



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
Investigative Hearing

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

GROUP	
EXHIBIT	

Agency / Organization

Title

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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WMATA INCIDENT AT L'ENFANT PLAZA *

STATION, WASHINGTON, D.C. *

JANUARY 12, 2015 *

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Docket No.: DCA-15-FR-004

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Interview of: DAVID WILLIAMS

Washington, D.C.

Thursday,
January 29, 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

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

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

DENTON ROURKE, Operations Manager
Office of Emergency Management
WMATA

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

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

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I N T E R V I E W

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

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

18 I'll now ask that our witness please identify
19 themselves, their employment affiliation, and job position/title.

20 MR. WILLIAMS: My name is David Williams, Firefighter,
21 D.C. Fire and EMS Department.

22 MR. DOWNS: Thank you, sir. And are you accompanied by
23 anyone today in this interview?

24 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

25 MR. DOWNS: Please identify yourself.

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

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

9 MR. ROURKE: Good afternoon. My name is Denton Rourke.
10 I work for WMATA. I am the Operations Manager in the Office of
11 Emergency Management.

12 MS. BURTCH: Good afternoon. I'm Kimberly Burtch. I
13 work for the FTA's Office, Federal Transit Administration Office
14 of Transit Safety and Oversight. I am the Safety Assurance and
15 Risk Management Lead.

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

18 MR. TEBO: Joe Tebo, Maryland Department of
19 Transportation, member of the Tri-State Oversight Committee.

20 MR. JOE GORDON: Joe Gordon, National Transportation
21 Safety Board and the investigator in charge on the L'Enfant Plaza
22 incident. And want to give you an overview of the purpose of the
23 NTSB investigation. It's to enhance safety. I'm looking for
24 process improvements, not looking to assign any fault or blame to
25 anyone. NTSB cannot offer any guarantee of confidentiality or

1 immunity from legal action or certificate action, and Mr. Downs
2 already touched on the transcript and the public docket. So with
3 that, we can begin with the interview.

4 MR. DOWNS: Thank you.

5 INTERVIEW OF DAVID WILLIAMS

6 BY MR. DOWNS:

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

10 A. I was a member of Rescue Squad 1.

11 Q. Very good. Thank you. And could you please describe
12 for us in your own words what occurred on the day of the event
13 relative to your actions and involvement in the -- at the L'Enfant
14 Plaza Station Response?

15 A. I was a member of Team B of Rescue Squad 1. Entered the
16 tunnel, the elevator shaft, went through the elevator, full gear,
17 SCBA, hand light, halogen bar and Metro bag along with the key
18 assigned to my writing position. Got down to -- exited the
19 elevator into the station, encountered heavy smoke conditions,
20 went down to the platform and still heavy smoke coming from the
21 tunnel within the station.

22 I remember a transit officer advising there was a train
23 in the tunnel with numerous people on the train. And when
24 instructed we went into the tunnel, got to the train, pretty much
25 could -- we were unable -- close to zero visibility en route down

1 to the train. We were -- I was on air. When we got to the train
2 we noticed there were however many people were on board. The
3 train looked full. Gained access to the train, made entry, tried
4 to calm people down and do a quick triage to find out our
5 evacuation process.

6 After that I led a group of I don't know how many people
7 down the walkway back onto the platform. Returned, helped take --
8 carry ██████████ from platform -- well, from the train all the way
9 out to street level. Performed CPR.

10 After I was done performing CPR I returned back down to
11 the train and assisted with another gentleman that was having a
12 medical emergency. Assisted him with the -- on the E-tech cart
13 back to the platform. Removed him from the platform. Began
14 rescue breathing until I was relieved again.

15 Went back to the train and completed a secondary search
16 of the train and a portion of the tunnel. And that was -- after
17 that we were relieved and went back up to the rescue squad.

18 Q. Up to topside.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Very good. Thank you, sir. You mentioned you went on
21 air when you were down in the station.

