

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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CSX COLLISION

* Docket No. DCA-11-FR-004

MINERAL SPRINGS, NORTH CAROLINA

*

MAY 24, 2011

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Interview of: HORACE GARLINGTON

Monroe, North Carolina

May 2011

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: WAYNE WORKMAN
Investigator-in-Charge

APPEARANCES:

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1 I N T E R V I E W

2 MR. WORKMAN: Hello, my name is Wayne Workman. I'm the
3 investigator-in-charge for the National Transportation Safety
4 Board. The Board is here in Monroe, investigating the accident of
5 Train Q194 and its collision with CSX Train Q618.

6 I'd like to introduce, around the table, Mr. Steve
7 Jenner with the National Transportation Safety Board; Mr. Joe
8 Corcoran with the National Transportation Safety Board.

9 MR. CORCORAN: No. No.

10 MR. WORKMAN: I mean with the Federal -- FRA.

11 MR. JENNER: Bob Beaton.

12 MR. WORKMAN: Yeah.

13 MR. BEATON: Oh, Bob Beaton, National Safety
14 Transportation Board.

15 MR. WORKMAN: Bill Herndon --

16 MR. HERNDON: No, Jim.

17 MR. WORKMAN: Jim Herndon -- we're getting to know one
18 another -- of the UTU; and Bill Setser of the CSX transportation.

19 At this time, I'd like you to give us your name and
20 spell that for us.

21 MR. GARLINGTON: My name is Horace Garlington, H-O-R-A-
22 C-E, G-A-R-L-I-N-G-T-O-N.

23 INTERVIEW OF HORACE GARLINGTON

24 BY MR. WORKMAN:

25 Q. Mr. Garlington, what was your position the night of the

1 accident?

2 A. Engineer on Q61623.

3 Q. And what time did you go on duty and where?

4 A. Went on duty at 21:15 at Greenwood, South Carolina.

5 Q. At Greenwood, South Carolina. And what did your train
6 consist of?

7 A. I had a 114 cars and 2 CSX engines.

8 Q. Okay. Because we're concerned with the accident at
9 location, to the best of your memory, could you begin with the
10 south end of Waxhaw and tell us what kind of signal you got there,
11 and in your own words, tell us the signal indications that you
12 received as you approached Monroe?

13 A. I approached Monroe -- or, I approached the south end of
14 Waxhaw on a clear signal. There was a hill right there, so I run
15 about 10 mile an hour up the hill there. When I got to the north
16 end of Waxhaw, I run about 25 miles an hour. When I started down
17 the hill there, on the north end of Waxhaw, the speed got up to
18 about 35 miles an hour. The next signal right there was Mineral
19 Springs; it was clear. The next signal right there was at
20 Houston; it was clear.

21 When I got to the 308, I had a clear signal. When I
22 got to the south end of Monroe, I had approach signal. Then I
23 heard the dispatcher gave a -- I think it was Q697, a head block
24 from the south end of Marshville to a -- he was coming to Rich
25 Creek. So I knew I was going to leave Monroe, so I went down to

1 the next -- north end of Monroe. I stopped there on approach
2 signal. Then when -- I started waiting on that train there to get
3 in the clear, I heard a dispatcher calling 194. And he called him
4 about -- I don't know, about five or six times. But then he
5 started calling 618. So he didn't have no -- he didn't have no
6 luck calling them. Then he called me back and gave me a head
7 block from Rich Creek northbound. So I left. Next thing that
8 occurred is I got a clear signal.

9 Q. Okay. You gave us the name of several signals in there
10 that you know very intimately because of your experience on this
11 road, so let me back up a second. At the south end of Waxhaw,
12 which is an absolute signal --

