



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

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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

Interview of: JASON WOODS

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  
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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. Woods)

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I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. DOWNS: Today's date is January 29, 2015. And the  
3 following is an interview being conducted, pardon me, in reference  
4 to NTSB investigation number DCA-15-FR-004, which relates to an  
5 accident involving a heavy smoke release and train evacuations  
6 that occurred in and near the L'Enfant Plaza Station of the WMATA  
7 Metrorail system here in Washington, D.C. on the afternoon of  
8 January 12, 2015.

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

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

22 MR. WOODS: My name is Jason Woods. I'm employed by the  
23 District of Columbia Fire Department and assigned to Rescue Squad  
24 1, Number 3.

25 MR. DOWNS: And you're a firefighter?

1 MR. WOODS: Yes, sir.

2 MR. DOWNS: Thank you. And are you accompanied by  
3 anyone today in this interview?

4 MR. WOODS: James Gordon from Local 36.

5 MR. JAMES GORDON: I'm James Gordon. I'm the Secretary  
6 for Local 36, and I'll be his union representation for the day.

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

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

15 MS. BURTCH: Good afternoon. I'm Kimberly Burtch with  
16 the Federal Transit Administration's Office of Transit Safety and  
17 Oversight, and I'm the safety assurance and risk management lead.

18 MR. HAWKINS: Good afternoon. I'm Derron T. Hawkins,  
19 Deputy Fire Chief, D.C. Fire and EMS, Division of Homeland  
20 Security.

21 MR. TEBO: Good afternoon. I'm Joe Tebo with the  
22 Maryland Department of Transportation, and I'm a member of the  
23 Tri-State Oversight Committee.

24 MR. JOE GORDON: Joe Gordon with the National  
25 Transportation Safety Board, investigator in charge on the

1 L'Enfant Plaza incident. Before we get started, overview of the  
2 purpose of the NTSB investigation. We're looking for process  
3 improvement, enhancing safety. Not here to assign any fault or  
4 blame. Mr. Downs has mentioned the transcript that would be  
5 generated from the recording. NTSB cannot offer any guarantee of  
6 confidentiality or immunity from legal action or certificate  
7 action. That's just a requirement that we let you know that.

8 And with that, Mr. Downs will start with the interview.

9 MR. DOWNS: Thank you.

10 INTERVIEW OF JASON WOODS

11 BY MR. DOWNS:

12 Q. Thank you. And as my first question for the witness,  
13 would you please briefly describe for us your role or involvement  
14 in the event?

15 A. I was a firefighter assigned to Rescue Squad 1 working  
16 at Trail Number 2 platoon that day.

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

21 A. We received the call. We were in the station.  
22 Responded, got there. We were on scene for a couple of minutes.  
23 We had -- we're hearing reports over the radio that there was  
24 smoke in the station.

25 After being there a couple of minutes, it didn't sound

1 like anyone was in the station yet. My lieutenant advised us to  
2 go -- we were going to go down and see what was going on. We took  
3 the elevator to the platform. Once we got onto the platform found  
4 pretty moderate smoke. We saw a train in the station. There was  
5 nobody on the train. There appeared to be nobody on the train.

6 We had some Metro Transit officers and other employees  
7 there advising us the train was empty. At that time we had no  
8 idea there was another train the tunnel.

9 Walked down. We were asking -- I think all of us were  
10 kind of asking about the situation with the power, if the power  
11 was down and had not got a clear answer on that at the time. I  
12 think we were on the platform, oh, it wasn't long, maybe a minute  
13 or two. And then two Metro Transit officers who were on the end  
14 of the platform closest to the entrance to the tunnel where the  
15 train was advised us that we had a train in the tunnel full of  
16 passengers and that they were in distress. They felt that they  
17 were in a bad way.

18 So we again asked about the power and never got a clear  
19 answer on that for a couple of seconds. I went over and tripped a  
20 blue light station at the entrance to the tunnel. I remember the  
21 lieutenant talking to the two Metro Transit officers. They again  
22 confirmed that we did have a train in the tunnel and that there  
23 were passengers on the train.

24 No one actually knew I don't think how far into the  
25 tunnel the train was or how close it was to us, so we made the



1 decision to put our masks on due to the amount of smoke that was  
2 in the tunnel and started down the catwalk towards the train.

3 Not sure exact distance, maybe 150 yards, 200 yards  
4 maybe max before we got to the train. Everything was kind of  
5 smoked up and dark. At first walking down through there we could  
6 see a light. We couldn't tell if it was a train, or I couldn't  
7 tell if it was a train. I was in the front of the other guys.  
8 And once we pretty much were right up on it I think before we  
9 realized it was the actual train. And --

10 Q. Is that because of the smoke there?

11 A. Because of the smoke. I mean, all of us had flashlights  
12 and everything else, but I mean there was a pretty good amount of  
13 smoke in there.

14 So we got to the train, looked in the first car, saw the  
15 car was packed full of people. I used a barrel key to open the  
16 doors to the train. I climbed inside of the train I think and --

17 Q. Doors?

18 A. The doors, the side doors.

19 Q. Side doors.

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. More than one door?

