

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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AMTRAK TRAIN 188 DERAILMENT NEAR

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PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

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Docket No.: DCA-15-MR-010

MAY 12, 2015

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Interview of: AKIDA HENRY

30th Street Station
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Friday,
May 15, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: DAVID BUCHER
Railroad Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

DAVID BUCHER, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

STEPHEN JENNER, Ph.D., Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MICHAEL BULL, Operating Practices Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

JOHN HINES, System General Road Foreman
Amtrak

DAVID NICHOLS, Chief Transportation Officer
Amtrak

EDWARD MRUK, Assistant General Trainmaster
Amtrak

MARK McKEON, Corporate Safety Advocate
Amtrak

WILLIAM BATES
National Safety Team
SMART Transportation Division

ANDREW CIUBA, Chairperson
SMART Local 1370

CARL FIELDS
Safety Task Force
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

DONALD HILL
BLET Safety Task Force

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:05 a.m.)

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3 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher, Rail Accident
4 Investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board. This
5 is the interview of Akida Henry, assistant conductor on Train 188.
6 The date is 05/15/15. The time is approximately 11:05 and we are
7 at Amtrak's 30th Street Station. The interview is in reference to
8 NTSB accident number DCA-15-MR-010.

9 To my right I have?

10 MR. HINES: John Hines, H-i-n-e-s, Amtrak System General
11 Road Foreman.

12 MR. BATES: William Bates, B-a-t-e-s. SMART, National
13 Transportation Safety Team.

14 MR. HILL: Donald Hill, BLET, Safety Task Force.

15 MR. FIELDS: Carl Fields, F-i-e-l-d-s, Brotherhood of
16 Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen.

17 MR. NICHOLS: Dave Nichols, N-i-c-h-o-l-s, Chief
18 Transportation Officer for Amtrak.

19 MR. BULL: Mike Bull, B-u-l-l, Operating Practices
20 Inspector with the FRA.

21 MR. MRUK: Edward Mruk, M-r-u-k, System General
22 Trainmaster with Amtrak.

23 MR. McKEON: Mark McKeon, Amtrak Corporate Safety
24 Advocate.

25 MR. CIUBA: Andrew Ciuba, Local Chairperson, Local 1370

1 for SMART. Again, the last name is Ciuba, C-i-u-b-a.

2 DR. JENNER: And I'm Stephen Jenner with the NTSB.

3 INTERVIEW OF AKIDA HENRY

4 BY MR. BUCHER:

5 Q. Okay. Ms. Henry, as we talked about, if you could just,
6 in your own words, go back to the beginning of your day on the
7 12th and when you got up, what you did, and as detailed as
8 possible? Thank you.

9 A. I got up that morning about 9, ate breakfast, got ready
10 for work. I got in, I signed up at 11:50 to take down train 171.
11 Everything went okay. We end up running late. I can't
12 remember why. We ran a little late. I think the train came in
13 late from Springfield. We were late, about maybe 30 minutes or so
14 behind scheduled time.

15 Went down to Washington. No problems with the trip. We
16 came in a low platform, detrained everybody, went to the crew room
17 to have lunch. And I signed up at 6: -- I think 25 or 30,
18 something like that, we sign up for our briefing. We had a job
19 briefing: Brandon, Emilio, myself, and Tommy.

20 We discussed the safety rule of the day. We discussed
21 the speed restrictions, any special requests for the train, car
22 numbers, and, you know, our duties, as far as Tommy does the brake
23 test and what have you, and he's flagging. I'm doing
24 announcements. Emilio worked the first two cars. And that was
25 pretty much our job briefing.

1 After the speed restrictions, Tommy -- not Tommy --
2 Emilio and Brandon was discussing the bulletin; something on the
3 bulletin they was discussing. After that, we concluded our job
4 briefing.

5 We went out to Track 14. The train still wasn't there.
6 The actual train showed up at departure time from the yard. It
7 backed in about 7:08, approximately. We loaded the train. Emilio
8 discussed on the platform whiles we was waiting for the train, it
9 was like an additional job briefing that, you know, we'll just get
10 the people on and we'll get out of here as soon as we can.
11 Everything was still the same. We still had the same job
12 functions. And we left a little late, maybe around 7:30-ish we
13 left Union Station.