13 A. That's correct.

14 Q. -- you had a clear signal.

15 A. That's right.

16 Q. At then at the north end of Waxhaw, also an absolute
17 signal --

18 A. (indiscernible).

19 Q. -- you had a clear signal. And then there's another
20 signal --

21 A. 316.

22 Q. -- 316-2, what did you refer to that as? Was there a
23 name to that signal?

24 A. No real -- no name, just --

25 Q. Okay. And --

1 A. We just say the name -- we just call it 316.

2 Q. Okay. And then the next signal was 314?

3 A. That's right, Mineral Spring.

4 Q. And that's called what?

5 A. We call that Mineral Spring.

6 Q. Miller Springs.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mineral.

8 BY MR. WORKMAN:

9 Q. Mineral Springs, okay. And that's also an intermediate.
10 And then after 314, what's the next signal?

11 A. Houston.

12 Q. Houston. And do you know the milepost number on that
13 one at Houston?

14 A. It might have been around 312.

15 Q. Around 312. All right. And then the signal that's next
16 after Houston?

17 A. The old Monroe holdout. It's 308.

18 Q. 308 is -- you called it the old Monroe holdout. And
19 what kind of aspect did you get on the --

20 A. Clear.

21 Q. Okay, that also got a clear. And then after the old
22 Monroe holdout at 308, what's the next signal?

23 A. South end of Monroe, absolute.

24 Q. South end Monroe, absolute. And do you know the
25 approximate milepost on that one?

1 A. Well, Monroe is 306 so it's about a -- I guess 306.2 --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- 3, somewhere around --

4 Q. Sure, and it's just from memory right now, what we've
5 got. And on that absolute, you got a?

6 A. Approach.

7 Q. You got an approach. And the next signal?

8 A. North end of Monroe.

9 Q. North end of Monroe. Okay.

10 A. Approach.

11 Q. Got an approach. And you stopped at the north end of
12 Monroe?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Do you recall what time you stopped there?

15 A. Well, probably about 3:10.

16 Q. About 3 --

17 A. I want to say 3:10.

18 Q. All right. And how long were you there?

19 A. About a hour.

20 Q. And during that hour, you heard conversations with the
21 dispatcher?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And could you go back and let me know what those were
24 again? What you did and what you overheard while you were stopped
25 at the north end of Monroe?

1 A. I thought I was stopped there about -- I guess about 10
2 minutes. The dispatcher called -- he started calling Q194.

3 Q. And he got no answer?

4 A. No answer. He called them about four or five times.

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. Then he started calling Q618 and he still didn't get no
7 answer.

8 Q. And no answer. So if you stopped about 3:10, this was
9 about 3:20 -- between 3:20 and 3:30 in the morning?

10 A. I would say yes.

11 Q. Okay. I'm just trying to put a timeline to this.

12 A. I mean, I wasn't --

13 Q. Oh, you weren't watching the clock?

14 A. I wasn't watching the time either.

15 Q. No, I understand that. But the dispatcher then began to
16 call them and got no answer. And then the dispatcher did what?

17 A. He called Q697 and gave them a head block from the south
18 end of Marshville to Rich Creek.

19 Q. Now, what is a head block?

20 A. Permission to move on a red signal.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. On an absolute red signal.

23 Q. Sure. And where does 697 come from?

24 A. He left out of Hamlet.

25 Q. It came from Hamlet, so Q697 --

1 A. He was at Marshville when he getting the head block.

2 Q. So he's coming south?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. They gave him a head block between what point?

5 A. South end of Marshville to Rich Creek.

6 Q. Okay. And after you heard that, what happened next from
7 your perspective, with you, you know, as the engineer?

8 A. Well, after he passed us, after he cleared up at Rich
9 Creek, dispatcher called us up on 1623.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And gave us a head block, permission to pass signal at
12 Rich Creek.

13 Q. Okay.

14 MR. WORKMAN: All right, that's all the questions that I
15 have. Mr. Jenner?

16 BY MR. JENNER:

17 Q. Just a few questions. Did you hear the dispatcher try
18 to call 194 or 618 prior to what you had described to us? You had
19 talked about them -- around 3:20, between 3:20 and 3:30, you said
20 the dispatcher was trying to contact both of those trains and
21 received no answer.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Did you hear the -- at an earlier time on your trip, did
24 you hear the dispatcher trying to contact either one of those
25 trains?

1 A. I can't recall that.

2 Q. Okay. How is the communication, radio communication,
3 between trains and dispatcher in that general territory?

4 A. Well, the radio at the Monroe Depot is a real good one.
5 You can hear -- I mean, you can talk to people a long ways on it.
6 The train radio, you know, they're not the best in the world
7 either, so -- some trains have better radios than others and I
8 think the reason why that because some antennas will stick and
9 scoot it in the air and then some is laying or something.

10 What question did you ask me?

11 Q. I'm sorry?

12 A. What question you ask?

13 Q. No, just in general, if there's sometimes problems with
14 the dispatcher trying to reach crews, you know, if it's due to
15 radio problems or some other problems?