22 A. Yes. This was when we got down into -- onto the
23 platform we're entering into the tunnel itself, we went on air
24 because we did not -- it was to a point where we didn't know what
25 we were going to encounter. We knew it was a tight walkway so

1 instead of having to stop and, you know, possibly fall off that
2 walkway onto the track bed, we felt it was necessary to go ahead
3 and go on air.

4 Q. And that would be SOP for an environment of that type?

5 A. Yes, IDLH.

6 Q. Very good. Are you certain that it was a transit police
7 officer that guided you to that particular tunnel and indicated to
8 the effect there was a train down there?

9 A. I'm -- I believe it was a transit police officer.

10 Q. Uniformed transit police officer?

11 A. It was -- I remember he had on a vest.

12 Q. Safety vest?

13 A. Yes, with WMATA on it.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. WMATA.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And I believe it was one of the officers.

18 Q. Might it have been, though, one of the station managers?

19 A. I -- on our side of the track I remember seeing a couple
20 cops and a couple other people, so I'm not 100. I don't remember
21 exactly.

22 Q. I'm not trying to challenge your recollection. We're
23 trying to identify who that might have been because we've had
24 other testimony conflicting as to who it might have been, and
25 without identifying a name we really can't narrow that down.

1 A. I don't -- I'm not --

2 Q. You're not positive?

3 A. I couldn't tell you --

4 Q. You're not positive.

5 A. Yeah. I didn't see a nametag, so I --

6 Q. I see.

7 A. -- couldn't tell you who it was.

8 Q. Okay. I'm going to pass it on to our next tech
9 questioner.

10 BY MR. ROURKE:

11 Q. Thanks. I'm just going to -- Denton Rourke from Metro.
12 I'm just going to ask you a couple questions, basic questions
13 about Metro training in general and then about the thought
14 process.

15 What kind of Metro training have you participated in
16 partially, either with Metro or at the company level, anywhere
17 you've been assigned?

18 A. The only thing I've ever done training-wise was many
19 years ago doing Metro rodeo.

20 Q. And how about at the station level?

21 A. Every now and then we company drill and they review SOPs
22 and such.

23 Q. And this kind of dovetails what you just said. What
24 Metro exercise -- have you participated in any full-scale drills
25 or anything besides the rodeo? And how long have you been on the

1 job?

2 A. I've been on 12 years 9 months.

3 Q. Radio communications, from your perspective how well was
4 the radio work?

5 A. It did not work very well.

6 Q. Can you expand on that a little bit?

7 A. I know -- I remember my officer trying to call and I
8 believe -- I remember at least twice the other firefighter that
9 was assisting me carrying Ms. Glover out making transmissions, but
10 I don't recall -- I don't know if his calls were ever answered.

11 Q. Um-hmm. Was your radio honking?

12 A. Mine was not. I was on the talk round channel.

13 Q. At the platform when you all got to the end of the
14 platform you ran into the Metro who was it that told you about the
15 train in the tunnel. You said there was several people there,
16 Metro police, and do you recall like the conversation, like I'm
17 saying, just beyond what you told us already?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Did anybody from either the Fire Department or from
20 Metro hot stick before you all went down there?

21 A. Not that I remember.

22 Q. And you took [REDACTED] -- you all went all the way to
23 the street and was -- when you got up to street level was there
24 any EMS or anybody out there at all? What did you see when you
25 got the street? Let me put it that way to you.

1 A. The only -- the ones that -- the only thing I remember
2 seeing out there was I believe Engine 10. I believe that was the
3 engine that was and they were the ones who assisted us and
4 relieved us.

5 Q. And you -- when you got relieved from that job they were
6 still working on --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. -- to do that. Um-hmm. Can you describe for us the
9 process how you actually got on the train when you got there?

10 A. One of the other -- I was third in line walking down.
11 One of the other firefighters opened the door, the right rear door
12 of the last car. And I jumped up into the car.

13 MR. DOWNS: Does anyone have anything? Next questioner.

14 BY MS. BURTCH:

15 Q. You said you had your SCBA --

16 MR. DOWNS: Identification?

17 MS. BURTCH: Kim Burtch.

18 MR. DOWNS: Thank you.

19 Q. You had your SCBA on?

20 A. Yes, ma'am.

21 Q. Okay. Did you remove that at any time during the --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. -- operation?