14 I got on the PA. I made the opening announcement about,
15 you know, train set, the car count, the station stops, the safety
16 instruction card in the seat pockets, where everything was -- the
17 business class, the quiet car, café -- and we went on about our
18 way. Nothing was out of the ordinary. Everything was the same,
19 as if it always was.

20 Made all the regular station stops, no problems. We got
21 to Philadelphia. We detrained. We board the Philadelphia
22 passengers. Emilio gave to the go. I got on the PA system, made
23 the same announcement that I make out of Washington far as where
24 everything is and, you know, the safety instructions and how to
25 move about the train when it's in motion. And we continued on.

1 About maybe 4 or 5 -- no, 10 -- I'm not sure about the
2 minutes, but shortly after we left Philadelphia, Brandon got on
3 the radio and said to CTEC, "I don't know if somebody is shooting
4 at us or if they're throwing rocks, but I see it."

5 After that, the horn started to go. He was laying on
6 the horn. The next thing, you see something flash and the train
7 is shaking so violently. It's just shaking and shaking and it
8 seemed like forever. Finally, we kind of -- I don't know if we
9 flipped or what, but we rolled and slid and the train was on its
10 side.

11 After -- you could just see stuff blowing up. I could
12 see the catenary pole getting ripped down. I could see the rail
13 ripping up off the ground. Stuff was just everywhere, bags,
14 people, computers. You name it, it was everywhere. Everybody in
15 the café car was thrown around, upside down, on top of each other.

16 When we finally came to a stop, I kind of, like, laid
17 there for a minute because I didn't know what was going on or what
18 just happened. Finally, I was able -- I had my radio attached to
19 my shirt and I was able to call CTEC, because I was waiting to
20 hear Emilio make a transmission but I didn't hear him, and I
21 didn't hear Brandon again. So I got on the radio and I gave the
22 emergency transmission. I said, "Emergency, emergency, emergency.
23 This is the head brake on 188. We just derailed."

24 CTEC asked me how many cars was derailed. I told him I
25 think it's the whole train, we were on our side. He asked me did

1 I know why we derailed and I said to him I think something just
2 shot at us; I could see something coming from the other direction,
3 and that was the last conversation I had. I didn't say anything
4 else to CTEC after that.

5 I don't know how long it was. Then I started to hear
6 sirens and, you know, helicopters and stuff like that.

7 Q. Okay. Let's take a break. Let's take a break.

8 (Off the record.)

9 (On the record.)

10 BY MR. BUCHER:

11 Q. Okay. This is Dave Bucher, NTSB. Ms. Henry, could you
12 just clarify which car you were in, in the train? Were you in,
13 what -- the third or fourth?

14 A. The café car.

15 Q. Café car?

16 A. Fourth car.

17 Q. And that was the fourth car. Thank you.

18 Do you remember about how many people were in the car
19 with you, passengers?

20 A. Roughly, just in the café car alone, besides the LSA,
21 about 15 people.

22 Q. Fifteen? Okay. Did you have any conversations with
23 other crew members after you left Philadelphia? I know it was a
24 short amount of time, but --

25 A. I had one conversation with Tommy, and I said to him

1 let's hurry up and do our sweep out of Philadelphia. And I told
2 him that we only had one passenger that was getting on in Trenton,
3 so just be careful and we can scan him on the platform.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. I did say that to him. And him and I proceeded to do
6 the sweep. And then he went back to the rear of the train and I
7 went to the café car.

8 Q. Okay. And do you know how many passengers got on in
9 Philadelphia?

10 A. I don't remember.

11 Q. You don't remember. Okay. Thank you.

12 Okay, and just you don't -- you mentioned before that
13 there were no problems with the train. You didn't feel any --
14 there were no -- you didn't feel any brake problems or anything
15 like that from leaving D.C.?