16 A. Well, I hear the dispatcher loud and clear.

17 Q. Um-hum. So that night, you didn't have any problems?
18 You, yourself, didn't experience any problems --

19 A. When I was leaving the north end of Waxhaw, 618 hit the
20 defect (ph.) detector. And a -- and I heard the defect detector
21 went off. And there was a milepost around 322. And I was at
22 milepost 318. So by the time I left the north end, he was just
23 probably at the south end of Waxhaw. And 194 was coming by the
24 holdout.

25 MR. CORCORAN: Did they -- I'm sorry to interrupt, but I

1 don't want to forget. Did -- when you heard the detector go off,
2 did you hear it go off for 194 also?

3 MR. GARLINGTON: I didn't hear it for 194.

4 MR. CORCORAN: Just 618? Did they answer? Do you have
5 to respond to the detector?

6 MR. GARLINGTON: No.

7 MR. CORCORAN: Okay.

8 BY MR. JENNER:

9 Q. Okay. At any point from the south end of Waxhaw to,
10 let's say, 308, did you notice any problems with the signals?

11 A. No. Signals were perfect.

12 Q. If there is a problem with the signals, what is your
13 responsibility to do in terms of -- do you have to contact someone
14 and when do you do that?

15 A. Well, let's say we got a dark signal, signal
16 (indiscernible) home, no lights on. Of course, you know you're
17 going to get a red signal if you are following a train real close,
18 you in the same block. But it be dark signal, if you call the
19 dispatcher.

20 Q. When do you make that -- I'm sorry?

21 A. When you see it

22 Q. Immediately?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Okay. Have you heard -- have you experienced any signal
25 problems in your time operating in that area in terms of

1 visibility, looking at the signals, being able to see them clearly
2 due to weather or due to the track structure?

3 A. Ever seen a dark signals?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yep.

5 MR. GARLINGTON: Everyone on the railroad has seen a
6 dark signal at one time or another. Let me see, every week I had
7 a dark signal. I worked on the north local then. That's what
8 plate that was. And I called the dispatcher, that before I got to
9 Waxhaw, though

10 BY MR. JENNER:

11 Q. Okay. But in terms of when the signals are doing their
12 job, are you able to see them pretty clearly during the middle of
13 the night?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. Did you know the crew members of the striking
16 train? Are you familiar with the circumstances at all?

17 A. You know got killed, my cousin.

18 Q. I'm sorry?

19 A. You know that killed my cousin. You say I'm familiar
20 with him? Yeah.

21 Q. Oh.

22 MR. WORKMAN: We didn't know that. We're sorry.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did not know that.

24 BY MR. JENNER:

25 Q. Oh, yeah, I -- no, I did not know that. Which one was

1 your cousin?

2 A. The engineer.

3 Q. Oh, son of a gun. I'm sorry.

4 What can you tell me about him in terms of --

5 A. I think he was a good engineer.

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. And I think he's real conscientious. I guess he got
8 caught slack.

9 Q. Do you know if he had -- if he -- if the two of you ever
10 talked about any concerns or problems he has operating trains or
11 anything about the railroad?

12 A. No, he never talked to me about any problems.

13 Q. Right.

14 A. Well, we talked but that's it. No problems.

15 The engineer on the other train, I helped train him. So we're
16 pretty close too.

17 Q. Of which other train, the --

18 A. The 618.

19 Q. 618, okay. Oh, you're familiar with his training and
20 experience, then?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. How do you regard him as an engineer overall?

23 A. I think he was a good engineer. I mean, I think he is a
24 good engineer.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. He had a new guy with him just like the guy -- that
2 other guy was new on the other train too. Both of them
3 conductors, they fairly well new and they -- I wouldn't say they
4 were real familiar with the territory because they ain't been
5 working that long, especially when you worked the extra board, you
6 hardly get a chance to make two or three trips in a row in the
7 same territory.

8 Q. Right. So, you have trained other engineers in that
9 territory?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. How -- in your estimation, how many trips do you need to
12 make for a rookie engineer to become comfortable with the
13 territory?

14 A. Be comfortable? Oh, about 6 months.

15 Q. Why is that? That sounds like a long time. Why is --
16 why that period of time?

17 A. Because of the territory. Different places you can
18 do -- different places use different times, but anytime you talk
19 about mountain curves, and it's great -- the curves, hills, take a
20 little -- take a little longer time.