24 A. As soon as we got on the train I removed it.

25 Q. That's all I have.

1 MR. DOWNS: Chief, anything?

2 MR. HAWKINS: Derron Hawkins, Deputy Fire Chief, D.C.
3 Fire and EMS.

4 BY MR. HAWKINS:

5 Q. I have a question regarding your Metro experience. You
6 mentioned that you participated in a Metro rodeo?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. As well as reviewing some SOGs. Have you been involved
9 in any inspections, Metro inspections?

10 A. Since this incident yes.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Prior to this incident, no.

13 Q. Okay. And were there any major Metro incidents you ran
14 before? Was an AR involved the actual (indiscernible)?

15 A. Not -- I believe this is one of my first major Metro
16 incidents.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. That I can recall.

19 Q. Okay. So based on your experience with Metro training
20 and some of the inspections, do you feel as though you're capable
21 of responding to Metro accidents?

22 A. Yes. I feel comfortable.

23 Q. Okay. You feel comfortable?

24 A. Um-hmm.

25 Q. Okay. I have no further questions.

1 MR. DOWNS: Thank you. Questions down there, Mr. Tebo?

2 BY MR. TEBO:

3 Q. Afternoon. Joe Tebo, Tri-State Oversight. Sir, do you
4 know what an ETS is or an emergency trip station is?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Okay. Do you know if that was activated upon your
7 arrival yet?

8 A. I do not know if it was activated prior to our arrival.

9 Q. And you indicated that you initially were on air. You
10 went off air once you got into the train?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Did you ever go back on?

13 A. No, sir.

14 Q. Did you ever deplete your bottle and have to get a
15 refill?

16 A. No, sir.

17 Q. What were the smoke conditions in the train since you
18 took your BA off?

19 A. It was -- Fire Department lingo -- moderate to heavy.

20 Q. Nothing further at this time. Thanks.

21 BY MR. JOE GORDON:

22 Q. Joe Gordon, NTSB. We had a previous testimony that
23 someone was sent back to get air quality meters. Were those air
24 quality meters back down to your level before you took the SCBA
25 gear off? Had you guys actually consulted the air quality meters

1 prior to?

2 A. We had meters on when we entered the tunnel.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And we, as far -- I don't remember -- I did not have one
5 of the 4 to the 6 gas meters so I don't -- I'm not sure what their
6 readings were on any of those.

7 Q. So you're just waiting on response or someone would
8 notify you with your group if they got any readings outside of the
9 norm?

10 A. Yes.

11 BY MR. ROURKE:

12 Q. And nobody provided any alert that there were readings
13 outside the norm?

14 A. Not that -- not that I recall.

15 MR. GORDON: Okay. I have no further questions.

16 MR. DOWNS: Thank you.

17 BY MR. DOWNS:

18 Q. Firefighter Williams, let's digress a little bit. You
19 mentioned you've been on the force, well, not quite 12 and a half
20 years?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. All the time as a firefighter?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. And you've attended the various training activities over
25 the years? You mentioned a little bit the routine training that

1 you go through to become a firefighter and such. And that would
2 include some training of WMATA familiarization?

3 A. Can you -- I guess --

4 Q. IN other words, as part of your initial training to be a
5 firefighter did they give you a WMATA training module to learn?

6 A. Through -- are you referring to in recruit school?

7 Q. Yes.

8 A. No.

9 Q. No. After recruit school did you have any WMATA
10 familiarization training?

11 A. Honestly I do not -- I don't remember.

12 Q. You don't remember?

13 A. Like, yeah, what questions we had through probation.

14 Q. Okay. But did you go down to the Common Turner Training
15 Facility at some point where they have the railcar in the building
16 to simulate a tunnel?