22 A. I can't -- I think -- I can't remember if both of them  
23 opened or not. I know when I used the barrel key to open the  
24 doors the one door -- I think they both opened.

25 Q. Doors meaning both panels of one door?

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Not multiple door --

3 A. No, sir.

4 Q. -- locations.

5 A. No, sir.

6 Q. What --

7 A. The first door at the end of the car was --

8 Q. That you came to?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Thank you.

11 A. And not the end door on the end of the car but the  
12 passenger door.

13 Q. The side door.

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 MR. ROURKE: On the right-hand side at the catwalk.

16 MR. WOODS: Yes, sir.

17 MR. ROURKE: Okay.

18 BY MR. DOWNS:

19 Q. Thank you.

20 A. So used the barrel key. I used the barrel key to open  
21 the doors, crawled into the train. Immediately as soon as I got  
22 in the car right inside the door there was a lady standing there  
23 with her two sons advising me that one of them had asthma and was  
24 in distress. I asked if they had an inhaler. They said no.

25 Obviously we had no medical equipment because we were

1 going down for a report of a fire in a tunnel and the station, so  
2 we weren't carrying any of our first aid equipment.

3 I kind of -- when I crawled onto the train and was  
4 talking to her I had people screaming there was people injured in  
5 the back of that first car. So I kind of told her to talk to my  
6 lieutenant and the other guys here, I think Dave Williams, or  
7 Firefighter Williams was the one right behind me. Last I remember  
8 I think he was talking to them.

9 I had passengers -- I started talking to passengers on  
10 the train. I took my mask off. Kind of felt that I would  
11 probably lose quite a bit of credibility when I had a train full  
12 of passengers that were all freaking out telling them they're  
13 going to be okay when I'm on air. So I took my mask off. Advised  
14 the lieutenant I was doing that.

15 I know passengers started asking me right away if the  
16 smoke was bad, and I said yeah. I mean, no smoke is good for you,  
17 so didn't feel that lying to the passengers right away was a good  
18 move.

19 Got quite a few of the people calmed down at first.  
20 Then I was notified that on the first train or on the first car  
21 there was a passenger having seizures. Started back towards the  
22 end of the first car. The men --

23 Q. Toward the front of the train?

24 A. Yes, sir. So the passenger was laying on the left side  
25 of the car. There was a younger African-American gentleman

1 helping him and told me he was having seizures. At the same time  
2 that I'm trying to evaluate this patient I had another passenger  
3 grabbing my shoulder telling me we had a pregnant lady who was a  
4 couple of weeks away from delivering who was in distress. And  
5 then I had another guy at the same time telling me there's another  
6 gentleman having chest pain.

7           So right away, you know, it was just Squad 1 down there  
8 so we didn't have a lot of resources or medical equipment there.

9           Q. And this was in the last car of the train?

10          A. This was in the first train, the first car.

11          Q. The first car that you came to?

12          A. Yes, sir.

13          Q. Okay.

14          A. The car closet to the station.

15          Q. So you had these multiple folks approaching you and  
16 informing you --

17          A. Yeah. It seemed like --

18          Q. -- you've got --

19          A. -- half the train was in some -- and legit, not, you  
20 know, we all run calls where people are panicking or whatever. It  
21 was people legit felt that they were in distress. I mean, the guy  
22 was having chest pains. I could look at him and tell that he was  
23 sweating pretty profusely, looked kind of pale.

24                 You know, the lady was a couple of weeks away from  
25 having a baby. So I mean, I was concerned about that. She was

1 having pain and distress.

2 Had the guy having seizures, so I think at that time I  
3 can't remember if Dave Williams is still on the train with me or  
4 not or if he had gotten back off, but I kind of started pairing  
5 passengers up with people who were sick. I would try to find one  
6 of the other passengers and ask them if they're doing okay. If  
7 they said yeah, we'd kind of say, listen, watch out for this guy.  
8 Come find me if things change with him because it was, again,  
9 limited resources.

10 I've got to say, throughout the whole incident I was  
11 extremely surprised with the amount of help that other passengers  
12 were willing to help and give.

13 So I kind of assigned -- the guy who was having chest  
14 pains, I mean, again, we had nobody down there at that time except  
15 for us. I was trying to evaluate and triage what we had. The guy  
16 with the seizure, the young man that was helping him -- not young,  
17 maybe early 30s, I just said, listen, stay with him. Let me know  
18 if something changes. Don't have any medical equipment.

19 I tried making it into the second car, and as soon as I  
20 got into the second car it was the same thing. I mean, it was  
21 just I had another pregnant female in there, a couple of asthmatic  
22 adults, another guy having chest pains. I was trying to call the  
23 lieutenant on my radio. Could not get out.

24 Q. Out meaning topside?

25 A. I couldn't get to him, which was at the other end of

1 that car.

2 Q. So he's at the other end of the car.

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. And that's kind of a line of sight?