21 Q. Is this --

22 A. Like flat country, like around the coast, shoot about 3
23 weeks is probably all they need. I lived in the Rocky Mountains
24 too, so I know the flat ground there. When you take one end and
25 you pull 14,000 ton, you know, that's pretty good. When you're

1 using 380 to pull 10-, 11,000 tons, so you know -- a whole lot
2 different.

3 Q. Is this -- do you regard this as one of the more
4 challenging, the most challenging territory?

5 A. That's exactly right.

6 Q. Oh. Okay.

7 A. You got me thinking now, about that night if something
8 was different.

9 MR. WORKMAN: Right. We appreciate that.

10 MR. GARLINGTON: Twenty-one years as an engineer. You
11 didn't ask me that.

12 BY MR. JENNER:

13 Q. Twenty years?

14 A. Twenty-one.

15 Q. Do you -- have you heard of any other crews talking
16 about challenges operating in this territory? Do they confide in
17 you, like we have problems maintaining, you know, speed control
18 or, you know, train -- proper train handling?

19 A. What they tell me, it's harder to go to Hamlin (ph.)
20 than it is to go to Atlanta. And the reason why they say that,
21 territory. It's harder to learn up here than it is to learn on
22 the south end.

23 Q. And specifically, what was the --

24 A. Curves, hills.

25 Q. Curves and hills, okay. I think that's all I have right

1 now. Thank you.

2 MR. WORKMAN: Okay. Mr. Corcoran?

3 BY MR. CORCORAN:

4 Q. I think he's covered just about everything I wanted to
5 ask you. I do have -- I have a quick question about your cousin.
6 Was he working spare? Was he on the spare board, extra board?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Or was he a regular job? He was?

9 A. Yeah.

10 MR. CORCORAN: I don't have anything else. I think that
11 we've satisfied what I'm going to need for --

12 MR. WORKMAN: Mr. Herndon, UTU.

13 BY MR. HERNDON:

14 Q. Just a couple, two or three questions to get
15 clarification on. You mentioned a defective equipment detector.

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. You gave the location, I didn't catch it. About what
18 milepost would be that?

19 A. About 322.

20 Q. About 322. And on your northbound trip on this night,
21 did you encounter any signals that were improperly displayed or
22 might not have been -- you know, dark when they shouldn't have
23 been?

24 A. Nope. All of them was right.

25 Q. Okay. And how long have you worked on this territory?

1 A. Oh, I would say about 10 years.

2 Q. Okay. That's all I have.

3 MR. WORKMAN: Mr. Setser, CSX?

4 BY MR. SETSER:

5 Q. The only other question that I have would be in
6 reference to the signal calling from the other trains in the area.
7 Do you distinctly remember Q194 talking on the radio, announcing a
8 stop or signals, as they traversed the Monroe sub behind you?

9 A. Well --

10 Q. Or 618?

11 A. -- I couldn't hear 194, but I can hear 618 calling
12 signals.

13 Q. Do you distinctly remember hearing them stop or announce
14 being stopped at around 614 milepost?

15 A. The last thing that I heard them call was at the south
16 end of Waxhaw. And by that time, I was in Monroe then. But the
17 people in Monroe, they can hear a signal calling all the way to
18 Catawba. My nephew's in (indiscernible) that night too, so he
19 tried to call me on the radio, just speaking.

20 Q. The last radio conversation you heard from Q618 was at
21 the south end of Waxhaw?

22 A. That's right.

23 Q. And no conversation with Q194 --

24 A. No.

25 Q. -- on the radio? And how about the weather that night,

1 as you traversed the railroad, how would describe the weather, in
2 your opinion?

3 A. It was a clear night.

4 Q. Clear, normal visibility with the signals?

5 A. Normal. Was no fog.

6 Q. I'm going to ask your opinion here because you have a
7 lot of experience to share with this group on this territory. As
8 you traversed the area there between the 316 and the 314, and you
9 come around the curve, what kind of visibility do you have coming
10 around that curve?

11 A. The 316 coming around the curve? Not much. Right there
12 before you -- right there at -- once you cross that dirt road, you
13 probably going to see no more than five cars at a time. Until you
14 get into the clear, then couldn't see no farther maybe about 10
15 cars to the next crossing up there.

