

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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IN RE: :

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THE AMTRAK ACCIDENT : NTSB Accident No.

IN WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA: DCA16FR009

ON JULY 6, 2016 :

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INTERVIEW OF: RODNEY FERNANDEZ

Wednesday,

July 7, 2016

Pampano Beach, Florida

BEFORE

DAVID BUCHER, NTSB

SCOTT KENNER, AMTRAK

AL YODER, SFRTA

RICHARD RUSNAK, FRA

This transcript was produced from audio

provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

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3 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher, Rail
4 Action Investigator for the National Transportation
5 Safety Board. This is the interview of Rodney
6 Fernandez, Amtrak train dispatcher.

7 It is July 7, 2016. We're at the RTA
8 Headquarters, and this is NTSB Action Number
9 DCA15FR009. NTSB's briefing item, the purpose of this
10 investigation is to increase safety, not assign fault,
11 blame, or liability, however, NTSB cannot offer any
12 guarantee of full confidentiality or immunity from
13 legal or certificate actions.

14 A transcript or summary of this interview
15 will go into the public docket and the interviewee has
16 had the opportunity to have one representative of his
17 choice. We'll go around the room and introduce
18 ourselves. Dave Bucher, B-U-C-H-E-R.

19 MR. KENNER: Scott Kenner, Amtrak.

20 MR. YODER: Al Yoder, SFRTA.

21 MR. RUSNAK: Richard Rusnak, R-U-S-N-A-K,
22 FRA.

23 MR. BUCHER: Okay, and Rodney, if you could
24 state your name and spell it for the transcriptionist?

25 MR. FERNANDEZ: It's Rodney Fernandez, R-O-

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1 D-N-E-Y, F-E-R-N-A-N-D-E-Z.

2 MR. BUCHER: Okay, thank you. And Rodney,
3 it's like I said, we're trying to get your story so we,
4 if we could start out by just telling us a little bit
5 about how your day was going before the accident
6 occurred. And then just give us an overview of what
7 your involvement was, prior to and even after the
8 accident occurred, the response, people you called?

9 MR. FERNANDEZ: I came on duty at 0625, had
10 16 hours, 15 minutes rest. And as far as the day was
11 going, it was going by pretty good. Around 9:20ish,
12 signal maintainer Al Prez called me to notify that a,
13 he'd be working on the crossing at 25th Street.

14 He was just giving me a heads up sort of in
15 case some, someone was to call in a gate malfunction.
16 That way we're aware that it's him and not an actual
17 malfunction.

18 He said it wouldn't affect train traffic and
19 at that point, I told him, just let me know when you're
20 done and say roughly around 9:59, Amtrak called the
21 emergency, emergency, emergency, and told us he had, he
22 had a vehicle strike and that he saw, it seemed like
23 somebody was working on the crossing at 25th Street.

24 And that's when I notified the PSCC right
25 away, and started making phone calls.

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1 MR. BUCHER: Okay, and you were working with
2 Matt? Matt was your coworker in the office.

3 MR. FERNANDEZ: Yes.

4 MR. BUCHER: What position, you were on the
5 D2 position?

6 MR. FERNANDEZ: Yes, I was on Desk 2 and
7 Matt was working Desk 1, and initially when I received
8 the phone call, I let PSCC know right away because they
9 start, you know, incoming calls would come in sometimes
10 when someone's working on a crossing and they'll say,
11 the gates are down, no trains around. You know, so we
12 know it's not a malfunction.

13 So I let PSCC know. Matt was in the middle
14 of EC-1, so at the time, I had not spoken with Matt.

15 MR. BUCHER: Okay, you were, but there
16 wasn't an issue of you being distracted or anything?

17 MR. FERNANDEZ: No.

18 MR. BUCHER: Okay. That was what I wanted
19 to make -- we'll go around the room with other
20 questions.

21 MR. KENNER: You said you had a conversation
22 with VTMI Inspector?

23 MR. FERNANDEZ: Yes.

24 MR. KENNER: And that was via phone?

25 MR. FERNANDEZ: Yes.

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1 MR. KENNER: Is it common for them to call,
2 call on the phone?

3 MR. FERNANDEZ: Yes.

4 MR. KENNER: And is it common for them to
5 contact you directly before maintenance inspection
6 activities at crossings?

7 MR. FERNANDEZ: Yes.

8 MR. KENNER: Okay. With the conversation
9 of, your conversation with the inspector, did you have
10 a better understanding of what was happening at the
11 crossing?

12 MR. FERNANDEZ: Yes. Yes.

13 MR. RUSNAK: Richie Rusnak at FRA. Just a
14 couple of questions. You stated that he called you up
15 at 0920 on the phone?

16 MR. FERNANDEZ: It was around 0920. Yes.

17 MR. RUSNAK: 0920, and the incident happened
18 at 0959?

19 MR. FERNANDEZ: Yes.

20 MR. RUSNAK: Did you have any conversations
21 with him between that time, 0920 to 0959?

22 MR. FERNANDEZ: No.

23 MR. RUSNAK: Okay, did the, do you recall if
24 other trains went through the area between that time
25 period?

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1 MR. FERNANDEZ: Yes, P614, northbound train
2 ahead of Amtrak went through there.

3 MR. RUSNAK: Now you work this D2 desk
4 regular, so you're familiar with the signal maintainer?

5 MR. FERNANDEZ: Yes.

6 MR. RUSNAK: Did you take any exception, or
7 did you note anything in his tone of voice when you
8 were talking to him, was it a normal conversation?

9 MR. FERNANDEZ: Yes, it was normal. I took
10 no exception. A lot of times they call, and they know
11 if they need to protection on. If he's telling me it's
12 not going to affect train traffic, I understand. He
13 knows what he's doing out there. I'm not qualified on
14 signaling and components, so. I'm taking his word for
15 it.

16 MR. RUSNAK: So, so basically when he told
17 you, you took no, no, no exception to it? That was
18 just like a normal procedure going on?

19 MR. FERNANDEZ: Yes. He's clear of the
20 tracks and in the past, they've actually gone out there
21 and worked on the crossings without telling anybody.
22 And PSCC will get a phone call the gate malfunctioned.
23 So then, now they started doing a courtesy call, just
24 letting us know, hey, I'm working on this crossing. If
25 somebody calls in, it's because I'm testing something.

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1 And that's it.

2 MR. RUSNAK: Thank you.

3 MR. BUCHER: Dave Bucher again. What were
4 the weather conditions? I mean I, what were the
5 weather conditions during or at the time of the
6 accident?

7 MR. FERNANDEZ: I would say it was clear,
8 sunny skies and we did have the windows closed.

9 MR. BUCHER: Okay. And, I know, I just have
10 to confirm that. Okay, I don't have any more questions
11 on my end. Anybody else in the group here? Okay,
12 well, this concludes the interview of Mr. Fernandez.

13 (End of recording.)

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