

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

COLLISION OF LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD *
(LIRR) TRAIN NO. 2817 WITH THE *
PLATFORM AT ATLANTIC TERMINAL, *
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, JANUARY 4, 2017 *

* Accident No.: DCA17FR002

* * * * *

Interview of: RALPH WETZEL

LIRR Facilities
Jamaica, New York

Sunday,
January 7, 2017

APPEARANCES:

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National Transportation Safety Board

ANNE GARCIA, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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JOSEPH MEADE, Operating Practice Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

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MARK ELLIOTT, Director of Investigations & Analysis
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DOMINIC AMENDOLARE
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(Observer)

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:37 a.m.)

1
2
3 MR. TORRES: Okay, we're going to get started. It's 9:37
4 a.m. and this is an informal interview, NTSB informal interview.
5 My name is Tomas Torres, T-o-m-a-s, T-o-r-r-e-s. Today's date is
6 January 7th, 2017, and we are at Jamaica Queens, New York, at the
7 Long Island Rail Road JCC Facility, and we're interviewing the
8 lead transportation manager in connection with an accident that
9 occurred at Atlantic Terminal on January 4th, 2017. The NTSB
10 accident number is DCA17FR002.

11 The purpose of the investigation is to increase safety, not
12 to assign fault, blame or liability. NTSB cannot offer any
13 guarantee of confidentiality or immunity from legal or certificate
14 actions. A transcript or a summary of the interview will go into
15 the public docket.

16 The interviewee can have one representative of the
17 interviewee's choice. Do you have somebody present?

18 MR. WETZEL: No.

19 MR. TORRES: Okay. Thank you. Do you understand this
20 interview is being recorded?

21 MR. WETZEL: I understand, yes.

22 MR. TORRES: Okay. Please state your name and spell it.

23 MR. WETZEL: Ralph Wetzels, R-a-l-p-h, Wetzels, W-e-t-z-e-l.
24 Good morning.

25 MS. GARCIA: Good morning. Anne Garcia, G-a-r-c-i-a, human

1 performance investigator with the National Transportation Safety
2 Board.

3 MR. MEADE: Joe Meade, M-e-a-d-e. I'm an operating practices
4 inspector for the FRA.

5 MR. BECKER: Bret Becker, B-e-c-k-e-r. I'm the
6 superintendent of engine service for the Long Island Rail Road.

7 MR. ELLIOTT: Mark Elliott, E-l-l-i-o-t-t, director of
8 investigations and analysis for Long Island Rail Road.

9 MR. TOMASZEWSKI: Bob Tomaszewski, T-o-m-a-s-z-e-w-s-k-i,
10 operating practices inspector, FRA.

11 MR. MARALDO: Rob Maraldo, New York State Department of
12 Transportation, Public Transportation Safety Board, M-a-r-a-l-d-o.

13 MR. HILL: Donald Hill, BLET Safety Task Force, H-i-l-l.

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

16 MR. NEARY: William Neary, N-e-a-r-y, SMART Transportation
17 Safety Team.

18 MR. AMENDOLARE: Dominic Amendolare, A-m-e-n-d-o-l-a-r-e,
19 SMART Transportation Safety Team, observer.

20 MS. LEE: Janet Lee, L-e-e, deputy regional administrator,
21 FRA.

22 MR. TORRES: Okay, Tomas Torres with NTSB. Do you mind if we
23 call you by your first name, Ralph?

24 MR. WETZEL: Please.

25 MR. TORRES: Okay.

1 MR. WETZEL: That's fine. Please.

2 INTERVIEW OF RALPH WETZEL

3 BY MR. TORRES:

4 Q. Okay. Ralph, can you please give us a description of your
5 job history, you know, date of hire and all that, training?

6 A. Sure. Hired in November of 1994 as an assistant conductor.
7 Qualified in 1996 as a conductor. Went into a supervisor program
8 in 1998 and then, through the supervisor program, became a
9 transportation manager, and I believe that's '98, '99, in Jamaica.
10 I reported in Jamaica, worked various shifts with that. In, I'm
11 going to say, 2001, it might be a little bit later, 2002, lead
12 transportation manager for Jamaica. And then in 2005, transferred
13 to Atlantic Terminal Brooklyn as the lead transportation manager,
14 currently.

15 Q. Okay. And as lead transportation manager, what are your
16 duties? You know, what's your responsibilities?

17 A. Sure. I oversee the conductors, the engineers of Atlantic
18 Terminal and outside the terminal. I report to Vincent Campasano,
19 GST, in Penn Station, who oversees my duties. My duties are, in
20 the morning, to provide good rush hour service; also to meet with
21 crews, make sure that everything is working okay; Book of Rules.
22 We do SAFER tests. We do train rides. I work with a project
23 currently, Forest City Ratner project, for VD Yard, and as the
24 liaison along with our capital team for that project. Numerous
25 different things such as meetings, interviews with new assistant

1 conductors and conductors at times. Overseeing anything that
2 comes in, injuries, employee injuries, employees want to talk.

3 Q. So on a daily basis, do you have, like, a lot of interaction
4 with the crews?

5 A. A lot.

6 Q. Do you meet them, like --

7 A. Face to face.

8 Q. Do you get to meet every crew member?

9 A. Not every day, no.

10 Q. Not every day?

11 A. No. My door, though, is always open. And any crew member
12 will tell you that.

13 Q. So, how frequently would you say you have interaction with
14 the crew, any crew?

15 A. Any crew? Some more than others, obviously. Some daily,
16 others once a week, maybe once every 2 weeks. Why? Some have
17 shorter turns. They come in, they go back out. They may not even
18 come back to me. They may go to New York. Part of their crew
19 books may be assigned that way, might be a little bit different.
20 Or they're finishing up when I'm coming in. I normally start 6:30
21 to 2:30, that's a normal day for me, Monday through Friday.

22 Q. So as a supervisor, you have this interaction with the
23 employees. Do you know their habits? Are you familiar with how
24 they perform?

25 A. Can I read people pretty well? Yes. Yes, I feel I'm fairly

1 comfortable with that. And I feel that crew members are fairly
2 comfortable with me.

3 Q. The accident engineer, are you familiar with him? Can you
4 describe him?

5 A. Mike Bakalo? Yes. Quiet man, very quiet man. He comes in
6 on 2817 and, as a routine, walks by my office every morning, walks
7 by the wheelhouse, and I say good morning to him. His crew, his
8 regular crew, I see them also, Joe Frank and Suju Jacob, also,
9 yes.

10 Q. Okay. On the day of the accident, where were you at?

11 A. I was in my office. Has everyone seen -- you've seen my
12 office? I believe you were all in my office in Atlantic Terminal?

13 MS. GARCIA: No.

14 MR. WETZEL: Okay. It's a transportation facility on the
15 Track 1 side. The trainmen's room, my office, wheelhouse, where
16 the operations for the AM and PM commission hour are operated
17 from, where we oversee it. And then there's restrooms and
18 whatnot. And they usually walk by in the morning, so it's always
19 a "good morning." Do I socialize with Mike? No. No.

20 BY MR. TORRES:

21 Q. Okay. Can you describe, you know, that morning?

22 A. Oh, I'm sorry. Yes. Yes, I sure can. In my office, the
23 ASM, Frank Degiulio, is in the wheelhouse. Frank screams out,
24 "Ralph." He had heard over the radio from a signal maintainer
25 that a train had struck the bumper block. And I'll walk you

1 through it from here.

