

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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UP AND BNSF TRAIN COLLISION
MAY 25, 2013
NEAR CHAFFEE, MISSOURI

Docket No.: DCA-13-MR-004

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Telephonic Interview of: ROB TESSON

Sunday,
May 26, 2013

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MICHAEL FLANIGON
Investigator-in-Charge

APPEARANCES:

MIKE FLANIGON, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board
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Washington, D.C. 20594

RICK NARVELL, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

FRED PRINGLE, Chief Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

BRYAN ALDRIDGE
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Safety Task Force
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers
and Trainmen (BLET)

CORY REYNOLDS, Senior Railroad Safety Inspector
Missouri Department of Transportation

KENNETH EDWARDS, Safety Team
United Transportation Union (UTU)

RANCE RANDLE, Operating
Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF)

JUNE WELLS

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MR. FLANIGON: So I just turned on the tape.

It is Sunday, May 26, 2013. My name is Mike Flanigon, F-l-a-n-i-g-o-n, and I'm the Investigator-in-charge of the collision, railroad collision investigation that we're doing here with a UP train and a BNSF train that collided about 2:30 in the morning Saturday morning, yesterday. And we're here to interview Mr. Rob Teffon, T-e-f-f-o-n [sic], who is a BNSF dispatcher and was the dispatcher on duty at the time --

MS. WELLS: Mike.

MR. FLANIGON: -- of the collision. Yes, ma'am?

MS. WELLS: We believe you've got the last name spelled incorrectly. It's T-e-s-s, Sam, Sam, o-n.

MR. FLANIGON: Oh. Oh, okay, thank you. Thank you. Sam, Sam. T-e-s-s-o-n. Thank you. So let's go around again and everybody just state your name and spell the last name, please.

MR. ALDRIDGE: Bryan Aldridge, A-l-d-r-i-d-g-e.

MR. NARVELL: Rick Narvell, N-a-r-v-e-l-l.

MR. RANDLE: Rance Randle, R-a-n-d-l-e.

MR. DUMEY: Randy Dumey, D-u-m-e-y.

MR. PRINGLE: Fred Pringle, P-r-i-n-g-l-e.

MR. REYNOLDS: Corey Reynolds, R-e-y-n-o-l-d-s.

MR. EDWARDS: Kenny Edwards, E-d-w-a-r-d-s.

MR. FLANIGON: Great. And, Ms. June, if you could identify yourself as well?

1 MS. WELLS: I'm June, or Junetta, Wells, W-e-l-l-s.

2 MR. FLANIGON: Okay, great. And, Rob, can I just ask
3 you are -- you're aware from our earlier conversation that we're
4 recording this interview?

5 MR. TESSON: Yes, I am.

6 MR. FLANIGON: Okay, great.

7 INTERVIEW OF ROB TESSON

8 BY MR. FLANIGON:

9 Q. Well, I'd like to start just very generally and ask you
10 in your own words and at your own pace to tell us the story of
11 what happened that morning, and we'd be particularly interested in
12 any communications or interactions you had with either one of the
13 two trains involved. So start where you think it best sets the
14 stage and tell us the story.

15 A. All right, well, it was about -- it was right around
16 2:30 in the morning I got a call from Kansas City to Hickman train
17 that was coming through the interlocking at Rockview. He told me
18 it was an emergency over the interlocking and his conductor was
19 walking back to see what, see what the problem was. And I just
20 told him to give me a call back and let me know what he found.

21 And then a few minutes later the chief had come in and
22 told me that the UP had called him and told him that the UP train
23 had run into the side of our train at the interlocking there, at
24 which point I called the train and they had told me the same
25 thing. And that basically was the only conversations we had had

1 up to that point about it.

2 Q. Okay. Any other communications or interactions that you
3 had on your shift with the BNSF train?

4 A. No. No, none that I can recall. I mean, they --

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. -- ran from St. Louis up to that point. I didn't have
7 any occasion -- I don't think I had any occasions to talk to them
8 up to then.

9 Q. Okay. And how about the UP train? Did you have any
10 communications with them?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Okay. What time do you go on duty?

13 A. 2230.

14 Q. So you'd been duty, if I got my arithmetic right, about
15 four hours?

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. And can you just give me a short rundown on your
18 railroad career?

19 A. Railroad career?

20 Q. Hire on and what you did and so forth?

21 A. Well, I started in 1993 as a maintenance-of-way working
22 for the Montana Western Railroad in Butte, Montana.

23 Q. Uh-huh.

24 A. And then 1995, I went to work for Montana Rail Link as a
25 customer service clerk. In -- I think it was '97, I hired on as a

1 train dispatcher with Montana Rail Link. And in 2000, I became a
2 chief with Montana Rail Link. And in 2002, I moved to Sioux
3 Falls, South Dakota and went to work for the DM&E Railroad and was
4 with them up until when the CP purchased the DM&E. Gosh, I think
5 it was in 2010, I think it was. I worked for the CP for two
6 years, and then I came to work for the BNSF here in Fort Worth
7 back in 2011.

8 MR. FLANIGON: Okay. Okay, I think that's all I have.
9 What I'll do is I'll ask my colleagues or teammates here to kind
10 of go around the table and see if they want to add any questions
11 to that, and I may think of something before we're done.