16 A. Every -- Tommy did the brake test. We checked
17 everything. We walked our equipment. Nothing was out of the
18 ordinary. We walked our equipment. We checked the hand brakes.
19 We checked for skates and chocks. We checked all the doors. We
20 did a door test. Nothing was wrong at that time. Nothing seemed
21 out of place.

22 Q. Okay. Great. Thank you.

23 MR. BUCHER: Okay. I'm going to pass it off to Mr.
24 Mruk -- or Hines.

25 BY MR. HINES:

1 Q. Good morning, Akida.

2 A. Hi.

3 Q. John Hines with Amtrak. I'm the System General Road
4 Foreman. You mentioned that Brandon reported to the dispatcher
5 that there was either rocks thrown or gunshot at the train. Do
6 you know exactly, or relatively, the proximity where you were
7 railroad-wise?

8 A. All I remember was that it wasn't too long after we left
9 Philadelphia. But where we were at that time, no.

10 Q. Okay. I have no questions, no further questions.

11 MR. BATES: William Bates. No questions.

12 BY MR. FIELDS:

13 Q. Carl Fields, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and
14 Trainmen. Akida, thanks for being here. I just have one
15 question. Would the engineer, prior to May 12th, did you ever
16 work with him before?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And did you take any exception to his operating?

19 A. Brandon is great. He knows his job. He's there on time
20 for the briefing. He answers any questions we have. And
21 sometimes I have questions about things that I don't understand on
22 the bulletin and he is there to help. I've never seen him do
23 anything that he wasn't supposed to do. He's great. I don't have
24 anything, I don't have anything bad to say about him. He does his
25 job. I've never been -- I never felt scared or unsafe to work

1 with him. He was -- he was good. He was a very good engineer.

2 Q. Okay. Well, thank you. I appreciate it.

3 MR. NICHOLS: Hi. Dave Nichols. I just want to thank
4 you, but I have no questions.

5 MS. HENRY: Thank you.

6 MR. BULL: Hello. Mike Bull, FRA. Again, thank you for
7 being here. I'm going to pass on any questions right now. Thank
8 you.

9 BY MR. MRUK:

10 Q. Akida, Eddie Mruk, System General Trainmaster. I just
11 have one question. When you guys were collecting tickets, did you
12 go in a certain direction or were you assigned to meet or how did
13 that work out?

14 A. That worked -- in the job briefing, we were told where
15 we work. Emilio works the -- we had seven cars. Emilio worked --
16 he told us in the briefing, he works the first two, and Tommy and
17 I were to meet. So I worked from the third car back to meet
18 Tommy; Tommy works from the seventh car up to meet me.

19 Q. Okay. All right. I have no further questions.

20 BY DR. JENNER:

21 Q. Okay. This is Steve Jenner. You're answering a lot of
22 our questions, so thank you. I'm just going to jump around a bit.
23 You departed Union Station in D.C. a little late. Do
24 you know why?

25 A. The equipment was not there. It wasn't available. It

1 came from the yard.

2 Q. Okay. Were you guys able to make up time along the way?

3 A. We don't make up time.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. If we're late, we're just late. That's it. We don't
6 make up any time.

7 Q. Okay. I should've phrased it a little differently.
8 Were there any other delays after you departed, in terms of
9 weather, in terms of passengers or --

10 A. No. No, we didn't have -- it was just regular like it
11 always is. We made all our station stops. People board. When
12 it's clear to leave, we leave. We take our time. We do not rush
13 no matter what.

14 Q. How late was your departure?

15 A. We're scheduled to depart out of Washington at 7:10. We
16 depart somewhere around 7:30, but I'm not exactly sure, but it was
17 somewhere around those lines.

18 Q. But the rest of your trip was normal?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. And you mentioned a couple times when Brandon
21 would make announcements. Did --

22 A. No. Brandon doesn't make announcements. I made the
23 announcements. The only announcement Brandon made was the
24 transmission about somebody -- the rocks or the shooting. He
25 doesn't -- he's the engineer. He doesn't make any announcements.