2 I get up, run into the wheelhouse. The first thing I see is
3 -- we have a bunch of monitors up. I look right at the monitor, I
4 see what I've got. I've got a cloud of smoke, cloud -- dust,
5 dust, not smoke. I immediately grab my radio and go out to the
6 scene.

7 At that point, at the scene, I immediately try to assess.
8 Now let me just back up. It's myself and there is no other
9 managers. So the incident command center, which we have, where we
10 report normally for a fire or any incident, is upstairs. Now I'm
11 going downstairs first to assess, and then I would respond
12 upstairs to the fire safety director and the fire chief. I don't
13 even get that chance.

14 When I get down to the scene, I immediately notify 204 of
15 what we've got, numerous injuries, bumper block strike, trucks on
16 the ground, and I request third rail power immediately off. I am
17 told by the chief that third rail is already in the process of
18 being removed, there is an ET person on-site. I am at the head
19 car. I am stationed outside the head car. I am being told that
20 now I have power off, and now there's a person next to me and it's
21 an ET person; very fortunate. I'm lucky. He confirms it's off.
22 The bureau confirms it's off; "Ralph, you have power off on Track
23 6," the time, and then I know I can tell the fire department that
24 I have power off when they come.

25 Dead air. Right on top of me again, there's my fire chief.

1 Instead of meeting him up there, he's already down by me. We
2 introduce ourselves real quickly; you stay with me, I stay with
3 you, we're going to stay right here. My location during the
4 entire incident was at that first open door of the first car.

5 I said I just want to go on the train and I want to see if my
6 engineer is okay, and my crew. I go up and I see there's a woman
7 in the vestibule. The door had already been opened. When I get
8 up on the equipment, the woman in the vestibule obviously needed
9 help, and now there's people responding, FDNY, to help her.

10 As I'm getting into the equipment, I notice that the rest of
11 the car is already now empty. It had been cleared out. And
12 here's my engineer now, walking. He's standing almost in the
13 vestibule, Mike.

14 I go up into his face and I just assure him it's going to be
15 okay, it's going to be okay, relax. And we go over to the middle
16 of the car in the consist, and he sits down. I tell him just stay
17 here. I'm going to need to just talk with everyone else and make
18 sure everybody's okay.

19 I come back off the car. The chief, other agencies now come
20 over. We're discussing it. At the same time I'm now updating my
21 supervisor of the incident. The call-outs were all done by Matt
22 Cleary in 204 when I had asked for the power off on Track 6. So
23 the chain of calling out was done by Matt Cleary in the Movement
24 Bureau. He is your chief that day. I'm comfortable with that.

25 What have I got now? I've got people on the platform. We're

1 trying to assess a number of injuries. The Movement Bureau would
2 like to know who, how many injuries we have, and what is the
3 severity of them. At the same time, we do have a train on Track 5
4 with passengers. The platform now is filling up from the people
5 that had already come off the train, and we're loading a train on
6 Track 5. Normal a.m. rush hour, normal service, normal 2817 to
7 Track 6 every morning; 904 leaving off of Track 5 every morning.

8 To back up, I want to just put in that I would like to
9 commend the assistant conductor from Train 904 that I just
10 mentioned, John Fiorino. John is a qualified conductor. John was
11 on the equipment assisting people off, also, in that head car
12 prior to me getting there. I spoke with John briefly. He asked
13 me, would you like me to stay with this? And I said we have
14 plenty of people, John; we're going to just have you make your
15 regular eastbound train. We want to get that train out so now we
16 don't have all of these people on the equipment -- I mean, on the
17 train next to it, watching.

18 Could I move the people off that, let's say, do a -- let's do
19 a track change because of all of this going on? No, I don't want
20 to do that. I don't want to move all of these people with a full
21 platform of people already that some are injured, some are not.
22 You're going to get too much of a commotion. My goal is to get
23 that train on Track 5 out. The train is due out. The incident
24 occurred at 8:19, I believe it is, 8:20. That train was due out
25 at 8:30. I look at my watch, it's 8:30.

1 I contact the stationmaster; I brief Frank that I want that
2 train out a minute or two before that. I brief Frank and let him
3 know that we're going to push this train. John gets on the
4 equipment, closes the door, off it goes. We establish a block on
5 Track 5 now, not to bring anything else in. We run a normal a.m.
6 rush hour, not utilizing C platform whatsoever from that point on.
7 NYPD tape off the entire platform, including the subways, so no
8 access for anybody in or out besides official people.

9 At that time, again, counts are being given to me. I am
10 giving those counts as a follow-up. I'm getting the counts from
11 the chief and I'm giving that as a follow-up to 204, numerous
12 updates on that.

13 You had a question?

14 MS. GARCIA: Go ahead.

15 MR. WETZEL: Okay. At approximately 9:10, the last person is
16 taken off the train. The numerous injuries were, I was told, were
17 18 injuries that was reported to 204, with the worst case possible
18 broken leg. Again, constant updates with 204. The chief is still
19 right there. At 9:10, I am told that that last person is now off
20 the train, and now continuing updates with, also, Rob Free, the
21 CTO, and Vincent Campasano. 9:10, the last person leaves the
22 train, I am also -- I now have supervision backup for myself, Rob
23 Kerr. Rob is a road foreman, the lead transportation manager.

24 MR. BECKER: Lead road foreman.

25 MR. WETZEL: Lead road foreman. Sorry. And Rob assists. I

1 brief Rob of what we have. He sees, he wants to know where the
2 engineer is, and he wants to talk to him. At the same time,
3 through all of that, I want to see my conductor and I want to see
4 my brakeman. I want to back that up just ever so slightly.

5 I've got them on the platform. They assure me that everybody
6 is off the train. I'm friends with them but I'm more concerned
7 with they're okay -- that they're okay. I'm in their face and I'm
8 assuring them that they're going to be okay. I just asked them to
9 step to the back, in the office area, the trainmen's room area in
10 transportation, and then we will come and we will conduct an
11 interview and, later on, a facility test, a drug test.

12 That takes place. Now more supervision is now coming on to
13 the scene, Rob Sisliano (ph.), Superintendent of Penn Station,
14 along with Vincent Campasano, my boss. The block in power that
15 was given to me initially on Track 5 was transferred over -- and
16 we call it an OSIC, operating supervisor in charge. The OSIC was
17 myself during the entire time. That was transferred to Rob. Rob
18 now is speaking with the fire chief, getting updates. And pretty
19 much, at 9:10, the platform is now clear. 9:15, 9:10, the
20 platform now is clear of all the aided and now they've been taken
21 upstairs and outside.

22 My duty there now is to just speak with the conductor and
23 assistant conductor. The engineer had been taken by Rob, the road
24 foreman. And at that point, I began an interview process in my
25 back office with the conductor. I had also, at the time the

1 assistant conductor was there, and was able to conduct the
2 interview with the conductor. If you want me to go into what she
3 said?

4 BY MR. TORRES:

5 Q. Yeah, can you describe --

6 A. Sure. Sure. I asked her, run me through your day. All
7 right, the run number is 85. She is the conductor, Sabrina Smith.
8 Good job briefing initially. They did not pick up their equipment
9 in West Side Yard that day. That day they -- which they normally
10 do on that particular job. They picked it up in the station.
11 There was some service disruption so they picked the job up in the
12 station.