16 Q. Thank you for the -- I have no further questions.

17 MR. WORKMAN: Okay.

18 BY MR. WORKMAN:

19 Q. Just a couple follow up track questions, from one
20 engineer to another, on your train handling and -- when you leave
21 the south end of Waxhaw, is that on a grade?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And you're going -- and when I say grade, we're going --
24 we're pulling up hill.

25 A. That's right.

1 Q. And is the top of the grade at the north end of Waxhaw
2 or beyond it?

3 A. It's north end of Waxhaw.

4 Q. All right, so north end of Waxhaw. And then after you
5 leave the north end of Waxhaw, you're on -- it's just rolling
6 terrain through --

7 A. You go down a hill and then you start back up another
8 hill at 316.

9 Q. All right.

10 A. Then you go down another hill.

11 Q. Okay. So at the signal at 316 --

12 A. Okay.

13 Q. -- is that on an uphill grade?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. So it's on an uphill grade. Is it at the top of the
16 grade in the curve or --

17 A. No, you come out the curve and start up the hill to the
18 signal.

19 Q. Start up the hill to the signal. Okay. And where is
20 the top of the hill?

21 A. Well, you done left the north end of Waxhaw.

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. Then you start downhill.

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. And then you start back up hill.

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. And then at the top of the hill is at 316.

3 Q. Gotcha.

4 A. Once you pass 316, you start back down the hill again.

5 Q. Downhill again.

6 A. And then bottom of that hill, you start up the hill just
7 a little bit. Then you start heading downhill again before you
8 get to --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- Mineral Springs.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. The one he was asking about -- I think he was talking
13 about the curve right there before you get to Mineral Spring, Main
14 Street Crossing.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, sir.

16 MR. GARLINGTON: Okay.

17 BY MR. WORKMAN:

18 Q. So, you're -- at 316 it's at the top of the hill --

19 A. Right.

20 Q. -- and you break over the hill and it's all downhill --

21 A. Well, a little piece.

22 Q. -- for a little piece. But is it downhill all the way
23 to the 314?

24 A. No.

25 Q. Okay. So it --

1 A. You start back up a hill again.

2 Q. So, you're starting back up again at 314?

3 A. At the 316, you're going up a hill.

4 Q. Yep.

5 A. The other side of 316 is the other side of the signal.
6 You start downhill.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. Probably around the bottom of the hill right there
9 probably be about the 315.

10 Q. Gotcha.

11 A. Then you start back up the hill right there. About a
12 half mile up the hill there, then you start back down the
13 hill --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- before you get to the 314, which is about a -- I
16 guess about a quarter of mile --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- you start back up the hill up to the 314.

19 Q. Okay. So essentially, after you leave the north end of
20 Waxhaw, they're going to run you down the hill, a little bit and
21 then you are going to have to pull up to 316.

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. After you leave 316, they're going to run you a little
24 bit more back down to, say, the 315.

25 A. That's right.

1 Q. And then you're going to come up another grade --

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. -- toward the 314?

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. Okay. That's all the questions, I've got.

6 MR. WORKMAN: Mr. Jenner, anything else?

7 MR. JENNER: No other questions.

8 MR. WORKMAN: Mr. Corcoran?

9 MR. CORCORAN: No other questions.

10 MR. WORKMAN: Mr. Herndon?

11 MR. HERNDON: Just one quick one.

12 MR. HERNDON: What's the maximum authorized speed for
13 the territory right there, where we're talking about, those
14 mileposts?

15 MR. GARLINGTON: From -- Waxhaw is 40 mile -- Waxhaw is
16 40 miles an hour. Then -- 40 miles an hour at, you know, the
17 milepost we talking about.

18 MR. HERNDON: No other questions.

19 MR. WORKMAN: No other questions.

20 BY MR. WORKMAN:

21 Q. I have no other questions and -- from the National
22 Transportation Safety Board. But is there anything else you would
23 like to add sir, to the interview?

24 A. Waxhaw is 40 mile an hour. Then it's 50 miles an hour.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. It done (indiscernible).

2 Q. But is there anything else? We certainly appreciate you
3 coming in.

4 A. Well, that's it.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. I mean, unless you've got some more questions?

7 A. No. No. No.

8 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: CSX COLLISION
MINERAL SPRINGS, NORTH CAROLINA
MAY 24, 2011
Interview of: Horace Garlington

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-11-FR-004

PLACE: Monroe, North Carolina

DATE: May 2011

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to
the recording accomplished at the hearing.

Jennifer Ames
Transcriber