5 A. Pretty much. I was a car away at the time.

6 Q. And the radio didn't function?

7 A. It was honking out.

8 Q. Honking out. Okay.

9 MR. ROURKE: So you were on the tactical channel?

10 MR. WOODS: Yes, sir.

11 BY MR. DOWNS:

12 Q. Please continue.

13 A. At some point, I mean, it was probably less than a  
14 couple of minutes, probably seemed like forever at the time, I  
15 started using passenger on the trains as runners. I got I think  
16 two guys that were running between me and my lieutenant trying to  
17 pass information back and forth just because I didn't have radio  
18 communications with him.

19 And just continued to try to triage what patients we  
20 had. I don't remember the amount of time that we were on the  
21 train or that I was on there before I encountered a probably mid-  
22 30s black female transit officer who was on the train I think when  
23 everything went down.

24 I could see that she was in distress. I was trying to  
25 get her towards the back of the car so we could get her off. She

1 refused to leave, made a comment to me that she was staying until  
2 her passengers were off.

3 She was -- would not leave at any point. I think at one  
4 point I remember she was really in distress breathing kind of  
5 crouched over one of the benches and I tried giving her my mask  
6 and she wouldn't even take it. But I ended up getting her to help  
7 with the guy that was having seizures and at one point somebody  
8 came and got me that the guy was getting worse having seizures.  
9 He was spitting up.

10 So when I went back to kind of give her and the other  
11 gentleman that was helping him a hand, that's when I heard a  
12 passenger screaming and two passengers drug up I guess Ms. Glover.  
13 And I tried --

14 Q. Two passengers dragged up --

15 A. Two civilians drug her.

16 Q. From?

17 A. At this time I had made it back from the front car  
18 because somebody had come and gotten me -- to get me.

19 Q. Meaning the last car of the train?

20 A. The last car closest to the end.

21 Q. And at that point some passengers had brought up  
22 Ms. Glover?

23 A. Two males.

24 Q. To the car that you were in?

25 A. Yes, sir. And dropped her kind of --

1 Q. They were --

2 A. They were screaming at me that --

3 Q. They were carrying her or?

4 A. They were pretty much carry/dragging her.

5 Q. And they came from the front of the train someplace?

6 A. They came from the front of the train, that train that  
7 was headed towards Virginia.

8 Q. Right. And you don't know which car they were in?

9 Q. No, sir.

10 Q. They just came from the car that was --

11 A. I was in the second car closest to the station, not the  
12 first car when I got in.

13 Q. Right.

14 A. And someone came to get me to say that the guy having  
15 seizures was getting worse, so I started making my way back  
16 towards him. And when I got to him I remember the Metro transit  
17 officer was there and she's like I've got to stick something in  
18 his mouth. And I'm like don't stick anything in his mouth, just  
19 -- he had started to spit up a little bit. So we rolled him on  
20 his side to try to clear out his airway.

21 During that process I think the guy having chest pains  
22 was still sitting there also in distress. And so when I heard the  
23 passengers not screaming but making a commotion and they drug her  
24 up behind me and kind of dropped her right behind me. And they're  
25 like, she's in cardiac arrest. I mean, I kind of made the



1 decision at that point the door was for me to 20 feet away to  
2 where the lieutenant was and we had to get her out of there  
3 because there was really nothing we could do. We had no AED. We  
4 had no oxygen. They said they'd been doing CPR on her, so myself  
5 and those two guys immediately took her to the lieutenant at  
6 Rescue 1, Lieutenant Kuhn, who was at the door and passer her to  
7 them.

8 Q. At the door that was open --

9 A. At the door that we opened.

10 Q. -- at the catwalk?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Okay. And you passed that patient out through that  
13 door?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. What happened to that passenger -- patient after that ?

16 A. I have no idea. I went back into the train because I  
17 still had cars full of passengers, so --

18 Q. So you went right back to what you were doing?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. And you let the firefighters handle the patient at that  
21 point?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Very good. Please continue.

24 A. I remember telling him we, you know, the guy having  
25 seizures was getting worse. We had a couple other patients. The

1 guy having seizures obviously wasn't mobile or ambulatory so at  
2 some point I remember the rear door, which is on the front of the  
3 car, not the passenger door --

4 Q. The rear bulkhead door?

5 MR. ROURKE: The bulkhead. Um-hmm.

6 MR. WOODS: Yes. Someone had opened that and I remember  
7 looking out and I saw Chief Welsh and a couple other firefighters  
8 out there and I told them we needed to scatter an E-tech or  
9 something to get this guy out of there.

10 So they immediately went to start working on getting  
11 stuff secured to get the patient having seizures out. Again, I  
12 left -- I was trying to make it -- I don't think I ever made it  
13 past the second train almost until the passengers were off because  
14 I kept encountering other people who were in respiratory distress  
15 or having legitimate asthma attacks and, you know, the triage  
16 thing when there's five of us, or there were four of us originally  
17 until our driver got down here, was just a lot of people for five  
18 guys to really work through.

19 Q. And how crowded was the train when you first --

20 A. The first car was pretty packed. The second car I got  
21 in was pretty packed. When we started moving people out I mean it  
22 was just --

23 Q. It thinned out?

24 A. Well, it thinned out. It just seemed like people were  
25 just -- kept coming and coming and coming. Except for I had two

1 gentlemen who you could tell weren't really in distress. They  
2 were just trying to get off the train and faking the whole -- they  
3 were kind of knocking people over a little bit and I kind of got  
4 control of them for a second to calm them down. And so much I  
5 wanted scream at them I just kind of said, you know, getting them  
6 off the train is the easiest thing so I don't have to worry about  
7 them after that.