13 Briefing was already done. They have no issues whatsoever on
14 their first few trains. A briefing was done on 2817 in regards to
15 a split between the conductor and the brakeman, six cars, three
16 apiece, after Valley Stream. There was a collector on that train
17 from Far Rockaway to Valley Stream. So at that point it was just
18 two apiece, but coming to me, split three apiece. She was
19 positioned as she approached Atlantic Terminal in the second west
20 car, and she was in the cab making announcements.

21 Now at this time, also, the assistant conductor is there but
22 I'm not taking his statement as of yet. The assistant conductor
23 is, every once in a while, feeding in. I asked him where he was.
24 He was in the fourth west car. Atlantic Terminal is a little --
25 it's a little anomaly in itself. Track 5 and 6 hold six cars but

1 they only platform four. So he was positioned in the fourth car
2 to get the doors in Atlantic Terminal. That's where he was as we
3 approached.

4 She was making the announcements, and the train hit the
5 platform, the bumper block and the platform that was in front of
6 the bumper block further west. From that point, the interview
7 with her was done. There may have been some questions I'm missing
8 that I gave to her, but the interview was done. I was going to
9 interview the assistant conductor, when a detective from the MTA
10 PD came, and that detective decided that he was going to conduct
11 the interviews. He needed to conduct interviews on his own, also.
12 And he had already spoken with Mike Bakalo, the engineer. So they
13 have the priority and they took the two of them to do interviews.

14 At that point they did the interviews and they were taken
15 immediately from there to JFK for a drug test. Those two
16 employees, the assistant conductor and the conductor, following
17 the test, requested to be evaluated. They weren't feeling well.
18 The shock wore off. And they then, coincidentally, went off
19 injured after that.

20 Q. Okay. Did they describe the approach of the train to you, as
21 it was coming into the station?

22 A. Sabrina did. She didn't take any exception.

23 Q. And your interaction with the engineer when you boarded, you
24 were trying to check on his condition?

25 A. He was glazed. It was a glaze. Are you okay, though? Are

1 you physically okay? He just -- yes, yes, Ralph.

2 Q. And that's the only interaction you had with him?

3 A. Yeah. Yeah. It was a glaze. He really -- this is not -- he
4 didn't want any conversation. I can totally understand it. And
5 he just had a glaze. He's a friend, you know. We all are in the
6 business. And he's a good man. It's unfortunate, but, you know
7 -- my concern really is health at that point, and it's going to be
8 okay.

9 MR. TORRES: Anne?

10 BY MS. GARCIA:

11 Q. Okay. I have many questions.

12 A. Sure. No problem.

13 Q. And some of them are simply because I don't understand the
14 nomenclature, you know, what some things mean.

15 A. No problem. That's okay.

16 Q. So bear with me. If it seems like I'm asking details, it's
17 simply to get on the record what something means.

18 A. Fine.

19 Q. But to start out, first, you mentioned in detail about your
20 interactions on a daily basis with everybody, and how many direct
21 reports do you actually have?

22 A. Brooklyn crews in the morning; they stagger throughout the
23 entire day. There's maybe 10 crews, starting with Run 150.

24 Q. Ten crews every day?

25 A. Yeah -- every day. I'm going to go 12 on that, by the way.

1 Q. Twelve?

2 A. Crews 150 to 162.

3 Q. Okay. And that's workdays?

4 A. Yes. Correct. Now, that can vary. Obviously, the weekend
5 is a whole separate thing. But I'm also getting crews that are
6 reporting to Jamaica that end up by me. So there's more to it
7 than just that.

8 Q. Okay. What days do you work? What's your normal work
9 schedule?

10 A. Normal is Monday through Friday.

11 Q. And hours?

12 A. Hours, 6:30 to 2:30.

13 Q. Okay. So the 12-odd crews that are direct reports -- I'm
14 trying to understand how you all are organized. So direct
15 reports, do you fill out their performance reviews?

16 A. No. No, I do not.

17 Q. Okay. How many employees do you fill out their annual
18 performance reviews?

19 A. None. None. There is one transportation manager on the PM
20 tour, and that is handled by the people in New York.

21 Q. Okay. Do you provide input to their performance reviews?

22 A. Minimal. Minimal. Only if they ask. It's just minimal.

23 Q. Okay. If you should observe that they're having some
24 difficulty, their performance isn't what you would consider up to
25 par, in general, what would you do then?

1 A. Sure. If it's an trainman or an engineer, I would ask him
2 first. Based on your saying performance, if I'm train riding and
3 I notice something, I'm going to discuss it with him. I'm going
4 to tell him what I saw, what I observed, and I will try to relay
5 to him the proper way of doing something. That's it.

6 Q. So, would you call that informal coaching?

7 A. Informal, yeah. At the same time, though, if it is a --
8 based on severity of what I observe, then there is a policy that
9 we have in place with the SAFER system. And that is inputting --
10 we are all required as managers to have a certain amount of SAFER
11 inputs for the month. And I would be doing that. And I would
12 instruct him on that.

13 An example, doors opening off the platform, that would be --
14 obviously, that's not a coaching. That's coaching and that's also
15 a document that you have to input, and it goes on a file. It goes
16 into a file in the database of the SAFER system. And it's a
17 progression type thing, and it's also an eyes and ears -- not ears
18 but eyes, so we can understand a little bit about that employee.

19 Q. Could you explain for the record what the SAFER system is,
20 how it works?

21 A. Sure. You have your compliances and non-compliances. We are
22 required to do a certain amount of them. The SAFER system is
23 observations and also testing of them. We have various number of
24 tests that we do now.

25 For instance, for an engineer, a banner test, okay? And we

1 have a banner flag that we go out to the yard with and I put the
2 banner flag between the running rails knowing that the train is
3 coming in. It's a test, and this test is to see if they follow
4 the rules. They're required to contact me and tell me we're
5 acknowledging your stop obstruction. That's what it is, a stop
6 obstruction sign. They are in compliance. That is noted. That
7 is documented. If they are not, that is noted, that is
8 documented. So you have your compliances and non-compliances.
9 And we're required to have a certain amount of them monthly, and
10 we do that.

11 Q. And who does that? Who would put the banner out there?

12 A. That's me. That's me. That's one of my -- one of the things
13 we would do.

14 Q. And do you have a schedule you're to do that for each train
15 crew or train or --

16 A. Yes, we do. We do have a -- it's not many that we do. It's
17 at certain points. And we have -- at certain days of the year.
18 We have an efficiency calendar, they call it, and this calendar
19 tells us what we should be doing: Atlantic Terminal or West End
20 Terminals, provide a banner test or a backup test, and we want to
21 make sure that they're complying with that on this specific date.
22 And there are codes and we input those codes.

23 Q. Okay. What other methods do you have in place as an
24 organization throughout a year to verify that engineers are
25 following the rules and they are operating things safely?

1 A. Sure. That would be our Rules Department. Our Rules
2 Department would bring them in periodically for testing, okay?
3 Once -- and Book of Rules qualified, they would be tested. Other
4 managers, we have train ride days where we go out and we observe
5 them, whether it be an engineer or a crew member, another crew
6 member.

