



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD - **Public Hearing**

Conrail Derailment in Paulsboro, NJ with Vinyl Chloride Release

GROUP	2
EXHIBIT	
C	

Agency / Organization

CONRAIL

Title

Conrail Conductor Interview

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of:

*
*
*
*
*
*

CONRAIL DERAILMENT/HAZARDOUS

MATERIAL RELEASE

PAULSBORO, NEW JERSEY

NOVEMBER 30, 2012

Docket No.: DCA-13-MR-002

* * * * *

Interview of: WILBERT DEN OUDEN

Conrail
Camden Yard Office
Camden, New Jersey

Saturday,
December 1, 2012

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: TED T. TURPIN
Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

TED T. TURPIN
National Transportation Safety Board
1515 West 190th Street
Gardena, California 90248

** PII **

** PII **

ROBERT TOMASZEWSKI
Operating Practices Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration

RYAN KEATING
Manager, Field Operations
Conrail

JOHN GAROFOLO
Superintendent, Operations
Conrail

MEL WICHELMANN, JR.
TOM HEBERT
Safety Task Force
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

WILLIAM H. BATES
Safety Task Force
United Transportation Union (UTU)

JOHN VESSELS
Chairman, UTU Local 1390

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Wilbert Den Ouden:		
By Mr. Turpin		5
By Unidentified Speaker		9
By Unidentified Speaker		10
By Mr. Turpin		10
By Unidentified Speaker		14
By Mr. Turpin		15
By Unidentified Speaker		16

I N T E R V I E W

(10:10 a.m.)

1
2
3 MR. TURPIN: My name is Ted Turpin, and we are
4 conducting interviews in connection with the Conrail derailment at
5 the Paulsboro movable bridge that happened about 7:05 a.m.,
6 November 30th, 2013 [sic]. The NTSB Accident Number is DCA-13-MR-
7 004 [sic].

8 Today is December 1, 2012, at 10:10 a.m. We're at the
9 Conrail Camden Yard Office, and this interview is with Wilbert Den
10 Ouden. He was the conductor on the train that derailed and,
11 William [sic], do you understand that this is being recorded?

12 MR. DEN OUDEN: Yes, sir.

13 MR. TURPIN: All right. State your name and spell it
14 please.

15 MR. DEN OUDEN: Wilbert Den Ouden, W-i-l-b-e-r-t, last
16 name, d-e-n, O-u-d-e-n.

17 MR. TURPIN: Okay. And we'll continue around the room
18 and state your name please and your position.

19 MR. VESSELS: John Vessels, UTU Local Chairman 1390.

20 MR. TURPIN: Okay. Spell your last name please.

21 MR. VESSELS: V-e-s-s-e-l-s.

22 MR. TURPIN: Thank you.

23 MR. KEATING: Ryan Keating, Manager, Field Operations,
24 Conrail.

25 MR. TOMASZEWSKI: Bob Tomaszewski, OP Inspector, FRA.

1 MR. WICHELMANN: Mel Wichelmann, BLE&T, Safety Task
2 Force.

3 MR. HEBERT: Tom Hebert, BLET, Safety Task Force.

4 MR. BATES: William H. Bates, UTU, Safety Task Force.

5 MR. GAROFOLO: John Garofolo, Conrail, Superintendent,
6 Operations.

7 INTERVIEW OF WILBERT DEN OUDEN

8 BY MR. TURPIN:

9 Q. We start this real simple. Just tell us what happened.

10 A. What happened is we came up on the bridge. We had a
11 stop signal. Mark stopped the train. He punches in the codes.
12 He got off. He (indiscernible) codes for all the bridge closes.
13 I look out. I see the bridge was already closed. I got off the,
14 I got off the engine. I walked the bridge. I check. I see that
15 the bridge is lined and locked. I got back on the engine. I tell
16 Mark the bridge is lined and locked. Mark says, let me try a few
17 more times. He punches in the codes. Nothing happened. We
18 contact South Jersey dispatcher, tell him that the bridge looks
19 lined and locked. He gives us a 241. We go by the bridge nice
20 and easy and we were about two engines, six cars, all of a sudden
21 I heard a bang, and I look in the rearview mirror and I see the
22 bridge tumble over. Of course, the train came to a stop.