8           But almost -- except for those two almost every other  
9 passenger on those trains if I asked them to help their neighbor  
10 or, you know, complete strangers, they were -- everybody was  
11 chipping in and trying to help.

12       Q.    So it was a relatively calm environment when you  
13 arrived?

14       A.    No.

15       Q.    So it was not a calm environment?

16       A.    When we opened those doors, the smoke was just as thick  
17 inside those cars as it was --

18       Q.    Were the passengers, though, calm?

19       A.    No.

20       Q.    They were kind of panicky or --

21       A.    I would be, too, if I was stuck in a tunnel in a train  
22 that was full of smoke.

23       Q.    Well, were you able to calm them down --

24       A.    Yes, sir.

25       Q.    -- enough? That's my --

1           A.    Enough or a lot more than when we first got there.  
2    Again, that's why I took my mask off. I felt that with that many  
3    people I was going to start losing credibility telling them they  
4    were going to be okay when I'm breathing air and they're breathing  
5    the stuff that's in there.

6           Q.    All right. Okay. So you continued to offload from your  
7    car that you were in?

8           A.    Offload and try to triage.

9           Q.    And you passed off the passengers off to the other  
10   firefighters who were on the platform at --

11          A.    The majority of the --

12          Q.    -- the catwalk?

13          A.    -- passengers we got to that passenger door that we  
14   originally opened with the barrel key. Lieutenant Kuhn was  
15   stationed at that point and we would get passengers to that door  
16   and, you know, I think I may have took three or four. The rest of  
17   them I would have other passengers kind of assist the ones in  
18   distress to that door so that I could keep trying to move forward  
19   and triage what we had.

20          Q.    Work your way forward.

21          A.    Yeah.

22          Q.    Okay. Very good. And you evacuated everybody from the  
23   car you were in, the last car of the train.

24          A.    Yes, sir.

25          Q.    What did you do then?

1           A.    After we got the majority of the people off, finally I  
2 think it seemed like forever, made it into the third car from the  
3 station.

4           Q.    So you basically worked your way forward?

5           A.    I was -- I kept trying to work my way forward and it  
6 just seemed like even doing a quick triage I just kept running  
7 into somebody having chest pains or somebody, you know -- I had  
8 the two pregnant females or people having asthma attacks and it  
9 was just kind of a sea of people that were --

10          Q.    Did you open any of the side doors in the other railcars  
11 as you --

12          A.    No, sir.

13          Q.    -- worked your way forward?

14          A.    No, sir, I did not.

15          Q.    Did you happen to notice were any of the doors opened?

16          A.    I did.  Once we felt we had all the passengers off the  
17 train or the last couple were left, Firefighter Carmody, who was  
18 driving Rescue Squad 1 that day got on the train with me.  He and  
19 I started to do our primary search of all cars to make sure all of  
20 the civilians were off or everyone was off.

21                   I think we got to -- when I say third or fourth car I'm  
22 talking third or fourth car from the station, closest to the  
23 front --

24          Q.    Right.

25          A.    -- that was moving forward.  I think we got to the third

1 or fourth car and I remember seeing the doors opened on the left  
2 side of the train. So it was opposite the catwalk.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. We did not open those doors.

5 Q. Somebody else had opened them.

6 A. It looked like that above the doors the handle or the  
7 emergency thing had been pulled and people had bailed off there.

8 Q. Self-evacuated?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. So as we did our primary search and we got the front of  
12 the train, I stayed at the front of the train on the catwalk.  
13 Firefighter Carmody got off the train and proceeded a couple  
14 hundred yards down the tunnel, checking the tunnel to make sure we  
15 had no passengers in there. I kind of stayed back towards as a  
16 reference for him.

17 He came back. We did our secondary sweep of the train  
18 and then a couple other members of Squad 1 got on and also  
19 completed another secondary search to make sure we had no  
20 passengers left.

21 Q. So you then worked your way back to the end of -- to the  
22 back end of the train and then did you go back to the station  
23 platform at that point?

24 A. No. We stayed on a couple of minutes. I remember the  
25 female officer from Metro Transit was still on there and as some

1 point while we were doing the primary and secondary search of the  
2 train, after the passengers were off, a sergeant got on there from  
3 Metro Transit and I finally told him, I'm like, she needs off.  
4 You need to get her out of here. She needs to get evaluated.

5 I mean and I told him I said just, you know, she was  
6 standout for what she did. I mean, she looked like she was  
7 definitely in distress from all the smoke and everything and there  
8 was a couple points I was worried about her, but she refused to  
9 get off the train.

10 Q. She wanted to make sure her passengers were taken care  
11 of.

12 A. She even told me at one point, I'm not getting off until  
13 all of my passengers are off.

14 Q. And you stayed on the train for a while after that or --

15 A. I was on the train -- well, no. I mean, after all the  
16 passengers were off we did the primary search then the secondary  
17 search and like I said, we went -- searched the head of the train  
18 and in the tunnel a little ways and I mean, we weren't down there  
19 too much longer.