7 Q. Okay. And to your knowledge, the engineer on this particular
8 train, the incident train, did he have anything in his record that
9 indicated other than --

10 A. To be honest with you, I only knew of his record following
11 the incident.

12 Q. Okay. And is that typical?

13 A. I'll say yes. I'll say yes. And the reason, that is a 12
14 a.m. start time, that job in West Side Yard. They come to me at
15 8:20 in the morning; at 8:45 they're gone. For me to start
16 sitting down, I mean, brief discussions and that really is it.
17 There's a lot going on in that rush hour, you know, a lot of
18 oversight. So, do I talk to the crews? Yes. Is it brief? Yes.
19 If it's a turn like that, it has to be. It has to be. The next
20 train he makes, Train 1402, goes to Jamaica. He lays up the
21 equipment and he's done. He's done for the day.

22 So there are a lot of crews. I mentioned the crew numbers.
23 There are a lot of crews that I may not even see all day. Why?
24 Because they go and they're going to New York, and then they're
25 finished. So unless I'm coming in at 12 in the morning, I'm not

1 going to see them.

2 Q. Thank you.

3 A. No problem. A couple of quick questions on what you were
4 explaining earlier just for clarification.

5 A. Okay.

6 Q. You mentioned that ASM -- Frank Degiulio?

7 A. Degiulio, um-hum.

8 Q. -- was in the wheelhouse and he was the one that first gave
9 you an alert that something had happened?

10 A. Yes, a scream.

11 Q. What is his -- oh, he -- what happened?

12 A. It was a scream.

13 Q. He screamed. Okay. And what is his position?

14 A. Frank is an assistant stationmaster.

15 Q. Okay. And he did not go down to the tracks?

16 A. He is not required -- he is not supposed to go down.

17 Q. Okay. And so what is the procedure that you have in place
18 for you to follow when an incident happens on the track?

19 A. Per the emergency action plan, I am to report to the incident
20 command center. Our incident command center in Atlantic Terminal
21 is upstairs, at the fire panel, directly across from Starbucks.
22 Due to the severity of this and to me wanting to give 204 an
23 immediate update, I did not report there; I reported down to the
24 platform first. Would I have? Yes. Once I had given them that
25 information, did I? No. I had the fire chief right there. I

1 wasn't moving. Once I had him, that's my piece through all of
2 this. My piece is the chief. He said, no, we'll stay right here.

3 Q. Thank you. And you said you notified 204. What is 204?

4 A. That's the Movement Bureau, who oversees the entire system.

5 Q. Movement Bureau?

6 A. Yep. Movement Bureau is -- they consist of a chief and a lot
7 of people. A lot of people. I forget the names of it. I forget
8 the names of them. But they are to answer phones. It's in a
9 facility here, and what they do is they're troubleshooting,
10 they're handling everything that is inputted.

11 Q. They're here, in this building?

12 A. They're a couple of -- they're in the building next to us.

13 MR. BECKER: Bret Becker from Long Island. The Movement
14 Bureau, or 204 as he was referring to, is our control center.
15 It's our --

16 MR. WETZEL: Control center. Thank you.

17 MR. BECKER: -- the command center for all the train
18 operations. That's what houses our chief train dispatchers and
19 oversees all the branches on the railroad.

20 MS. GARCIA: Thank you.

21 MR. BECKER: You're welcome.

22 MR. WETZEL: Much better said. Thanks.

23 BY MS. GARCIA:

24 Q. Now, getting back to the day of the incident, you mentioned
25 that when you first went to the train -- where did you enter the

1 train?

2 A. I didn't enter right away. I was right by the first car,
3 first open door on the west end.

4 Q. First car, first open door?

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And that's when I made that notification to 204 and to get a
8 good base between myself and the chief and 204.

9 Q. Okay. You mentioned there was a woman in the vestibule?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. What is the vestibule?

12 A. The vestibule is -- when you come onto the train, you're in
13 the vestibule right there.

14 Q. Okay. First stepping in --

15 A. The door was open and she was sitting down, and she was in
16 pain.

17 Q. Was she on the floor?

18 A. On the floor.

19 Q. Okay. And could you carry on? What did you do at that
20 point?

21 A. Once I was in the train, somebody was helping her. I went
22 and spoke to the engineer, and he was standing right at the
23 vestibule.

24 Q. Was anyone else in the train at that time?

25 A. Nope. No. The train had already been evacuated in that car,

1 in that car.

2 Q. Okay. And the engineer, how was he positioned?

3 A. Standing.

4 Q. Standing. Was he still in his compartment?

5 A. No, he was right at the vestibule also.

6 Q. Okay. Had anyone else spoken to him at that time?

7 A. I don't know if somebody spoke to him before. The gentleman
8 that was helping from the previous train, the train across the
9 platform, he had gotten onto the equipment and was assisting
10 customers off the train prior to my arrival. He may have talked
11 to him.

12 Q. You mentioned that you escorted the engineer down, further
13 into the train?

14 A. Half a car.

15 Q. Half a car?

16 A. It's in the middle of the first car. Just to sit him down
17 and see how he was doing.

18 Q. And then you told him to stay seated while you went to go do
19 something else?

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. Was anyone with him at that time?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay.

24 MS. GARCIA: Okay, I'm going to pass the questioning on down
25 at this point.

1 BY MR. MEADE:

2 Q. Joe Meade, FRA. First, I'd like to commend you. I think you
3 did a great job.

4 A. Oh, thank you, Joe. Thank you.

5 Q. You know, under extreme conditions.

6 A. That's a very nice thing to say. Thank you.

7 Q. Thank God, you know, we don't have to do these things often,
8 but I commend you for that.

9 A. Thank you.

10 Q. When you said that you went onto the train and you went to
11 the head end and saw John, you asked him if he had any injuries,
12 did you notice any injuries on him or anything like that?

13 A. No. No, I did not. Otherwise, I wouldn't have sent him. I
14 would have just had the station manager -- what I would have done
15 is I would have called on the radio to the station, get me a
16 brakeman for 904 immediately.

17 Q. Sure.

18 A. Frank has a little pager where he can just hit a button and
19 it sends a -- it transmits any qualified people or any collectors
20 report to the wheelhouse, and that goes into the trainmen's room.

21 Q. Got it.

22 A. They respond to him; he sends somebody right out.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Just to back up a little with John, had I -- I didn't see
25 anything. I would have said, John -- he's a friend, again.

1 Q. Sure.

2 A. John, we're going to just take care of you, you've got to --

3 Q. Right. Okay.

4 A. Now, he did -- supposedly he had blood. I didn't see it.

5 Q. Got it. Okay. Which was my next question, so thank you on
6 that. You stated that when you first got down to the train and
7 you -- you know, the dust was still in the air. The doors on the
8 train were already open and passengers were self-evacuating?

9 A. There was a lot of self-evacuation from what I could see.
10 The platform was pretty full.

11 Q. Was starting to fill up as people are coming?

12 A. So my thought is -- because I'm stationed there looking down,
13 I could see that doors were open some, but I couldn't see if they
14 were all open.

