

10 A. Not that I recall. I think that was -- I mean, it -- I  
11 think that was -- not everything went great, but I think that went  
12 very well. I know -- yeah.

13 Q. I have one more question here. So you was dispatched.  
14 Did you -- was you aware of a previous call from Battalion 6 that  
15 he went to, was you aware of that? Did you hear that prior to  
16 being dispatched?

17 A. I heard the call meaning I just happened to hear the 6th  
18 Battalion was on a run for Metro. So as soon as they hit the box,  
19 it was like okay, something else is going on.

20 Q. That's all I've got.

21 MR. DOWNS: Further questions on the right here?

22 BY MR. BLACKISTONE:

23 Q. Just asking about your prior experience with calls in  
24 the Metro system, have you seen any or many smoke calls before,  
25 things like --

1 A. Not that much smoke.

2 Q. No.

3 A. Most of it has always been a lot lighter. Usually it's  
4 more a laid back response -- laid back's the wrong word, but  
5 because there's no train in the tunnel, we're not going on the  
6 track, none of that's supposed to happen. So it's a much slower  
7 operation that we're just, everybody's taking their time. And  
8 again, they wait for the chief to get down there because there's  
9 no imminent danger. And we usually coordinate with Metro and  
10 everything gets taken care of without a problem.

11 Q. How often do those kinds of calls happen? A couple  
12 times a year?

13 A. Yes. Yes. And I guess it also goes with each part of  
14 the system, how old it is. You know, the Red Line for years, you  
15 go, we were doing the Red Line 5 or 10 years ago because that was  
16 the oldest. And now, I'm sure it's going to different places.

17 Q. Do you have a sense of the call volume on Metro is going  
18 up down or sidewise? I don't want to talk about medical locals,  
19 but the --

20 A. I can't say for sure.

21 Q. And the other thing I just wanted to follow up on Rick's  
22 questions about your background and past. Whereabouts have you  
23 been stationed?

24 A. As everywhere in the city has a company officer. I was  
25 a Battalion Chief in the 6th Battalion, which, that's this area.

1 I'm currently in the 4th Battalion which is at 14th and Newton. I  
2 was in Southeast for -- a Battalion Chief for 4 years. So all --

3 Q. Battalion 3?

4 A. -- pretty much -- Battalion 2, all -- I mean, so --

5 Q. Battalion 2.

6 MR. BLACKISTONE: That's it. Thank you.

7 MR. DOWNS: Mr. Rourke?

8 BY MR. ROURKE:

9 Q. Chief, I think you might have hit on this, but when you  
10 heard the transmission about the train being in the tunnel, was --  
11 there was no location given?

12 A. No, not that I heard.

13 Q. And did you hear anybody acknowledge that or anything,  
14 do you recall?

15 A. No. I think the next transmission was we're entering  
16 the track.

17 Q. And how about the woman that was removed by the rescue  
18 squad, the rescue they made? Do you know where she was on the  
19 train?

20 A. No.

21 Q. That's all I have.

22 BY MR. GORDON:

23 Q. Yes. I have a couple of questions. Joe Gordon, NTSB.  
24 The evacuation on the catwalk, was there a fire department  
25 firefighter that went ahead of the group, every group for

1 lighting, to kind of guide the group out or --

2 A. We had lights shining on their feet. On the catwalk,  
3 the platform was light enough.

4 Q. So --

5 A. We didn't -- at the time, the crew we had and even Metro  
6 had people with flashlights too. And so it was lit up there and  
7 then I'm pretty sure -- I don't recall. It was bright. I don't  
8 recall that the platform was an issue.

9 MR. DOWNS: So the smoke had dissipated in the tunnel  
10 enough that they were able to get by with the handheld lights that  
11 you were providing at their feet?

12 MR. WELSH: Yes.

13 BY MR. GORDON:

14 Q. And one other question. The E-tech cart, you were  
15 positioned at the rear bulkhead door, so when they brought the --  
16 we've heard that they did bring the E-tech cart in --

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. -- for some of the evacuation.

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. Approximately how many people do you think they took  
21 out? How many trips on that and --

22 A. It was only two because we took the seizure patient out.  
23 We pulled the handicap person back. Grabbed the seizure patient,  
24 put him in a Stokes and Truck 4 got him out and then we came back  
25 and got the handicap gentleman.

1 BY MR. DOWNS:

2 Q. So it was two --

3 A. And then we took the -- after that, we also took his  
4 wheelchair, so --

5 Q. So it was two E-tech cart trips up and back?

6 A. Up and back.

7 Q. And that was it?

8 A. That was it.

9 Q. And the wheelchair was hand-carried out or --

10 A. No. We put in on the E-tech cart.

11 MR. GORDON: Back on the E-tech cart.

12 BY MR. DOWNS:

13 Q. At the same time as your --

14 A. No. We came back and got it after the incident was  
15 over.

16 Q. So it was three E-tech visits.

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. Ultimately.