20 Q. And then you got relief or something or?

21 A. Went back to the platform. I think we got on the  
22 platform and started doing accountability and everything. We  
23 stayed there for a few minutes and they released us to go up top.

24 Q. Okay. Very good. That concludes my questions for the  
25 moment. I'll pass on to the next questioner.

1 BY MR. ROURKE:

2 Q. Denton Rourke from Metro. I just want to ask you a  
3 couple of general questions about Metro training --

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. -- from your point of view. Can you tell me what Metro  
6 training you've participated in either with Metro or with the Fire  
7 Department?

8 A. With Metro, I mean, I've got close to 15 years on the  
9 job. I think I went twice out to you all's facility in Maryland  
10 and did some training out there. With the Fire Department, I  
11 mean, it's just in the academy I can't really remember. I mean,  
12 some. I can't remember how much. It's been several years ago  
13 now.

14 At the company level I remember prior to going to Rescue  
15 Squad 1 when I was at 11 Engine, you know, we had officers there  
16 who was big on drilling, and we would hit Metro from time to time.  
17 But I mean, that was a company we were doing 20, 24 runs in 24  
18 hours, so drilling was what we could make of it when we had time.

19 Since I've been at Rescue Squad 1, I mean, we've done  
20 several in-house drills going through SOGs for Metro or jut in-  
21 house drills or going into tunnels looking at things since I've  
22 been assigned there.

23 And since I've been at Rescue Squad 1 for almost 6 years  
24 we -- I mean, we've had numerous calls in Metro. I mean, we seem  
25 to get them pretty frequently. Not -- a lot of jumpers, but I



1 mean we've had some other incidents at Union Station and stuff  
2 that I've been on with Metro.

3 Q. All right. Thanks. How about I know you said the  
4 Carmen Turner a couple of times. Have you ever participated in a  
5 full-scale drill or exercise maybe like in the middle of the  
6 night, Sunday morning kind of deal?

7 A. No. I've never been on shift when those have happened.

8 Q. All right. When you guys -- you talked about your  
9 radio. You were on the tactical channel and your radio was  
10 honking out?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. All right.

13 A. We were -- I was in that station Friday night before the  
14 incident. We had a report of a person underneath a train. I was  
15 on the platform on that call. We never went into the tunnel. On  
16 the platform my officer was three cars away from me and I was  
17 trying to call him because I was searching underneath the train to  
18 see if we had anybody, and I could not see -- talk to him line of  
19 sight.

20 Q. How long -- I'm going to interrupt you here.

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. How long have you noticed the issues with these radios?

23 A. This was the first time with the new radios.

24 Q. The new radio, digital radio.

25 A. The digital radios that I've -- I had a problem, and

1 again, we were there the Friday night -- this incident that we're  
2 talking about happened on Monday. I was working my shift Friday  
3 night and we had a report of a person under the train in the same  
4 station, the exact same spot. And I was standing on the platform  
5 looking at my officer three cars away and I could not talk line of  
6 sight to him.

7 Q. So you had -- you've had at least one prior event where  
8 you had trouble with the radios --

9 A. Three days before.

10 Q. -- down in the Metro system?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 BY MR. DOWNS:

13 Q. Before you got the digital radios you had the analog  
14 radios.

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Did you have similar issues with communication in the  
17 tunnels that you're familiar with?

18 A. Not that I'm familiar with. I mean, we've always had  
19 issues here and there, spotty issues, not just with Metro but with  
20 radios in general. But I never remember anything being like --

21 Q. As bad?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. It's a problem --

25 Q. I don't -- I don't want to put words in your mouth, but

1 that might be a good way --

2 A. Right. No.

3 Q. -- to discuss it.

4 A. It's definitely an issue if I'm standing there looking  
5 at my officer three cars away on a platform and can't make  
6 communication with him, but the day of this incident I'm on the  
7 train and he's at the -- I'm at one end of the car, he's at the  
8 other end of the car, not the train, and can't communicate with  
9 him.

10 Q. Very good. Thank you.

11 BY MR. ROURKE:

12 Q. Did -- in the heat of the moment when you were  
13 responding on the 12th did you remember that? Did you bring it up  
14 at all?

15 A. No. To the -- about the radios?

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. No, sir. No, because we had heard the call -- I think  
18 the initial call went out for something at Southwest Waterfront.  
19 We were doing a drill in the firehouse and we heard a local  
20 assignment go out for smoke coming from a vent shaft.

21 And then us being next door to Metro we saw the Metro  
22 Transit cops. I remember seeing a bunch of them flying by the  
23 firehouse. And it seemed like, I mean, it was several minutes, 5,  
24 10 minutes maybe before we were dispatched on the box that we  
25 responded on.

1 Q. So would you say that your antenna were up at that  
2 point?

3 A. I mean, we heard it. I think -- I think I even made a  
4 comment, you know, it's probably smoke coming from a vent or  
5 something like that or steam coming from a vent when they put out  
6 the one at the Southwest Waterfront.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. And then, you know, we saw all the Transit cops go by.  
9 I mean, we noticed but, you know, as soon as the box came out we  
10 hopped on the truck and left.