17 A. That would have been whenever we did the Metro Rodeo.

18 Q. And that was your only --

19 A. Yeah. And that was --

20 Q. -- that was your only training exercise? You've not
21 done any live exercises with WMATA?

22 A. No, sir.

23 Q. Okay. All right. But there are SOPs that would address
24 various Metro response processes. Is that correct?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And other documents that you could refer to in terms of
2 familiarization with the Metro equipment?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Very good. I'm going to ask you about the emergency
5 access doors and your familiarization with those, okay? Here you
6 just indicated that somebody else opened the railcar door?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. It wasn't you so you didn't have to engage anything to
9 get in to the car, right? You just went inside --

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. -- to help with the evacuation process?

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. Okay. In terms of your background knowledge of how to
14 access railcars, tell us about what's your understanding or any
15 training that you've had in terms of getting access from the
16 outside to get into a railcar.

17 A. There's many -- there's so many different versions of
18 railcars, years, models, makes that there -- no two are the exact
19 same, you kind of have to identify, you know, make a clear
20 identification -- excuse me -- clear identification of the car
21 you're dealing with before you can make that decision.

22 Q. Okay. And once you've made the identification of which
23 car that would prescribe which process you would follow. Is that
24 what you're saying?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. Let me just ask you here we had 6000 series cars.
2 We had 3000 series cars. Okay? For 3000 series cars, which
3 happen to be the last car of the train that you were in, okay, how
4 would you access that particular railcar?

5 A. I believe it is door nine, but I'm not --

6 Q. Door nine? Okay. Let's make it nice and simple. You
7 have three doors on each side of the railcar, right? Would it be
8 the first door you come to, the middle door or the last door?

9 A. I believe it -- I believe it's the middle door, but
10 right now I --

11 Q. A little foggy?

12 A. To be 100 percent I can't --

13 Q. A little foggy?

14 A. -- remember, yes.

15 Q. Okay. Very good. How about accessing through the end
16 of the railcar, the very end bulkhead door?

17 A. I've never -- I've never personally done that, and I
18 believe it would be use of a barrel key if I'm not mistaken on it.
19 But like I said, you know, I refer to my keys to --

20 Q. I see. Okay. Very good.

21 A. -- you know, with questions.

22 Q. And the middle door on the side would that be a barrel
23 key or some other mechanism that you would open the door with?

24 A. I believe it's a different key, but I --

25 Q. A --

1 A. -- off the top of my head to remember I don't.

2 Q. Okay. That's fine.

3 A. I don't know.

4 Q. And if you were on the inside and need to get out, how
5 would you do that?

6 A. On which --

7 Q. Any of the railcars, the 3000 series.

8 A. For the 3000 series you have to unscrew the -- I'm
9 terrible with some technical terms at times, but basically you
10 have to unscrew the deal to unlock the door and open it from the
11 inside.

12 Q. Unscrew a panel somewhere on the railcar?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And where would that panel be located?

15 A. It would be by the door.

16 Q. By the door or above the door?

17 A. Well, I say by. Some people may say above. I mean --

18 Q. So you would unscrew a panel and what would you find?

19 A. Bottom lever to be able to open the door.

20 Q. And you pull the lever and it would open one of the
21 doors or both of the doors or?

22 A. It should unlock the doors so they can be opened.

23 Q. Okay. Is there a release handle by chance in the middle
24 of the car adjacent to each middle door?

25 A. The --

1 Q. You're not familiar with that? Okay.

2 A. I'm not 100 percent familiar.

3 Q. Okay. Let's pass on to the next line of questioning.

4 Thank you.

5 MR. ROURKE: I don't have any additional questions.

6 MS. BURTCH: I don't have any additional questions.

7 MR. DOWNS: Chief, any additional questions?

8 MR. HAWKINS: No, I don't have any further questions.

9 BY MR. TEBO:

10 Q. Joe Tebo with Tri-State Oversight. Upon graduation from
11 the academy, what emergency medical training do you have?

12 A. It was just very little emergency medical technician.

13 Q. You were an EMT?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. All right. Is it your understanding that that's a
16 requirement to graduate from the academy for every recruit?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Is it still that to this day? Is that still the
19 requirement to your knowledge?