1 Q. Okay. Let me ask about that. When he made that
2 announcement, who was he making it to?

3 A. CTEC.

4 Q. But you overheard him --

5 A. Well, I can hear what he says on his radio. We all hear
6 the same thing.

7 Q. Okay. You mentioned that once, and I think you said
8 someone may be throwing rocks at us or gunshot? Can you --

9 A. He -- Brandon said, he says, "CTEC, this is the head end
10 of 188. I'm not sure if somebody is shooting at us or they're
11 throwing rocks, but I see it out my mirror."

12 Q. So how do you understand "I see it"? What do you think
13 he was referring to?

14 A. I don't know. I don't -- I can't be sure. I don't know
15 what he saw and how he saw it. I don't know what angle he was
16 looking at it from. I don't know if it was on his right or if it
17 was on his left. I don't -- or it was in front of him. I have no
18 idea.

19 Q. Okay. So you didn't see anything yourself?

20 A. As I said, once Brandon made that transmission, a couple
21 seconds later, he's blowing that horn. And I'm thinking somebody
22 -- automatically, when you hear the engineer blow the horn, you
23 automatically think somebody is around about the track area and
24 they're trying to alert them to move. You know, nobody told me
25 that. That was my own opinion of why he could've been blowing the

1 horn.

2 After that, right after, it's just this, this violent,
3 violent shaking. And as the train is shaking, like, the lights
4 are going on and off, on and off, stuff was thrown around, you
5 see, like, these flashes of light. I can't tell if it's coming
6 towards us, if -- I can't tell what it is.

7 But then after that, I can see stuff just being ripped,
8 the pole -- I couldn't be sure what it was, but it was coming from
9 a direction -- I don't know if it was the catenary poles, because
10 at that time we're on our side. So I don't know really where it's
11 coming from, but I just see it.

12 Q. Okay. If you can give your best estimate that, after
13 you heard him call CTEC and then you said a couple seconds later
14 he blew his horn, then how much time do you --

15 A. It was all happening at the same time.

16 Q. I see.

17 A. It was all happening at the same time.

18 Q. When you heard him on the radio to CTEC, how did he
19 sound? Did he sound calm or did he sound very concerned and
20 nervous?

21 A. He sound to me, in my opinion, he sound like he was
22 afraid and he just wasn't sure which -- what was happening.

23 Q. Was he, like, yelling for -- I don't want to say the
24 word yell --

25 A. Well, Brandon is not that kind of person. No matter

1 what's going on, he's never -- like, I've never seen him frantic.
2 He just, he says what it is and that's pretty much it. So, like,
3 if he was screaming? No. But he was stern and firm at what he
4 said.

5 Q. Okay. So it sounds like you know him well enough to
6 know that he was concerned?

7 A. I worked with him quite a few times. I've been on this
8 particular regular job that works 188. Prior to this job, I had
9 another job that worked the other side of his train, so I worked
10 with him quite a few times, even when I was on the extra board.
11 So, yeah, I can say that.

12 Q. Okay. Did you hear any communication back from CTEC or
13 from anyone else?

14 A. CTEC froze.

15 Q. What does that mean?

16 A. Like, it was silence. When Brandon said that, CTEC --
17 it was a dead silence. And then they says, 181, and then that
18 was, that was -- they couldn't -- it was -- everything started
19 happening. I guess that maybe they had another question. I can't
20 really be sure.

21 Q. So they started to reply --

22 A. I heard them say something. But like I said, at that
23 time everything started to go wrong, so I really wasn't listening
24 for any other further transmissions. I was kind of trying to
25 brace myself. We were being thrown and to kind of protect --

1 because there's stuff falling everywhere. So I was trying to
2 protect myself at that moment. I wasn't listening for any other
3 transmissions.

4 Q. Did you hear, outside of what we were discussing,
5 Brandon calling CTEC the first time, was there any follow-up to
6 anyone else?