12 BY MR. DUMEY:

13 Q. Rob, how does that interlocker work up there at
14 Rockview? Who lines that?

15 A. Well, no, we don't -- it's an automatic interlocking.
16 We just put the -- I guess we call putting a request in and it --
17 I think that just activates the circuit or however it works, and
18 then when the train gets in the circuit if it's -- the
19 interlocking's clear, the signal will line for them.

20 Q. Okay. So once you put that request in you -- how would
21 you get it back, or could you?

22 A. Yes, well, you could. I mean, it's the same as taking
23 back any other signal. I mean, you'd talk to the train crew and
24 make sure they comply with the signal change.

25 Q. Okay. And if you would, you would have to contact the

1 UP dispatcher? I mean, what -- how would that work?

2 A. No. If I was going to take the signal back from BNSF
3 train there I would just talk to the BNSF train and make sure they
4 comply with the signal change, and then once you take the signal
5 back it does whatever the interlocking does, I guess.

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

7 BY MR. PRINGLE:

8 Q. Rob, it's Fred Pringle, FRA.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. I appreciate you talking to us. The night of the
11 incident the southbound BNSF crew got to north McBride, they said
12 they had a red signal and they were delayed because of it. Are
13 you familiar with that instance?

14 A. Well, yeah, now that you bring it up, I am, yes.

15 Q. Well, why was it red and what did you do to get them by
16 it?

17 A. There was a track indication had popped in between
18 McBride and Wittenberg, if I remember correctly, and it ended up
19 dropping the signal at south McBride.

20 Q. Oh, I got it backwards. I'm sorry.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Yeah. And you talked them by and you gave them some
23 kind of authority to get on by, or --

24 A. Correct. I flagged them out of South McBride.

25 Q. All right. And then did you dispatch somebody to go out

1 and look at the reason it was red or something?

2 A. Yes. There's -- I reported in to the signal call desk
3 and track inspector Joe Day (ph.) was out there. He came on
4 behind. There was a coal train following that Kansas City to
5 Hickman train, and he got on behind the coal train and went up and
6 inspected the track.

7 Q. Who did you say you reported that to, Rob?

8 A. The signal call desk.

9 Q. Oh, okay. That's all I have. Thanks, Rob.

10 BY MR. REYNOLDS:

11 Q. Rob, Corey Reynolds.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. What's your off duty time?

14 A. 6:30.

15 Q. Do you ever have any communication with any UP crews
16 whatsoever in that location of the interlocker?

17 A. No, I do not. I mean, well, yes, I talk to UP crews
18 that are coming off the UP onto our railroad, but I mean as far as
19 just trains that go through the interlocker there, no, I do not.

20 Q. Okay.

21 MR. REYNOLDS: (Indiscernible).

22 MR. FLANIGON: Okay.

23 MR. REYNOLDS: That's all.

24 BY MR. FLANIGON:

25 Q. Just so -- I think we're about done. One more quick

1 question for me. At the time before you got the call was there
2 any kind of indication or abnormality or anomaly showing on your
3 board or computer screen that you look at?

4 A. No, there was not.

5 Q. So it would just show the -- I mean, once the BNSF train
6 got into the interlocking and through it, it would just show
7 occupied, huh?

8 A. Correct, yes.

9 Q. And on your board, do you -- you don't see any status of
10 the UP?

11 A. I do when they go through the interlocking. I mean, I
12 can see when they have a train going through there.

13 Q. Okay. But if they don't have the signal or a route or
14 they're not in the interlocking, you don't see them; is that
15 correct?

16 A. That is correct.

17 Q. Okay.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did the UP interlocking track
19 circuit come on at the time of the derailment?

20 MR. TESSON: If it did, I mean, I didn't notice it until
21 they had -- until that crew called me and the chief came in and
22 told me that the UP train had run into the side of them.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But you did see the track circuit
24 then?

25 MR. TESSON: Then I did, yes.

1 MR. FLANIGON: Okay. Well, I think we're --

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Does he have anything he wants to
3 offer?

4 MR. FLANIGON: Yeah. Yeah, anything you want to offer,
5 Rob?

6 MR. TESSON: Oh, nothing I can think of right now.

7 MR. FLANIGON: Okay. Well, with that I'm going to thank
8 you on the tape. I'm going to turn this off, and just stay on the
9 line and we'll chat for just a second.

10 MR. DUMEY: Hey, Rob, were you the one that ordered the
11 emergency vehicles?

12 MR. TESSON: No, I was not.

13 MR. FLANIGON: Okay?

14 MR. DUMEY: Yeah, that's it.

15 MR. FLANIGON: All right. I'm going to turn off the
16 tape. Hey, and so thank you very much. We appreciate your time.
17 Hope you have a good rest of the night. And with that we'll wrap
18 up unless anybody had anything here?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, I appreciate you, June and
20 Rob, for being available and talking with us tonight.

21 MR. FLANIGON: Okay.

22 MR. TESSON: Thank you.

23 (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: UP AND BNSF TRAIN COLLISION
 MAY 25, 2013
 NEAR CHAFFEE, MISSOURI
 Interview of Rob Tesson

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-13-MR-004

PLACE:

DATE: May 26, 2013

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.

Kimberly Hawkins
Transcriber