11 Q. Yeah. You probably see that a lot right there anyway.  
12 When you guys got down to the platform, or before I go there, can  
13 you just briefly describe for us the process of managing third  
14 rail power and taking it up -- taking it down in an emergency,  
15 that sort of thing? How do you all do that when you do that?

16 A. We do the blue light stations.

17 Q. Um-hmm.

18 A. Again, being assigned to the Rescue Squad we tend to be  
19 the ones when we have people under the trains or whatever that are  
20 down there. I know on our shift our policy is we manually make  
21 sure our guys are hitting the blue light stations since we're the  
22 ones getting in the track bed.

23 On that day I don't think it's any different. I mean,  
24 it's a lot of times hard for us to get clarification if power is  
25 up or down even from Metro when we're there.

1 Q. And let's say if you do -- let's say somebody from Metro  
2 says it's down.

3 A. We wait until our Chiefs tell us, give us a green light.  
4 This day was probably the one exception for that.

5 Q. And did you all -- do you do any testing or anything  
6 before you go down?

7 A. We do have WSADs, the hotsticks. Every other run except  
8 for this one, yes, we do. We hit -- we make sure the WSADs are in  
9 place, use the hotsticks. This day hit the blue light stations  
10 and we kept hearing all the commotion. We've got people trapped  
11 on the train and, you know, they're screaming. They're dying or  
12 they're in distress and it's kind of --

13 MR. DOWNS: That became your priority?

14 MR. WOODS: Yes, sir.

15 BY MR. ROURKE:

16 Q. Sure. Did -- so just let me ask you. Did anybody, when  
17 you all left the platform, anybody from your company or from Metro  
18 that might have been with you, anybody hotstick? Do you recall?

19 A. I don't recall.

20 Q. And did you -- well, when you were at the platform with  
21 the Metro employees were you talking to them or were you listening  
22 to the lieutenant and them talk about it?

23 A. I was talking to them as well. The lieutenant was  
24 trying to get out on his radio and couldn't get out. It seemed  
25 like he was fighting to try to talk to people up top and let them

1 know what we had. So I was communicating some with the two Metro  
2 Transit officers that were at the platform closest to the tunnel  
3 where we were going in.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. Because I remember when we were putting our mask on it  
6 looked like they were getting ready to go with us. And I remember  
7 asking those two guys, I'm like, you're going with us are you?  
8 And they're like no. So I was a little concerned that if these  
9 guys started down the tunnel then we were going to be dragging  
10 them out --

11 Q. Um-hmm.

12 A. -- which was kind of going to defeat the purpose of us  
13 going down --

14 Q. Right.

15 A. -- to the train in the first place.

16 Q. Did --

17 A. I remember one was on his cell phone and the other was I  
18 think talking on his radio.

19 Q. Um-hmm. And so when you talked to them can you just  
20 describe for us how -- what they described as where the train was?

21 A. They just said, we have a train in the tunnel. All I  
22 remember is them saying, we have a train in the tunnel. And I  
23 think they said, people are dying down there. People are choking.  
24 They can't breathe. They were -- seemed excited about what was  
25 going on with -- I mean, you've got a train in the tunnel packed

1 full of people it's understandable that they're a little worried.

2 Q. Um-hmm. Absolutely. That's all I've got right now.

3 MR. DOWNS: Thanks.

4 BY MS. BURTCH:

5 Q. Kim Burtch. You mentioned that you didn't have your  
6 first aid equipment with you. You didn't carry it down to the  
7 scene.

8 A. No, ma'am.

9 Q. Do you typically leave it? Was it left in the vehicle?

10 A. Yes, ma'am.

11 Q. Okay. Because your --

12 A. We were responding for a fire. We weren't responding  
13 for a medical run.

14 Q. And you had your hands full would that be --

15 A. We have our equipment. We had -- going on a Metro,  
16 whether it's a fire, a person under the train kind of dictates  
17 what we take down. Certain things we always take down is our  
18 WSAD, our Metro bag. I mean, we each had halogen bars. We were  
19 going down for a report of smoke in the tunnel, so we're not going  
20 to be carrying a bunch of aid equipment that we're not intending  
21 to use because that's not our job.

22 Q. Okay. You were the only Rescue Squad dispatched?

23 A. Originally. I remember at some point towards the end of  
24 the incident I do remember seeing Rescue 3 there.

25 Q. Rescue 3?

1 A. But on the initial box alarm it was just Rescue 1.

2 Q. Did Rescue 3 make it down to the tunnels to help?

3 A. I saw them in the tunnel when we were --

4 Q. You did see them.

5 A. -- getting ready to leave.

6 Q. Oh, okay.

7 A. So I'm not -- I'm not even going to say what I think  
8 they did. I'm not sure.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. But I know that I did see them in the tunnel when I got  
11 out of the train.

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

13 BY MR. HAWKINS:

14 Q. Okay. Derron Hawkins, D.C. Fire and EMS. I have a  
15 question of Firefighter Woods. Sir, regarding your training,  
16 Metro experience, you've got the training and inspections you've  
17 participated in, and any after reviews that you've done on those,  
18 do you feel that you have the knowledge and skills to respond to a  
19 Metro accident?