7 A. Prior to when Brandon -- you're saying prior to --

8 Q. No. After his initial call to CTEC.

9 A. After that, like I said, that's when we start to come
10 off the rails --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- and I made my transmission once we came to a stop.
13 And after that -- I don't know how much time was in between there
14 -- it was another train crew. They wasn't Amtrak. I don't
15 remember the initials that they used, but they identified
16 theirselves as something, and they were talking to CTEC at that time
17 telling them that we were all over the place. I heard him say,
18 "Can we go assist, because they're everywhere?" And they were
19 saying, "It's people running all over the place. Shut it down."
20 And that's -- I don't remember anything else, other transmissions
21 after that.

22 Q. Okay. Thank you.

23 So you were in car number 4 with about 15 people in
24 there. You were banged up during this incident?

25 A. Yeah. I was sitting on the left side of the café car.

1 I ended up on the right side of the café car hanging out of the
2 window.

3 Q. Okay. What was the situation with the passengers
4 immediately after?

5 A. They were everywhere. They were everywhere. Stuff was
6 on top of them. People were bleeding. One person was pinned down
7 in a table, like, crushed. Somebody was, like, upside -- it was
8 -- they were everywhere.

9 Q. Okay. How did passengers evacuate the car?

10 A. Firefighters, EMS was kicking in the windows from the
11 opposite side of the train, pulling us out through the windows.

12 Q. Okay. So no one got out on their own? You relied on
13 the assistance of --

14 A. Not in the -- you couldn't. It wasn't -- I told
15 everybody to just stay there. If they can move safely, then move.
16 But for the most part, stay there, because I didn't know what
17 position the car was in. I knew we probably was on our side, but
18 I didn't know what we were near, what was there. I didn't know if
19 the weight of the car was going to make it fall any more or tilt
20 any more, so I was telling everybody, if you can, just kind of lay
21 there. If you felt like you could safely get up and move -- but
22 nobody could walk because of the position. You would've had to
23 crawl or something because you couldn't stand up the way the train
24 was positioned. So for the most part, everybody kind of -- nobody
25 -- everybody that tried to stand up, fell back down because you

1 just -- it was impossible to stand. So nobody in the café car
2 walked out of there by theirself.

3 Q. Okay. Was there -- how did you see? Was there lighting
4 on?

5 A. It was some light from the -- in the center of the --
6 where the LSA is. I don't know what light, but there was
7 something on over there. It wasn't any -- it was the emergency
8 crew, once they started, you could see flashlights and, like, a
9 helicopter shining down. I had my flashlight on my side and I was
10 able to turn that on and kind of point it up to the air and kind
11 of take a quick glance to see who was there and, you know, the
12 condition of the car.

13 Q. And were the EMS able to get everyone out after they
14 arrived?

15 A. It was mostly the firefighters at that time, and some
16 police.

17 Q. Okay. Well, thank you for those details. That's all
18 the questions I have.

19 MR. BUCHER: Dave Bucher. I don't have any questions.
20 I appreciate everything you've given us.

21 MS. HENRY: Thank you.

22 MR. HINES: Thank you. No more questions. John Hines.

23 MR. BATES: William Bates. Akida, thank you so much.

24 And no questions.

25 MR. FIELDS: Carl Fields, BLET. No questions. But

1 thank you.

2 MS. HENRY: Okay.

3 MR. NICHOLS: Dave Nichols, Amtrak. Thank you again.

4 And no questions.

5 MR. BULL: Mike Bull, FRA. No questions. Thank you.

6 BY MR. MRUK:

7 Q. Akida, thank you. It's Eddie Mruk. I just wanted to
8 follow up with one thing. You heard your engineer report that
9 either a rock or gunshots were going. Did you hear any other
10 trains reporting anything similar to that?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. I didn't.

14 Q. Thank you. And thank you for coming. I appreciate
15 that.

16 MR. BUCHER: Okay. Dave Bucher. And that concludes the
17 interview of Ms. Henry.

18 (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: AMTRAK TRAIN 188 DERAILMENT NEAR
 PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA
 MAY 12, 2015
 Interview of Akida Henry

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-MR-010

PLACE: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

DATE: May 15, 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.

Karen A. Stockhausen
Transcriber