15 Q. Okay. And the first door where you positioned yourself,
16 where you met the battalion chief --

17 A. It was open.

18 Q. That door was already open?

19 A. That was already open. And I believe John opened it.

20 Q. Okay. That's just an assumption; you're not sure if John
21 opened it?

22 A. Not sure. Exactly.

23 Q. Okay. Okay. Thank you. That's all I have. Thank you.

24 A. Okay.

25 BY MR. BECKER:

1 Q. How you doing, Ralph?

2 A. Good, Bret.

3 Q. Bret Becker from Long Island. I've just got a couple quick
4 questions besides the fact that we discussed, you know, great job
5 again.

6 A. Thank you.

7 Q. You know, we've known each other for a long time.

8 A. Yes. Yes.

9 Q. I just wanted to know, you had mentioned about the engineer
10 -- actually, the crew and how they had to bring the train -- they
11 got the train at Penn Station instead of -- you know, there was
12 something abnormal about that.

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. Were you also aware that the engineer was not the original
15 engineer that picked up the job, you know, I mean, in Penn
16 Station? He picked it up later on because of that incident?

17 A. And that's a great point. Engineer Bakalo did not make his
18 first roundtrip. Due to that service disruption -- and remember I
19 had mentioned that the train wasn't in West Side Yard; that's
20 their normal report, that's where they would normally pick it up?
21 That engineer did not make that first roundtrip assignment. So
22 now his timing, if you will, is now off.

23 I believe there was a car on the tracks or a strike, 2071,
24 was it, on the main line? So he could not come in. Obviously, he
25 can't if there's a service disruption. So there's backup ways,

1 obviously. The stationmaster in Penn Station then assigns an
2 engineer and puts him on that first roundtrip.

3 Q. Okay. And also, you had mentioned that you knew the
4 engineer. I mean, you know, you've known him for quite some time.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. In your capacity as the lead transportation manager, have you
7 ever seen the engineer exhibit any unusual or erratic behaviors?

8 A. None. None. A gentleman. A gentleman.

9 Q. And lastly, in regards to the interviews that, you know, that
10 were conducted, and specifically those interviews by the MTA PD,
11 were you aware that that interview had to take place with the
12 engineer prior to him going for his drug test? You know, were you
13 aware?

14 A. My understanding was they needed to talk to -- they were
15 interviewing him first, period.

16 Q. All right. Thank you.

17 A. You got it.

18 MR. BECKER: That's all the questions I have at this time.

19 BY MR. ELLIOTT:

20 Q. Mark Elliott. Nice job.

21 A. Thank you.

22 Q. You deserve your reputation, so --

23 A. Thanks.

24 Q. Just a quick question. And I know I asked you on the morning
25 of, but just to clarify, when you entered the engineer's cab, did

1 you notice any loose paperwork or certification slips, or anything
2 like that, and do you know -- well, just that.

3 A. I saw him in the vestibule.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Yeah, I didn't see him in the cab.

6 Q. Did you know if anybody took any paperwork out of the
7 operating cab?

8 A. I did not go up to the cab.

9 Q. Okay. That's my only question. Thank you very much.

10 A. No problem.

11 BY MR. TOMAZEWSKI:

12 Q. Bob Tomaszewski with the FRA. Ralph, again, as my co-worker
13 said, very good job.

14 A. Thank you.

15 Q. And I know from times that I've spent in Atlantic Terminal,
16 you run a very good operation and you're very well respected by
17 the employees there.

18 A. Well, that means -- if I can just say -- stop for a minute.
19 That means a lot. Really. Thank you.

20 Q. How long would you say it was -- this is just a general
21 question we're asking everybody -- before your first responders
22 had showed up? Any idea of what --

23 A. Minimal time. I'll give you under 5 minutes they were there.
24 Yeah, that was shocking how fast they were there, to me. Maybe it
25 was my adrenaline going, and then the next thing you know the

1 chief is right there. Right there, which was awesome. And I had
2 met him on other occasions, so he knew my face, I knew him -- not
3 too well, but he knew, okay, that's him, and I -- okay, good, got
4 him.

5 Q. And the only other question is how long was the engineer on
6 the train before the police department took him off?

7 A. I'm going to say probably at least 15 minutes, 15 minutes.
8 That would be very close.

9 Q. Okay, that's it. Thank you.

10 MR. MARALDO: Rob Maraldo. I have no questions.

11 BY MR. HILL:

12 Q. Don Hill. You did a good job from everything I hear.

13 A. Thank you.

14 Q. And a lot of the questions, actually, you pretty much
15 answered.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. The only question I think I might have is you mentioned a
18 road foreman, Rob. What was his last name?

19 A. Kerr, K-e-r-r.

20 Q. Okay. Thank you. You did a good job. Thanks.

21 A. Thank you.

22 MR. BATES: William Bates, SMART. I want to thank you for
23 your help. I have no questions for you.

24 MR. WETZEL: Thank you.

25 BY MR. NEARY:

1 Q. I'm William Neary from SMART. And thanks again, Mr. Wetzel.

2 A. Thank you.

3 Q. Job well done. I wanted to ask you two questions, maybe
4 three. You mentioned earlier that the evolution of the engineer
5 was interrupted by not taking his job out of West Side Yard and
6 that may have affected performance?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. In your vast experience, have you seen when other
9 crews have had disruptions in their evolutions there's been
10 performance degradations?

11 A. I would say there has to be. You're breaking up a person's
12 routine. I'm going to say yes. I haven't seen it, per se. I
13 haven't evaluated that, but I would definitely say there's
14 something to that, yes.

15 Q. Okay. Oh, one further, sir. Did you have a passenger count
16 for the incident train?

17 A. I did speak to the conductor, Sabrina, and that was one of
18 the questions I did -- I neglected to mention. She said a seated
19 load for the first three cars, and then it was sparse, she said
20 sparse afterwards. It was then mentioned at a briefing in my
21 office with the gentleman from the FRA that that number, that
22 sparse number was 70. So with my -- I take a car as 120, the
23 seated load. And now, it might be a little less, a little bit
24 more. So I just do quick math, 120, 360 for three, plus 70, 430.
25 That number, that seems to be the number that's floating around,

1 and it probably came from me, and I think that's pretty accurate.

2 Q. Okay. And the train that departed on Track 5, was that at
3 capacity, too?

4 A. No. No. That's eastbound, non-revenue -- well, eastbound
5 passenger train. But I'm just saying equipment. I'm thinking
6 equipment in the back of my head. It's a passenger train but it's
7 off peak, so the number is very low. Good going, Ralph.

8 (Laughter)

9 MR. NEARY: Thank you, Mr. Wetzel. That's all I have.

10 MR. WETZEL: No problem. Thanks.

11 MS. LEE: I have no questions. I just want to say as a
12 senior person from FRA, thank you very much for your service.

13 MR. WETZEL: Oh, you're quite welcome. Thank you.

14 MS. LEE: Job well done. Thanks.

15 MR. WETZEL: Thank you.

16 MR. TORRES: Tomas Torres with the NTSB. I don't have any
17 questions. I don't know about you, Anne?

18 MS. GARCIA: I do.

19 MR. WETZEL: Okay. Sure.

20 BY MS. GARCIA:

21 Q. So, first, a couple of questions on what you observed being
22 one of the first people on the scene. Okay. What was the
23 position of the first car in relation to both the platform and its
24 rails?