20 A. It --

21 Q. To your knowledge.

22 A. To my knowledge, yes.

23 Q. Okay. In order to be a -- certified as a firefighter I,
24 II when you come out of the academy?

25 A. I don't --

1 Q. Maybe a Firefighter I by national standards?

2 A. I believe it's II, but --

3 Q. Okay. Great. Thanks. That's all.

4 MR. GORDON: I have no further questions.

5 MR. HAWKINS: I have a question I'd like to
6 (indiscernible).

7 MR. DOWNS: Go ahead, Chief.

8 BY MR. HAWKINS:

9 Q. Okay. Regarding recruits accrued training after you
10 come out as a probationer, there's a series of exams you must
11 take, correct?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. So as you studied through your probation manual
14 was there anything regarding Metro procedures or where you had to
15 learn and test out as a rookie?

16 A. Chief, that was 12 and a half years ago. I honestly
17 don't remember what questions were on my probation. I think it's
18 changed a lot over the years and I honestly don't remember.

19 Q. Okay. All right. Okay. No further questions.

20 MR. DOWNS: Okay.

21 BY MR. DOWNS:

22 Q. Firefighter, did you happen to take any notes of the
23 event itself, like have to fill out a report or anything like
24 that?

25 A. I filled out a sheet yesterday for the fire

1 investigator.

2 Q. For the fire investigator, an internal D.C. Fire report?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And you passed that up to the chain of command?

5 A. I gave it to my lieutenant.

6 Q. And what happened to it you don't know.

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. Very good. And that's the only notes or documentation
9 that you generated?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. I mean that -- very good. We'll address that with the
12 Chief later on. As it looks like we've pretty much addressed all
13 of our questions so far, I'd like to wrap up my line of
14 questioning with what I like to give is the witness an opportunity
15 to express what we call retrospective thoughts, meaning knowing
16 what you know now, kind of in hindsight, is there anything that
17 you might have done differently or any kind of changes in your
18 processes that you might want to recommend to the other
19 firefighters and professional firefighter community or your fire
20 management? Things that you might do differently in a future
21 event of this magnitude?

22 The idea is that you always learn about new stuff in an
23 event, right, that sometimes you want to take advantage of in the
24 future. Anything that comes to mind you'd do differently?

25 A. After the event we kind of talked as a group.

- 1 Q. You did an internal kind of brainstorming --
- 2 A. Yeah, we kind of did that, yeah.
- 3 Q. -- session? Okay.
- 4 A. It was a company hot wash and --
- 5 Q. Hot wash, okay.
- 6 A. -- we came up with a couple ideas as far as bringing the
- 7 Metro light with us on all incidents.
- 8 Q. The Metro --
- 9 A. Light.
- 10 Q. Light?
- 11 A. Yes.
- 12 Q. What is a Metro light?
- 13 A. It's a box, a Pelican light.
- 14 Q. Pelican light, okay.
- 15 A. So it's basically a small tower light.
- 16 Q. Okay.
- 17 A. -- that we would use just to -- that would have been
- 18 something that would have been very useful for us.
- 19 Q. It's a battery-powered?
- 20 A. Yes.
- 21 Q. Very good. Okay. Go ahead.
- 22 A. Bring our own Sked, you know --
- 23 Q. Yep. Okay.
- 24 A. -- people movers, stuff like that.
- 25 Q. Yep.

1 A. It's something that would have helped -- could help us
2 -- help us in the egress of downed passengers. It's the little
3 things like that, just a --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- even if it's a lot more to carry, but just have it.
6 It's better to have it and not need it (indiscernible).

7 Q. Throw it in the Metro bag in other words?

8 A. Wherever the case would be, yeah, just carry it. The
9 main mover has to be in the Metro bag. The skid mover would not
10 be able to fit in the Metro bag.

11 Q. Very good. Anything else?

12 A. That's all I can remember right now.

13 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Very good. If that's the end of
14 questions that concludes our interview. Thank you very much.

15 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: WMATA INCIDENT AT L'ENFANT PLAZA
STATION, WASHINGTON, D.C.
JANUARY 12, 2015
Interview of David Williams

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-FR-004

PLACE: Washington, DC

DATE: January 29, 2015

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

Teresa Holevas
Transcriber