20 A. I do think I have the knowledge and skills and also the  
21 experience. I still think that there's a lot -- I mean, we, not  
22 just the Rescue Squad but all the Fire Department in general we  
23 have a lot of information we need to know, and Metro is a very  
24 complex system within itself.

25 Do I feel that I could learn more? Absolutely, but I



1 think everybody can. There's a lot of -- a lot of things down  
2 there that can create problems and issues.

3 Q. That's all I have.

4 MR. TEBO: I have no questions.

5 BY MR. JOE GORDON:

6 Q. Joe Gordon, NTSB. You were the first firefighter  
7 actually on the -- on the cars --

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. -- on those trains? Was the -- were the lights on in  
10 the cars --

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. -- the entire time?

13 A. It seemed very dim.

14 Q. Probably smoke?

15 A. Smoke. Yeah, I mean, the smoke was thick.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I mean, I'm not -- it was almost as thick in there as it  
18 was in the tunnel.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. You know, I'm looking at ladies who have white scarfs  
21 over their mouths and you can see the black outline around where  
22 their mouth and nose is. Or people have soot outside of their  
23 nose and around their mouth. I mean, it was -- it was just as  
24 thick in the car as it was in the tunnel.

25 Q. Okay. You're making your way through the cars trying to

1 do an initial triage trying to assess the condition of the  
2 passengers. At this point were they -- the firefighter that was  
3 staged back at the door that you guys came into, were already  
4 evacuating passengers there?

5 A. I don't remember. At one point I remember when I first  
6 got on the train we were still trying to confirm that power was  
7 down. We didn't want to start moving -- and I told the  
8 passengers. I said, look, before we can start moving people, for  
9 your safety we need to ensure there's no power up. And I  
10 explained everything. I mean, obviously as soon as we opened the  
11 doors people wanted off.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. And but nobody was running off because it's starting to  
14 get smoky. They had no idea what to do. So after we kind of got  
15 them calmed down a little bit I just said, listen, you need to  
16 stick with us until we confirm that power is down for your safety  
17 before we start moving you out.

18 So again, I lost contact with -- I was on the train  
19 closest to him but I kind of lost contact with my lieutenant --

20 Q. Right.

21 A. -- immediately because I'm getting bombarded with people  
22 in distress on the train. And I had -- my only communication,  
23 again, probably in the first 2 or 3 minutes is when I started  
24 using passengers as runners to go between he and I.

25 Q. Okay. How long in your -- and, you know, understanding

1 that time is really hard to -- really hard to keep track of that,  
2 but how long would you say before you started the evacuation  
3 process after you boarded the train?

4 A. I don't know. I would say definitely less than 5  
5 minutes.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Because I remember when things started to move I stood  
8 up at one point. I was talking with a person in distress. I  
9 remember standing up and kind of saying, listen, we need to get  
10 the people in distress off of here first.

11 And again, I was not surprised, but it was -- it was  
12 good to see that the other passengers were listening to what we  
13 were asking them to do and trying to help out complete strangers  
14 that they didn't know. I mean, it's I'd be a little nervous, too,  
15 if I'm a civilian down there stuck down in a train full of smoke.

16 So yeah, I saw a lot of good come out of that day with  
17 other passengers just helping complete strangers.

18 Q. How about conversation? Did the Metro train operator,  
19 did he identify himself when you boarded?

20 A. He wasn't in the train when I -- when I first got in the  
21 first car that I entered he was not in there. I remember I was on  
22 a couple of minutes or I don't remember how much time I was on  
23 there. I remember he came through at one point telling people  
24 keep the other doors closed. Stay calm.

25 So I do remember him coming through. He was very

1 professional and was right there and, you know, that was -- the  
2 only two Metro employees I encountered on the train were he and  
3 the female police officer, and both of them were nothing less than  
4 extremely professional.

5 Q. Okay. And you don't remember any conversation with the  
6 operator regarding a possible move back to the station to --

7 A. No.

8 Q. He never mentioned any --

9 A. No.

10 Q. -- plan for that? Okay. I have no further questions.

11 BY MR. DOWNS:

12 Q. Thank you. You touched a little bit, Firefighter Woods,  
13 on your personal work history. You're been there roughly 15  
14 years, not quite you said?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. And a firefighter the entire time?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. And you've gone through all the normal progress of  
19 training for your probationary period up to now?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. In other words you haven't -- don't have any missing  
22 blocks of training that you need to catch up on that you --

23 A. Missing blocks?

24 Q. -- that you know of?

25 A. No, sir.

1 Q. Okay. And part of the training I think we touched upon  
2 it before that included some Metrorail familiarization. Did you  
3 say you went down to the Carmen Turner facility at one time?

4 A. I know I've been down there at least twice over the  
5 years, maybe a little more for different drills. The last time I  
6 was there was probably less than a year ago and we went out there.  
7 The Rescue Squads went out to do elevator and escalator training.