23 Q. All right. And then what?

24 A. Then Mark goes on the radio, just emergency, emergency,
25 emergency, Paulsboro movable bridge is out, is down. We got off

1 the engine. I got my paperwork. He walks one way. I walk
2 another way. The dispatcher, Jon Havlicek, has called the police.
3 I, in the meantime, got on my phone and call the trainmaster,
4 Gary, who was supposed to meet us at Hercules to give us our
5 paperwork for the outbounds going north, in the (indiscernible).
6 He's on his way.

7 In the meantime, the police arrives. The police officer
8 takes my name. I tell him -- he asks me what's in the cars. I
9 tell him I'm worried about two cars because I consider first two
10 dangerous. I give him the UN codes. At that time Gary shows up.
11 I hand him the paperwork, and the police officer says if we can
12 cut the engines away. I tied two brakes on the cars, got on the
13 engine and we cut away and I tell Mark just take to the Paulsboro
14 Yard Office, we'll go from there.

15 Q. Okay. All right. When you went down to check the
16 bridge, what do you actually check?

17 A. There are like these orange, reddish orange clamps. I
18 make sure that they are against the rail.

19 Q. Okay. Is that instruction in the timetable telling you
20 what to look at?

21 A. No, they actually showed me.

22 Q. They showed you?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. When did they do that?

25 A. During training.

- 1 Q. Okay. Who is it that showed you?
- 2 A. J. J. Rainey (ph.).
- 3 Q. Is he a training officer or --
- 4 A. No, he's a conductor.
- 5 Q. So it's like a student trip and --
- 6 A. Yeah.
- 7 Q. -- or in training --
- 8 A. Yes. It was 4 years ago.
- 9 Q. Okay. And how did he know what to check?
- 10 A. That I don't know.
- 11 Q. Had you been required to check the bridge before?
- 12 A. This was the first time I had to check it.
- 13 Q. First time?
- 14 A. Yes.
- 15 Q. Had you ever had to stop at the red signal before?
- 16 A. Yeah, we always have to stop at the red signal.
- 17 Q. Okay. And normally it goes green?
- 18 A. Yeah, normally the bridge closes, we get the message and
- 19 it goes green, yes.
- 20 Q. How long have you been working on this job?
- 21 A. Three days. I just got on it.
- 22 Q. Okay. I was told that you walked back towards the
- 23 bridge a little bit --
- 24 A. Uh-huh.
- 25 Q. -- after it first happened?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Could you see anything at that time, on the bridge, the
3 damage or what had happened?

4 A. I could see the bridge like leaning over. I could see
5 the white -- the stuff coming off, the white smoke coming off.

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. And I walked right back the other direction and talked
8 to the police officer.

9 Q. Okay. All right. So this is the first time you checked
10 it after you had had a training 4 years earlier, right?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Did you have to look anything up or you pretty well
13 remembered what you needed to do?

14 A. I pretty much remembered.

15 Q. Okay. Did the engineer remind you of anything before
16 you left --

17 A. No.

18 Q. -- to be sure to look at this, look at that?

19 A. No, he didn't.

20 Q. Okay. Are you able to observe the orange pin areas when
21 you're actually on a moving train? Can you actually see them?

22 A. No, I don't really -- I really cannot see that, no.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. The nose is too long.