25 A. Sure. The front of the train had struck the bumper block.

1 The bumper block was not visible. It was somewhere underneath the
2 train. There is a concrete barrier following the bumper block.
3 It's probably about 20 feet between the bumper block, and that's
4 pretty accurate, between the bumper block and that concrete. That
5 concrete wall, as I'll say, the train sat on top of it when it
6 came to rest.

7 That also penetrated an area of an entranceway for a
8 facility, and that facility is for the maintenance of -- the M of
9 E people have an office just like in my area. It's very similar.
10 It's a mirror image of the transportation facility on Track 1
11 mirrored on Track 6. That's their access point, behind the west
12 end of the train on Track 6. So, normally, they just keypad in,
13 and the cleaners go back there. They take their breaks back
14 there. They get supplies from back there. And that was one of
15 the fortunate things, was that nobody was in that area, because
16 they're in and out of there all day long.

17 Q. And do you recall, when was that room or that entry into
18 their work area, when was that built?

19 A. The facility completed -- there's a plaque on the wall.
20 Again, I'm not good with the years, but I'm going to say 2005 the
21 facility was completed. It was renovated prior to 2005, and that
22 was the turnover. That was the completion. So I'll say the area
23 back there, 2005.

24 Q. Okay. So before that renovation, that area --

25 A. And I'm going to get you some information, also. I can get

1 you exact dates with that. That's no problem.

2 Q. Thank you. Before the renovation, that area back there was
3 not used as a workspace?

4 A. It was at some point, yeah, because our -- from when I was a
5 trainman, that used to be the trainmen's room on that side of the
6 facility. It was back there, yes.

7 Q. Thank you. And the train, where was it? Was it on the
8 tracks, that first car? Was it on the tracks?

9 A. No. No.

10 Q. Describe it, please.

11 A. The trucks, the F end trucks, the front of the train, were on
12 the ground completely, and it almost looked like it had come apart
13 from the body of the car. Which I have never seen before, but --

14 Q. Yeah. For the record, the trucks?

15 A. It's the housing. It's the assembly of the wheels, the
16 braking system, and a lot of electrical components. And that was
17 on the ground.

18 Q. That was on the ground and --

19 A. That was on the ground and the train is in the air. So now
20 you have -- instead of this, you have this.

21 Q. Okay. And so the car itself was elevated?

22 A. Um-hum, up onto that concrete platform, yes.

23 Q. So, about how far from -- the door that you did enter into,
24 was it up above the platform level?

25 A. It was raised above the platform when I entered that door a

1 foot, a foot. Nothing considerable where, you know, I'd have to
2 jump down or anything like that, no; maybe a foot.

3 Q. Okay. Thank you. Did you receive any updates on the spot,
4 at the time, of the condition of the train and what was smoke or
5 dust or what was going on with the train?

6 A. For clarification purposes, no smoke, dust. Definitely just
7 dust. The cloud of smoke when I saw it on the camera before I
8 went out, no question. When I got there, it was minimal, minimal,
9 and it was -- and it dissipated within a minute, 2 minutes; gone.

10 Q. And does someone report to you on the state of the train?
11 Did the fire department give you a report? Did someone from the
12 railroad give you a report?

13 A. No. And that's where I was asking for third rail power off.
14 And that's what feeds the train and the power. So my request to
15 the chief in 204 was to have that done. It was already in the
16 process and it was already completed. And I had my third rail man
17 right there, which was wonderful, having him there instead of
18 having to go trying to figure out who it is, where he is.

19 It's a different thing in the Atlantic Terminal. We have two
20 third rail plans. We have an A and a B. A is for Tracks 1, 2, 3;
21 B is for 4, 5, 6. For them to -- and that's done remotely to
22 remove third rail power. Now, in this case, it was isolated, so
23 he throws a knife switch at the 6, Track 6 spot only, and that
24 just throws the thing for that.

25 So we were very fortunate to have someone there, otherwise we

1 would have had to shut down half of the system; half of our tracks
2 would have had to have been shut down. So it would have been a
3 little bit more involved. In this case, he was there; "No, Ralph,
4 I isolated Track 6." Okay, I need confirmation on that. I know
5 you did it. Speaking with the Bureau, who speaks to the power
6 director, confirmed, it's now out, the power is now out in my name
7 on Track 6.

8 Q. Okay. Thank you. Now, with your experience with the
9 railroad and your knowledge of how trains work, some understanding
10 that with the power out, you knew that one major safety risk was
11 gone.

12 A. Major.

13 Q. Major. So, who would you look to for information on other
14 safety risks that could have resulted from the impact of the
15 train, that there was no risk of an explosion, of a fire erupting?
16 Who would give you that information?

17 A. We have -- through rules, we can check, also. The exterior
18 of the M-7s have indicator lights. Those indicator lights, they
19 were off. Once you de-energize and you've gotten that
20 confirmation, we're required to check those indicator lights.
21 They were off. You can see them from the platform.

22 Q. And that would tell you if there was --

23 A. You look down and you could see it, you could see the
24 indicator lights. That confirms to me that the car is dead, that
25 the train is dead, that third rail is off.

1 Q. Okay. Good. And did the fire department or the police
2 department give you any additional confirmation that they okayed
3 the area?

4 A. No. No, they just -- I mean, they're doing their thing.
5 They're not going -- no one was down on track level. There was no
6 need to. So nobody's going down there. We've got our
7 confirmation, and they went onto the equipment and assisted the
8 people on the platform.

9 Q. Okay. Thank you. The train that was on Track 5 -- so we
10 have the train coming in, the incident train coming in on Track 6,
11 we have the impact. At the same time, the train on Track 5 is
12 there taking on passengers?

13 A. And loading, yeah.

14 Q. The doors are open?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. It's loading. Okay. So I'm envisioning this scene of
17 complete chaos, as it's been reported.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. With people getting off of the incident train and then people
20 coming down the stairs and getting on Track 5. What is your
21 decision-making process? What rules do you have in place, formal
22 or informal, so that you -- did you make the call to keep loading
23 the train on Track 5?

24 A. Yeah. Yeah, that was me.

25 Q. And what process --

1 A. And why?

2 Q. Right.

3 A. My reason for doing that is I did not want to now unload,
4 let's say -- I don't know offhand the number of people that were
5 on there. I'm guessing, on a regular basis, it's 200. It's a
6 quiet, offbeat train that has a Huntington connection in Jamaica.
7 That 200 people, I don't want them on the platform now. It's
8 almost leaving time for them.

9 If there is nothing wrong going on, on Track 5, let's move
10 them out. We'll take the block and we'll put -- what we actually
11 did later on was we put a train there just to keep media and
12 anybody away from viewing. So once we knew that was it -- I knew
13 the time. I know my trains in that area at that time. I know
14 what's coming. I knew we could operate on a four-track system.
15 And that's just through manipulating. That's part of our job.

16 Q. So, if you could, just think about where in the timeline of
17 events -- starting from when you first heard the word that
18 something had happened and you start going down, where in that
19 timeline of every moment that you did something did you -- do you
20 recall making that decision --

21 A. For the one on Track 5?

22 Q. -- it's okay to continue and get that train going?

23 A. Once I knew third rail was removed.

24 Q. From Track 6?

25 A. And this is now -- yeah. Let me back up a little. Not from

1 the time I ran out there. When I came to the scene, that's when I
2 said, okay, I see John, and John triggers Train 904. John is the
3 gentleman, the brakeman that was assisting from 904. I said,
4 okay, now I got him over on 5. You know, you click, you know. I
5 can walk around in that terminal and know what train is coming at
6 what time. It's just the nature of being there for so long.