8 Q. Not railcar?

9 A. The last one was elevator and escalator. Railcar it's  
10 probably been a few years since I've been out there.

11 Q. Several years? Okay. I'm going kind of query you here  
12 now on your knowledge of the emergency access doors, okay?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. Tell me about what's your understanding of the emergency  
15 access doors? You're on the outside of the railcar. You need to  
16 get in. How would you go about doing that?

17 A. The other day I used the barrel key.

18 Q. And what happened the other day. What's your  
19 understanding from your training that you go through to access a  
20 railcar? In other words, is the barrel key the only way to get  
21 in?

22 A. No. There's other ways.

23 Q. That's what I want to -- I want you to tell me about  
24 that.

25 A. I can't -- to be honest with you right now I cannot

1 remember every way. Again, Metro is something that is very  
2 complex and it's one of a million things that we're expected to  
3 know in our job. So is it stuff that we would have learned in the  
4 past? Absolutely.

5 But I know that there are emergency handles inside the  
6 car that you can use to access to -- if you're in the car that  
7 each of the guys on the Rescue Squad when we have a Metro incident  
8 are assigned a ring of keys that -- keys for all the Metro. And I  
9 used the barrel key on my key ring to open the door.

10 Q. And that would be your standard process --

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. -- that you would engage? On the side of the railcar  
13 you have three doors, one on each side of the car and then a  
14 middle door, right?

15 A. Right.

16 Q. Were you aware that the middle door is the access door?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And were you aware that there is a barrel key lock for  
19 that?

20 A. For the middle door?

21 Q. For the middle doors.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Much similar to the other end doors.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Were you aware that the middle door has a door release

1 handle?

2 A. On the outside?

3 Q. On the outside.

4 A. Yes, sir. I do know that. Again, heat of the moment  
5 the door that we came to was the first one, and that's what we  
6 used.

7 Q. Very good. Okay. Did you take any notes of the event,  
8 fill out a report or anything like that?

9 A. I did have to fill out a report with the Fire  
10 Investigation Unit following the incident that night. FIU as well  
11 as a Metropolitan Police detective came to the firehouse to  
12 interview us. And then we were asked to fill out a summary of  
13 what happened due to the fatality on the train.

14 Q. And basically what you described today is what you put  
15 in that report?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. Nothing --

18 A. Well, not as lengthy. I had about this much room on a  
19 piece of paper to fill it in, so --

20 Q. Okay. All right. Well, it looks we're pretty much  
21 winding up on our questions. I always like to give my witnesses  
22 the opportunity to express what we call retrospective thoughts.  
23 Meaning knowing what you know now, not that you did anything  
24 wrong, the idea is that you always learn about new things you  
25 could engage in an event that you might want to think about to use

1 for a future event.

2 So is there anything that you might engage in the future  
3 differently or do differently in a future similar event that might  
4 be helpful to the professional firefighting community? You did a  
5 hot wash. I believe one of the other firefighters indicated in  
6 his witness testimony, did a hot wash of the event shortly after  
7 you got back to the firehouse, kind of a brainstorming session?

8 A. Right

9 Q. That's the kind of thoughts maybe if you kind of share  
10 any of those thoughts with us?

11 A. Yeah. You know, I'm not sure. It's looking back on it  
12 I think you can Monday morning quarterback anything. I think that  
13 our reaction of going into the tunnel when we did probably helped  
14 the situation. We had no idea, again, on the initial dispatch  
15 that we had a train in the tunnel what was full of people.

16 I mean looking back on it I don't know that I would have  
17 done things any differently than we did that day.

18 Q. Maybe add a few things to your Metro bag, a few tools or  
19 whatever, a man mover or something like that?

20 A. Yes. I mean, some things have been done. I have  
21 actually been off the past couple of tours since the incident  
22 happened, and I know when I came back to work today that, you  
23 know, there's been some modifications. Some of our Skeds and some  
24 other devices that we've added down there, but again, the Rescue  
25 Squad's got 30 tons of tools on that thing and there's five of



1 us --

2 Q. Lots of stuff to --

3 A. -- and initially four.

4 Q. -- keep track of.

5 A. And not knowing -- we didn't know what we had down  
6 there. So if we had known we had a train in the tunnel with  
7 people packed in it, we would have probably grabbed some Skeds and  
8 stuff when we went down. But we had no idea. You know, if we  
9 respond to a Metro incident for a person under the train, we  
10 automatically take a Sked. We take a rope bag. We take some  
11 other things because we know we're going to be trying to move that  
12 person out. But you can only go off of what information you have  
13 and carry so much stuff.

14 Q. Very good. Anybody else have any further questions?

15 MR. ROURKE: I don't.

16 MR. DOWNS: Further questions?

17 MS. BURKE: I don't.

18 MR. TEBO: None from me.

19 MR. DOWNS: Very well, Firefighter Woods, that concludes  
20 our interview. Thank you.

21 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-FR-004

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

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

February 17, 2015

To: DFC Hawkins  
DC Fire and EMS Special Operations

From: Jason Woods  
DC Fire and EMS RS1 #3

Concerning: L'Enfant Plaza Metro Fire NTSB Interview

Chief Hawkins,

I concur that the transcript is correct and that the information is accurate.

  


Jason Woods  
2/17/15