19 A. Correct. We even had two E-tech carts on the track.

20 Q. So there were two carts in use and at least three trips  
21 were made --

22 A. Right.

23 Q. -- one including the --

24 A. Right.

25 Q. -- removal of the wheelchair.

1           A.    And one of the things I thought was I wish we could have  
2 an E-tech cart that had six chairs that we could just put them on  
3 and strap them.

4           MR. DOWNS: That actually brings in other retrospective  
5 thoughts, but let's finish your question, Mr. Gordon.

6           MR. GORDON: I have no further questions.

7           BY MR. DOWNS:

8           Q.    I'll bring that up now. Maybe add that --

9           A.    (Indiscernible) --

10          Q.    -- to your retrospective thoughts.

11          A.    -- you can't ask them to lay down. You can't ask them  
12 to lay down right now. They're not going to lay down. You know,  
13 with the E-tech carts are designed for a crash --

14          Q.    Right.

15          A.    -- backboard, collar -- I mean backboard --

16          Q.    Right.

17          A.    -- Stokes, whatever. And again, I'm -- there's just  
18 that practicality was six chairs, sit them on the chairs --

19          Q.    And push.

20          A.    -- and push.

21          Q.    So you --

22          A.    Because then they'd even be lower and again, even the  
23 catwalk -- the thing about that catwalk, the things that come out  
24 of those walls are just incredible. I don't -- I was looking at  
25 them even at the time, looking at it going why is that there.

1 Like a block.

2 MR. GORDON: A box.

3 BY MR. DOWNS:

4 Q. Or those control boxes or whatever?

5 A. Something just -- yeah. Just --

6 MR. GORDON: Right.

7 MR. WELSH: -- where it's right at the -- it's right at  
8 their (indiscernible) -- and I know it's not for, you know,  
9 civilians, but it's right there, right on the ground too.

10 BY MR. DOWNS:

11 Q. Suffice it --

12 A. (Indiscernible) box is on the ground.

13 Q. Suffice to say, Chief, it's an impediment to the  
14 expedient evacuation process?

15 A. And then you add one elderly person right there and  
16 you've really, really slowed it down. There was one lady I  
17 thought of grabbing. I wasn't quite tall enough to, because they  
18 just -- she kind of just stopped and it was like oh, ma'am, we  
19 can't -- we got to go.

20 Q. So the junction boxes along the catwalk and the E-tech  
21 cart, you'd like to see maybe chair feature on there so you'd have  
22 the capability to put people in seats rather than on the cart  
23 itself.

24 A. Right.

25 MR. ROURKE: You're talking about the handicapped guy?

1           MR. WELSH: No. I just meant that we just needed to be  
2 able to put six people on a cart and get them out of there. You  
3 know, boom, boom, boom (indiscernible) --

4           MR. ROURKE: Well, I'm with you. I'm with you.

5           MR. WELSH: Yeah. That might not be practical. The  
6 other thing that the -- heat, fire was never the issue, that it  
7 was smoke and I know they're starting with different programs with  
8 over the -- you know, bags over the heads and --

9           BY MR. DOWNS:

10          Q. Escape hoods and such.

11          A. Yeah. And I mean, there was no imminent danger of heat.  
12 You know, that was one thing that didn't even -- as soon as you  
13 got there, you could tell that it wasn't fire because there was no  
14 heat.

15          Q. Given your experience.

16          A. Right. And just down the road, if that was ever set up  
17 like a thing that gets dropped off to a site on a mass casualty at  
18 Metro or --

19          Q. So if -- you're thinking, maybe brainstorming a little  
20 bit here, if there was a high volume --

21          A. I thought about it at the time.

22          Q. -- of escape hoods or something, it would have --

23          A. Because there was no --

24          Q. -- alleviated the situation?

25          A. There was no imminent threat. It was just trying to get



1 that smoke from there out of the tunnel, then out of the car.

2 Q. Going back to your indication, you first arrived on  
3 scene. You heard trains continuing on the lower level.

4 A. That was when I was going down the escalator  
5 (indiscernible).

6 Q. And refresh my memory as to your testimony. Your  
7 thinking was that the problem was not on that level so much as the  
8 other level? Is that what you were thinking at the time or --

9 A. No. My thinking was my crews are operating on the  
10 tracks with the trains coming through.

11 Q. So suffice it to say, would it be a process to  
12 discontinue all train operations in a given station no matter what  
13 level if there is any event involving a fire department response?  
14 Because you don't know in which tunnel you guys have to go down,  
15 correct, and you don't have to -- you don't have the luxury of  
16 time to worry about a possible train coming. Would that be a fair  
17 characterization?