25 Q. All right.

1 MR. TURPIN: We'll go around the room and see if anybody
2 has anything, anything else to ask.

3 MR. KEATING: I do not.

4 MR. TURPIN: Bob?

5 MR. TOMASZEWSKI: I'm good for right now. I might get
6 back to him.

7 MR. TURPIN: Okay.

8 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

9 Q. What was your date of hire?

10 A. **** PII **** I mean 9/22/2008. That's the date for my
11 birthday.

12 Q. 9/22?

13 A. Yeah, 9/22.

14 Q. And how long was your OJT when you hired out?

15 A. What do you mean?

16 Q. On-the-job training.

17 A. It's about a year here.

18 Q. A year here. Okay. What was the job symbol you were
19 working on then?

20 A. FC42.

21 Q. I'm sorry?

22 A. FC42.

23 Q. FC42.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's all I have.

25 MR. TURPIN: Okay. Since --

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I do have one question.

2 MR. TURPIN: Oh, okay.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sorry.

4 MR. TURPIN: That's all right.

5 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

6 Q. You said that you checked to make sure that they were
7 lined and locked. You said they're clamps?

8 A. It looks like a clam, yeah.

9 Q. Okay. Oh, just --

10 A. So clamp the thing, yeah.

11 Q. -- more or less like come together and hold.

12 A. Uh-huh.

13 Q. Okay.

14 BY MR. TURPIN:

15 Q. Just to verify, they were fully engaged? They were --

16 A. As far as I know, yes. As far as I could see, yes.

17 Q. They looked identical to 4 years earlier what they
18 showed you to look like?

19 A. What I remembered, yes.

20 Q. Okay. Have you ever seen them out of position? Do you
21 know what that would look like?

22 A. No, I don't.

23 Q. Okay. 2008, training for about a year; 2009, then
24 you're a brakeman. When did you become a conductor?

25 A. Actually we became right away a conductor after, after

1 training.

2 Q. Okay. Have you done any engineer training at all?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Okay. Are you remote qualified?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. When were you remote qualified?

7 A. I don't remember. About a year later, I think, 6 months
8 later, something like that, after training.

9 Q. All right.

10 A. I don't remember exactly.

11 Q. Okay. How long have you been working here at Camden?

12 A. Well, it's been -- after training, it's been 3 years,
13 and then I would say about 3, 2½ I've been at a few different
14 yards.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. But I always end up back in Camden.

17 Q. This has been your primary place?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. And third day on this job, how long -- how many
20 times have you actually gone down over the bridge and on this
21 route?

22 A. During -- you know, when I was on the extra list,
23 whenever they called me up. I don't remember. I really wouldn't
24 know.

25 Q. Kind of sporadic?

1 A. Sporadic, yeah.

2 Q. What was the majority of places you've been, you worked?
3 In the yard?

4 A. In the yard, yeah.

5 Q. And you finally got a road job?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Did you get it on a bid?

8 A. Actually I bumped a guy.

9 Q. Did you?

10 A. Yeah.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So back to the yard?

12 MR. DEN OUDEN: No, I'll go right back on this job.

13 BY MR. TURPIN:

14 Q. Okay. So let's back up. You started Wednesday morning,
15 3 a.m., first --

16 A. 3 a.m.

17 Q. Okay. And --

18 A. No, Thursday. Was it? It was Thursday, Thursday
19 morning.

20 Q. Thursday?

21 A. Yeah, Thursday morning. No, wait. It happened
22 yesterday.

23 Q. The day of the accident.

24 A. It happened yesterday, Friday.

25 Q. Friday.

1 A. Friday 3 a.m.

2 Q. Did you work Thursday?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Did you work Wednesday?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Did you work Tuesday?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Let's start Wednesday --

9 A. Okay. Wednesday.

10 Q. -- 3 a.m.

11 A. 3 a.m.

12 Q. How long did you work?

13 A. Wednesday, we worked till about 12:30.

14 Q. Okay. And Thursday, how long did you work?

15 A. Till about 1.

16 Q. Okay. So when you finished working, just go through

17 your normal routine: When do you go to bed? How long do you stay

18 up?

19 A. Well, I go home. I sleep for about an hour, hour and a

20 half. Kids come home. We have dinner. We do homework, do

21 something else. Kids go to bed around 7:30, 8:00. I go to bed

22 with them. Wake up at 1:00, take a shower, and then around 2:00 I

23 come to work.