7 Knowing I had Track 6 out, knowing that the police and the
8 FDNY were there and assisting people -- and people are loading
9 now. Police are also closing off the top staircase. They're not
10 letting people come down for boarding. But you can board another
11 way. You can come in from the atrium area, the new atrium area.
12 So if you board at the west end of the car, there's no problem.

13 So, with 2 minutes to go, or 3 minutes, whatever it was at
14 that time, that's a very quick decision on my part. As long as I
15 know nothing was affected. How do I know nothing was affected?
16 It was an isolated situation. It was on that track only. We
17 weren't taking power outages. My chief that I spoke to didn't
18 say, you know, we're getting power flips on Track 5. That wasn't
19 the situation. I want him out. I want those 200 people that are
20 on that train, I want them out. Then I take a block and that
21 protects the -- that isolates it then. And then we continued to
22 run a rush hour on Tracks 1 through 4.

23 Q. Thank you.

24 A. No problem.

25 Q. And at the time when that train was cleared to depart, were

1 the passengers all off of the train, the incident train? Were
2 they still on the platform? What was the situation?

3 A. Still on the platform. They're being assisted on the
4 platform. 8:30? No, they weren't all off. Some were being
5 attended to on the train; yeah, some of the injured. The majority
6 had been off the train. In the first car, everybody was off in
7 that one car that I looked in except for that one woman who was
8 sitting in the vestibule on the floor.

9 Q. So in your opinion -- and this is what I'm gathering from
10 you, so please tell me if I'm not getting it correct. Was part of
11 your decision making that in getting the passengers and the train
12 that was on Track 5 gone, that it would clear up the area to
13 continue with the emergency response?

14 A. Well, it's also -- I didn't want more -- I wanted them safely
15 gone, all right, and I didn't want anybody else there. I wanted
16 now the NYPD and the MTA PD to just have that as an isolated area.
17 Now it's isolated. You keep them there, they're not isolated,
18 so -- and if you're moving them from there to another track,
19 they're now in all of it.

20 You know, 200 people, they do -- the majority of them do
21 board on the west end in Brooklyn and they come in on the west end
22 in Brooklyn. But I'm not -- I don't want them on the platform.
23 You know, there's still probably a hundred people further up in
24 the car, and I don't want them walking through all of that. And
25 there's no need to. Move the train. We didn't take any power

1 flips. Move that train. I'm not being told anything different.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And again, that's a managerial -- we make these decisions
4 daily with different things, different things. You know, late
5 trains. You know, we do this all the time.

6 Q. Thank you.

7 A. No problem.

8 Q. I have two additional question areas, okay? One is you
9 mentioned the toxicology testing for the employees involved. What
10 is your process for -- are you responsible, is your organization
11 responsible for getting the toxicology tests if an employee is
12 involved in an incident?

13 A. Yes. We don't perform them but we initiate that.

14 Q. Yes.

15 A. Initiating. Initiating meaning they're called in or they're
16 told that they're going to be tested. That box then is brought
17 with them by a manager to the site, or sometimes the site -- the
18 individual from the testing will come to Atlantic Terminal or --
19 I've never seen it, but it can happen where they'll come to the
20 location.

21 Q. Okay. And that box is what?

22 A. There's all sorts of -- there's urine. I'm not sure if they
23 test blood. I'm not sure what it is exactly in the box. Those
24 boxes are updated by our medical facility in Mineola. And that
25 box had just -- I had just brought that over to Mineola within the

1 last month and it was updated.

2 Q. Thank you. Is that a Long Island Rail Road box or an FRA
3 box?

4 A. FRA.

5 Q. Thank you. Okay. So you have people that maintain that,
6 make sure that they're up to date?

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. And who is it that provides that at the scene? Did you say
9 that the box is brought to the scene?

10 A. It can. It can. It's at a location sometimes. In this
11 case, it was not.

12 Q. Okay. So how does it get to the place where --

13 A. A manager will bring it.

14 Q. Okay. A manager takes it. Okay. And what is the time frame
15 from the --

16 A. Four hours.

17 Q. Pardon?

18 A. From the time of the incident, it has to be done in 4 hours.

19 Q. In 4 hours. Okay. And do you know if that time frame was
20 maintained?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Thank you. And my last area of questions: You mentioned
23 that on first sight of the crew involved, that you got right in
24 their face and did a check; are you okay?

25 A. Always do. If you're my conductor, I'm coming right into

1 your face and I'm going to look you straight in the eye and I'm
2 going to tell you -- I want to know. I want to know.

3 Q. And with you already having personal knowledge of them, you
4 have indicators that --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. -- you would know -- despite their response, you would have
7 an idea --

8 A. No, I gauge them pretty well, yeah.

9 Q. There's a gift part of that, in being able to do that, as you
10 mentioned, judging people, knowing people. There's also training
11 involved. Has the railroad given you specific training on
12 assessing fitness for duty and what's involved in that?

13 A. Oh, that's a tough one. There is. We do have that. And
14 that's through our program in Hillside, which is our learning
15 facility. And we also do different courses. We also have
16 different online courses that we're required to take. And those
17 courses, also -- there are different ones. How do I say? I'm
18 going to get this.

19 MR. ELLIOTT: May I answer? Mark Elliott.

20 MS. GARCIA: No.

21 MR. ELLIOTT: Okay.

22 MS. GARCIA: Thank you.

23 BY MS. GARCIA:

24 Q. Go ahead.

25 A. Diversity classes. These type of classes.

1 Q. If I can say, this isn't a memory test of you checking all
2 the boxes and getting it right.

3 A. Right. That's okay. That's all right.

4 Q. Just, you know, give us what you recall and, you know, what
5 you can think of, as specific as you can.

6 A. I don't recall that much. I'm more of a -- I mean, I take
7 the classes and I understand them, but I don't know the name of
8 that particular class that would enhance it.

9 Q. Well, the type of things that --

10 A. That would enhance it. Just, you know, again, like I was
11 saying, it's similar to what I had done with the people. You
12 know, just be as helpful and cordial and -- not cordial, but
13 helpful and anything I can do.

14 Q. And fitness for duty in particular, do you receive -- well,
15 first, do you receive annual training in your position as a
16 supervisor manager? Do you have refresher training? What's your
17 basic training that you get every year?

18 A. For myself it's Book of Rules, it's PTEP.

19 Q. What is that?

20 A. PTEP is --

21 Q. Just basically.

22 A. Yeah, it's just -- they're operations of the trains.

23 Q. Thank you.

24 A. All right? Emergency preparedness. But there are different
25 things that they do train us in. You know, more so, the rules

1 part of it.

2 Q. Right. Right. And then do you have annual training on
3 things like EEO, diversity training, you know?

4 A. Diversity, yeah. Those are more -- we used to have them in
5 classrooms. Now it's done more online. And we're required to do
6 those, yes.

7 Q. Okay. So some of that is soft skills training, and then some
8 of it is actually -- like fitness for duty, would that be part of
9 a refresher that you get every year, do you think?

10 A. Refresher.

11 Q. Okay. Okay. Do you receive or does anyone in the group that
12 you work with there in your daily routine in the office, okay, do
13 you all receive any type of emergency training, first aid
14 training, CPR, anything like that?

15 A. They offer it. They do offer it, yes.

16 Q. They offer it?

17 A. The safety department does that.

18 Q. Okay. Do you have like -- is there a percent of people that
19 are required to have it, or is it just something that you might
20 pick off a list to do?

21 A. It's an option that you can. I mean, if I wanted to, I could
22 take a course on it.

23 Q. Okay. Thank you. That's all. Thank you.

24 A. Okay.

25 BY MR. MEADE:

1 Q. Joe Meade, FRA. You stated that the stationmaster notified
2 you of the incident. Do you have radio communication in your
3 office, in your area?

4 A. We do have -- we have a Vega system. It's called a Vega
5 system, and that's Brook Tower; that's the wheelhouse. There is a
6 handset, also, in the office next to me.

7 Q. Okay. Did you hear anybody make any kind of notification,
8 emergency notification?

9 A. No. No.

10 Q. You stated you got on the train, you called for third rail
11 power to be knocked out. Did that turn the lights out in the
12 train?

13 A. Not immediately, no. There were lights initially.

14 Q. Okay. So when the third rail power goes out, you still
15 have --

16 A. Still have emergency lighting for a certain amount of time.

17 Q. Okay. I'm just trying to -- did you have emergency lighting
18 or did you have full lighting? Do you know if you take third rail
19 power out --

20 A. Emergency.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Yeah, once that's off, you're going to have emergency
23 lighting.

24 Q. Right. So all your -- 50 percent or --

25 A. Yeah, not all the lights are on.

1 Q. -- a certain percentage of lights remain on for that?

2 A. Exactly.

3 Q. Okay. Back on the line of questioning, are you provided with
4 training from the LIRR to notice any anomalies as it refers to
5 drug and alcohol, or noticing --

6 A. Oh, without a doubt, yeah. We do.

7 Q. Okay. So you're provided training?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Do you get certified in that? Is there a certification on
10 that?

11 A. We're trained on it. It may fall into -- I'm not sure what
12 it would fall into. I don't know.

13 MS. LEE: If I may, I think signs and symptoms. Is that
14 something that rings a bell?

15 MR. WETZEL: That doesn't even ring a bell.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's identifying (indiscernible) --

17 MS. GARCIA: Excuse me.

18 MR. TORRES: Make sure you guys identify yourselves, guys.

19 MS. LEE: Sorry.

20 MS. GARCIA: Yeah. But could we just leave it to the
21 interviewee to make responses and --

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sure. No problem.

23 MS. GARCIA: And if you have questions, then when it comes
24 around to your time, you can phrase it in a question.

25 BY MR. MEADE:

1 Q. Right. So, what I was -- not only fit for duty -- fit for
2 duty can be taken as a vast area -- specifically for noticing
3 symptoms for drug and/or alcohol?

4 A. Absolutely.

5 Q. Okay. Thank you. That's all I have. Thank you.

6 A. No problem.

7 MR. BECKER: I have nothing further.

8 BY MR. HILL:

9 Q. I just have a clarifying, I guess, question or statement.

10 A. Sure.

11 Q. You being qualified as an assistant conductor and a
12 conductor, you would know the difference between a diesel and an
13 electric locomotive, correct?

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. And do they typically run diesel trains into --

16 A. No.

17 Q. Okay. So --

18 A. They might have to.

19 Q. So all of the trains that they're currently running to
20 Atlantic Terminal are electric?

21 A. Electric, yes.

22 Q. And with that being established, after the incident, once the
23 third rail power was off, you had no concerns of -- would it be
24 fair to say you had no concerns of an explosion because this was
25 an electrical engine?

1 A. Fair to say, yes.

2 MR. HILL: Okay. Thank you. That's all I have.

3 MR. BATES: No questions.

4 MR. NEARY: With thanks, no questions.

5 MS. LEE: No questions.

6 BY MS. GARCIA:

7 Q. I jut have one follow-up.

8 A. That's okay.

9 Q. So the fitness for duty, drug, alcohol, those things, but
10 fitness for duty could also be on the medical end. So the
11 question is have you received any mandatory medical type of
12 training from the organization, because that would be one of your
13 responsibilities?

14 A. (No audible response.)

15 Q. Okay. So in terms of also gauging fitness for duty,
16 particularly after an incident, do you have any training or
17 specialized knowledge or experience in assessing if someone's
18 dazed look is -- what it would be caused by? You mentioned that
19 the engineer looked dazed. Do you have anything that would help
20 you have a professional assessment of it as to what was the cause
21 of the dazed look?

22 A. I'm missing it. I understand the question, but I don't have
23 it off the top of my head. It's just not coming to me right now.
24 Again, I can assess the bloody eyes, I can assess the smell of
25 alcohol on you. And again, I'm going to come up -- usually, what

1 will happen is, if someone is on a train and they get a report,
2 you know, maybe they saw somebody in the cab or something and they
3 say, hey, I saw a beer bottle in the guy's -- I'm going to get a
4 phone call and I'm going to look and I'm going to go to that train
5 and I'm going to look at that car and I'm going to look at that
6 person.

7 Q. Good.

8 A. And I'm going to get up in that person's face. And that's a
9 different get up in the face. And I'm looking for signs.

10 Q. Thank you. So what I hear you saying is that is level that
11 you do your assessment at and that you've been trained at, that
12 the expectation from the organization is. And what I'm hearing
13 from you is that you do not have professional training in
14 determining if a dazed look is because there was a heart attack or
15 a stroke or --

16 A. And that's where I mentioned I'm missing it. There is
17 something out there that is that I'm just not hitting right now.
18 There is a training class for that.

19 Q. There is a training class for that?

20 A. Yeah. It's just not coming to me.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I've been going around and I just can't put my hand on it.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. There's a name for it, but unfortunately --

25 Q. Right. For example, right, there would be concussion -- in

1 looking at an incident, you know, there'd be reasons for a dazed
2 look resulting from the incident or reasons for a dazed look for
3 something that happened before the incident. And so you have no
4 training in discerning this in particular, is that what I'm
5 hearing from you?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Thank you.

8 A. Okay.

9 MR. TORRES: Tomas Torres with NTSB -- go ahead.

10 MR. BECKER: I have one follow-up question, please? I just
11 wanted to, you know, ask you --

12 MR. TORRES: Identify yourself.

13 BY MR. BECKER:

14 Q. Bret Becker from the Long Island. I wanted to ask you if you
15 recall taking a refresher training identifying the troubled
16 employee that you're required to do online every year for the
17 state refresher?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. Thanks.

20 A. Thank you.

21 MR. BECKER: I have nothing further.

22 MR. TORRES: Tomas Torres with the NTSB. I have no further
23 questions. So unless anybody else has anything?

24 Okay, the interview is concluded, 10:50 a.m.

25 (Whereupon, at 10:50 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: COLLISION OF LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD (LIRR)
 TRAIN NO. 2817 WITH THE PLATFORM AT
 ATLANTIC TERMINAL, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK,
 JANUARY 4, 2017
 Interview of Ralph Wetzel

ACCIDENT NUMBER: DCA17FR002

PLACE: Jamaica, New York

DATE: January 7, 2017

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.

Lisa Fuerstenberg
Transcriber