18 A. Yes. And in the past history with 29 years on, there  
19 has been times where it has been understood that if we're in the  
20 hub, doesn't matter, everything's down and then if we don't need  
21 it, we'll get it back up.

22 Q. Better to air on the side of safety.

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. Anything else, Chief, that you would like to add to that  
25 or no?

1 A. No.

2 Q. I see you've brought your notes here today. Is there  
3 anything additional in your notes that you might want to add to  
4 the discussion here that you've not already covered today?

5 A. The other thing, the catwalk. Again, in the future, I  
6 mean it's so dark. The whole area's just so dark.

7 Q. That brings a good point. When I inspected the tunnel  
8 that night, the light fixtures, there was a lot of dust and such  
9 collected. Was that your observation as well?

10 A. Just the overall --

11 Q. Darkness of the tunnel?

12 A. -- darkness. It was dark.

13 Q. And have you been in other Metro tunnels for similar  
14 inspections or evacuations where you noticed the lighting was much  
15 better or --

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. -- about the same?

18 A. No. I just -- at that incident, it was extremely dark  
19 which made it extremely difficult to (indiscernible).

20 Q. And would it be obvious that more lighting would be --

21 A. Would be better. That's all I know.

22 Q. -- far better?

23 A. Yes. Yes.

24 Q. Very good. All right. That concludes my questions.

25 MR. DOWNS: Any more questions down here?

1 MR. BLACKISTONE: Go ahead.

2 MR. HAWKINS: No.

3 MS. BURTCH: No.

4 BY MR. BLACKISTONE:

5 Q. Yeah. Steve Blackistone with NTSB. Ventilation, did  
6 you at any point as for ventilation and fans to be --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. -- turned one way or the other or --

9 A. Yes, I did, but I did not -- I said I needed the  
10 ventilation system -- I needed to confirm that the ventilation  
11 system was on and at the time, I really -- I knew what it  
12 logically looked to me, the way it should go, but I figured  
13 they're in the house where they can see everything. They're going  
14 to know we're taking them out this way, that it needs to be here  
15 and it needs to -- and I just didn't want to say it the wrong way  
16 or anything. And I don't know that I got confirmation or not.

17 Q. You just asked generically --

18 A. To confirm that the --

19 Q. -- that -- to confirm the ventilation system --

20 A. -- ventilation system is, you know, on. I didn't say  
21 exhausting because I was like, I'm not -- I can't -- make sure I  
22 don't say the -- you know, it seemed logical to me that we would  
23 put that closest fan shaft on exhaust to pull that smoke away from  
24 the way we were taking those people.

25 Q. And that would be the fan shaft that was just south of

1 the train?

2 A. Correct.

3 Q. Towards the portal.

4 A. Correct, but with the other hub, with the other tunnel,  
5 they might have seen it differently too. So that's why I just --  
6 we just needed it on.

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. I think in the past, it was always worried about pushing  
9 fire. You know, turning them on automatically without  
10 confirmation. That wasn't the case here that fire was an issue.

11 Q. Yeah. So you asked for it to be turned on the -- saying  
12 which way you wanted the air to move.

13 A. Correct.

14 MR. DOWNS: Could you feel the flow of air on your face  
15 or anything when you were in the tunnel or --

16 MR. WELSH: No.

17 MR. DOWNS: So it was --

18 MR. WELSH: I did feel it in the lower when the trains  
19 were running through.

20 MR. DOWNS: But not the upper level tunnels, you  
21 couldn't tell?

22 MR. WELSH: No.

23 MR. DOWNS: But you just wanted to get the confirmation  
24 that the fan was correctly operating in some manner?

25 MR. WELSH: Right.

1 MR. DOWNS: Very good.

2 BY MR. BLACKISTONE:

3 Q. And that the air was moving?

4 A. Correct.

5 MR. DOWNS: Right. And back to your notes there,  
6 there's nothing additional in your notes that you'd want to add to  
7 your testimony? You've covered everything pretty much?

8 While he's reading over his notes, any other further  
9 questions come to mind to my right?

10 MS. BURTCH: No.

11 MR. DOWNS: And to my left?

12 MR. GORDON: No.

13 MR. DOWNS: So we'll allow the Chief a few moments.  
14 Nothing further you want to add? Very well. That concludes our  
15 testimony, Chief. Thank you very much.

16 MR. WELSH: Thank you.

17 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: WMATA FIRE/SMOKE INVESTIGATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
January 12, 2015  
Interview of Henry Welsh

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-FR-004

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: January 28, 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.

---


Tiffany Meeker  
Transcriber

Testimony for Battalion Chief Henry Welsh

Page 11, line 2, States Engine 2 and should be Tower 3

I see no discrepancies in my statement, However there are quite a number of blank spaces both in the questions and my answers.

Henry E. Welsh

  
Battalion Fire Chief