24 Q. Okay. Friday morning did you feel rested?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. Did you feel comfortable with what to look for on
2 the bridge?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. It wasn't an issue as to what needed to be inspected or
5 how to proceed?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Okay. I've got just kind of a general question. Do you
8 feel like this is a safe place to work?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Why?

11 A. If you just follow the rules, you're fine, you're safe.
12 When they tell you in training, the first thing they tell you,
13 like, you know, watch out because if it hits you, it's going to
14 kill you.

15 Q. Okay.

16 MR. TURPIN: All right. Anybody have anything else?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just had one more question, or
18 a few more questions.

19 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

20 Q. Wilbert, often do you do rules training here?

21 A. Once a year.

22 Q. Once a year.

23 A. Uh-huh.

24 Q. How long is that training?

25 A. A day.

1 Q. One day? Eight hours?

2 A. Uh-huh.

3 Q. And in that rules training, do you guys discuss bridge
4 safety at all?

5 A. No. We haven't gone over that one yet.

6 Q. So this is more of a peer to peer, to learn how to --
7 what to look for --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. -- the codes, line and lock the bridge?

10 A. Yeah, the codes are in the timetable.

11 Q. They're in the timetable, right.

12 A. Yeah. You open them up and then once the bridge goes
13 by, at a certain point, it will open up itself.

14 Q. Uh-huh. And then any kind of problems that arise or
15 troubleshooting, that's more of like a peer-to-peer kind of
16 approach?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Kind of like the reset?

19 A. Yeah.

20 BY MR. TURPIN:

21 Q. Had you ever heard people discuss problems with the
22 bridge, say, in the locker room or anything?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. What do they say?

25 A. The bridge wasn't working correctly. There were false

1 messages coming up. So heard that (indiscernible) --

2 Q. When? When does that happen?

3 A. That actually happened all 3 days. We got the signal.
4 I believe on Thursday we also had a 241, and once we go over the
5 bridge, the message actually said bridge failure to operate.

6 Q. Oh, so you got the clear, your 241, but when you were on
7 top of it, you got a message?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Okay. Huh. How about from other crew members, what I'm
10 saying, around the locker room or hear on duty? Did you hear
11 people complaining about the bridge at all?

12 A. Yeah, in Paulsboro, the crews have had problems with the
13 bridge, too.

14 Q. And by problems, specifically you mean the signal's
15 always red on them or --

16 A. Signals or sometimes the bridge won't -- I don't know
17 exactly what, but a message won't come up. So --

18 Q. Okay. All right.

19 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

20 Q. So if I'm understanding this correctly, every time that
21 you code in the 137 star, you'll get an audible message either
22 way, whether it's --

23 A. It's supposed to, the message --

24 Q. -- lined or if it's not lined?

25 A. When you push in the 137, it's supposed to say Paulsboro

1 movable bridge closing.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And we didn't get that on Friday morning.

4 Q. Okay. So it says closing and then once it's closed, you
5 get the green light?

6 A. We got the green light, yes. That's what I said, and it
7 will say Paulsboro movable bridge closed.

8 Q. Oh, it does tell you that it is closed also?

9 A. Yeah, once it works, yeah.

10 MR. TURPIN: Is that before the green shows or --

11 MR. DEN OUDEN: Around the same time, yes.

12 MR. TURPIN: Yeah. Huh. All right. Very good. Anyone
13 have anything else? Bob, you said you were going to think of
14 something.

15 MR. TOMASZEWSKI: No, you beat me to a couple of them.
16 You guys (indiscernible) --

17 MR. TURPIN: All right. All right. I think that's it.
18 Thank you very much.

19 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

20

21

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: CONRAIL DERAILMENT/HAZARDOUS
 MATERIAL RELEASE
 PAULSBORO, NEW JERSEY
 NOVEMBER 30, 2012
 Interview of Wilbert Den Ouden

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-13-MR-002

PLACE: Camden, New Jersey

DATE: December 1, 2012

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.

Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber