

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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COLLISION OF AMTRAK TRAIN #91 AND  
A STATIONARY CSX TRANSPORTATION  
TRAIN NEAR CAYCE, SOUTH CAROLINA  
FEBRUARY 4, 2018

Accident No.: RRD18MR003

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Interview of: SHAWN HESTER

Dispatching Center  
Jacksonville, Florida

Tuesday,  
February 20, 2018

## APPEARANCES:

TOMAS TORRES, Rail Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

RICKY PAGE, Rail Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

DAVE BUCHER, Chief, Railroad Division  
National Transportation Safety Board

ADAM MARSHALL  
Federal Railroad Administration

STEVE AMMONS  
CSX Transportation

STEPHEN REAVES  
Amtrak

MICHAEL TURNBULL  
Federal Railroad Administration

CORY CLAYPOOL, Representative  
Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen

MATTHEW STEWART  
American Train Dispatcher Associations (ATDA)

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I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. TORRES: Okay, this is an NTSB informal interview. My  
3 name is Tomas Torres, T-O-M-A-S, T-O-R-R-E-S. Today's date is  
4 February the 20th, 2018. We are at a CSX train dispatching center  
5 in Jacksonville, Florida interviewing the assistant chief train  
6 dispatcher in connection with an accident that occurred at Cayce,  
7 South Carolina on February the 4th, 2018. The NTSB accident  
8 number is RRD18MR003.

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

14 The interviewee can have one representative of the  
15 interviewee's choice. You have someone?

16 MR. HESTER: Yes.

17 MR. TORRES: Okay. Do you understand that the interview is  
18 being recorded?

19 MR. HESTER: Yes.

20 MR. TORRES: Please state your name and spell it.

21 MR. HESTER: Shawn Nickolas Hester. That's S-H-A-W-N, N-I-C-  
22 K-O-L-A-S, H-E-S-T-E-R.

23 MR. TORRES: Thank you. Your representative?

24 MR. STEWART: Matthew Stewart, American Train Dispatcher  
25 Associations. M-A-T-T-H-E-W, S-T-E-W-A-R-T.

1 MR. AMMONS: Steve Ammons, A-M-M-O-N-S, CSX.

2 MR. REAVES: Stephen Reaves, R-E-A-V-E-S, Amtrak.

3 MR. MARSHALL: Adam Marshall, Federal Railroad  
4 Administration, M-A-R-S-H-A-L-L.

5 MR. TURNBULL: Michael Turnbull, Federal Railroad  
6 Administration, T-U-R-N-B-U-L-L.

7 MR. BUCHER: Dave Bucher, division rail chief for NTSB, B-U-  
8 C-H-E-R.

9 MR. PAGE: Ricky Page, railroad accident investigator, NTSB.  
10 R-I-C-K-Y, P-A-G-E.

11 MR. CLAYPOOL: Cory Claypool, C-O-R-Y, C-L-A-Y-P-O-O-L.  
12 Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, representative.

13 MR. TORRES: Okay, Tomas Torres with the NTSB.

14 INTERVIEW OF SHAWN HESTER

15 BY MR. TORRES:

16 Q. Shawn, can you please give us a brief description of your  
17 work history with CSX?

18 A. Yeah. Hired out in February 2008 as a clerk. And then in  
19 2009, went as a yardmaster; 2010 to a dispatcher. So I've been a  
20 dispatcher since -- marked up since basically November 2010, but I  
21 took a transfer down to South Carolina, Florence, from Baltimore,  
22 where I hired out as a dispatcher. So my seniority restarted in  
23 January 2011.

24 Q. So currently, you're working as a train dispatcher or --

25 A. Well, I'm an assistant chief now. And I work both. I'm

1 qualified on both.

2 Q. Okay. Can you describe your duties as a train dispatcher?

3 A. My duties -- yeah, it's to get men and equipment across the  
4 railroad safely and efficiently. You know, we -- you know, we're  
5 in charge of everything out there as far as, you know, the ECIs  
6 and the -- routing the correct way and stuff like that, so --

7 Q. So you dispatch trains. And is there like priorities or --

8 A. Priorities is a daily thing. You know, it depends on what --  
9 if we got one running late, you know, we're going to give them a  
10 little bit more priority to get them across the railroad. Amtraks  
11 get priorities all the time, you know, usually above everything  
12 else, unless we have something late we're going to try to get  
13 to -- from point A to point B.

14 Q. Okay. And are you familiar with this territory --

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. -- in this incident?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Can you describe it for us? You know, what kind of territory  
19 it is?

20 A. Well, now when I say I'm familiar, I work the desk. I've  
21 never actually been out there. So all I --

22 Q. Yeah, yeah, as a dispatcher.

23 A. Yeah, as a dispatcher. Yeah. That territory is -- it's  
24 signaled, but you know, in the night of the events it was during a  
25 signal suspension. But, I mean, I know there -- Cayce Yard, we

1 have locals that come out that work along the main line. They  
2 take to the ramp yard, put auto racks. I think it's about near  
3 where that happened, so --

4 Q. When you mean signal, you're talking like trains are  
5 authorized --

6 A. By a signal indication, yes.

7 Q. Signal indication. And you do that --

8 A. On the -- yes.

9 Q. Through the computer and stuff?

10 A. Yeah, on the CAD system, yes.

11 Q. Okay. And then, as an assistant chief train dispatcher, what  
12 are your duties?

13 A. My duties is to oversee all the desks and, you know, make --  
14 you know, any problems arise, I try to get the right men or right  
15 people -- excuse me -- in place to help with the situation. Make  
16 sure crews are called for trains. Make sure the dispatchers know  
17 where to -- you know, what's going on on their desk, if there's  
18 anything out of the ordinary going on.

19 Q. Okay. And on the day of the event, were you on duty?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Now what's your hours?

22 A. My hours that day?

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. From 2300 to 0700.

25 Q. Okay. Can you describe that night?

1 A. Yeah, it was going normal like any other night. And then I  
2 get a phone call. I answer it. It's the yardmaster at Florence.  
3 And he said, you know about 91, right? I said, I don't know what  
4 you're talking about; what's going on? And he said, my conductor  
5 just called on the local and said that 91's hit them head on. And  
6 I was like, what? And I said, hold on.

7 So I hollered down to the dispatcher and said, hey, get on  
8 the radio now with 91, or get on the radio to the local; see  
9 what's going on. And then I come back. So at the same time, I'm  
10 looking on my screens trying to get the right screen pulled up so  
11 I can look at the area.

12 Of course, with it being in signal suspension, I can't -- we  
13 can't actually tell where the train is, because it doesn't track  
14 on our screens because it's dark territory. So I know -- I see  
15 that 91 has the territory. The dispatcher hollers back up to me  
16 and says, yeah, they said they've -- there's been an accident.

17 So immediately, you know, when I found the screens and he  
18 told me that, I asked the yardmaster, all right, I said, have you  
19 contacted the trainmaster yet? He said yeah. I said, okay, I'm  
20 going to call PSCC. He said, no, I've already done it. I said  
21 okay. So I said, I got to go.

22 So I got off with him, then I went through my protocol. I  
23 called the chief. Then I called the GM. Then I called -- who'd I  
24 call? I want to say it was mechanical, trying to make sure we get  
25 somebody down there. The chief said he would take care of calling



1 the higher-ups, of course, like he's supposed to, so I -- and, you  
2 know, we sort of split that so we can get everybody called at  
3 once. I called Amtrak desk. Either called Amtrak desk or I  
4 linked her on the, on the link. I can't remember exactly.

5 And then after that it was just, you know, continual updates  
6 throughout the night. He would call me. I would get more  
7 information from the dispatcher. I would disperse it out to  
8 whoever, you know, to everybody, so --

9 Q. So the yardmaster's the one that contacted you directly?

10 A. Yes. Yeah, he said a conductor contacted him, which I guess  
11 -- I mean -- you know, I don't want to speak for him. But we're  
12 supposed to call the dispatcher, you know, supposed to contact  
13 dispatcher in case of emergency. But, you know, just -- that  
14 situation, you just try to get a hold of somebody, so --

15 Q. Okay. So when you go on duty as an assistant chief train  
16 dispatcher, what do you do when you go on duty? I mean, like,  
17 what takes place?

18 A. We have our transfer. Our transfer the previous shift tells  
19 me everything that's going on on the railroad. I get all the  
20 information. I get settled in. I sign on to my computer screens.  
21 I get everything, you know, in front of me. My emails,  
22 everything, try to go through them. At the same time, trying to  
23 keep an eye on the railroad and keep answering calls as they come  
24 in. So just trying to prioritize things when I first get settled  
25 in.

1 Q. And how many subdivisions do you oversee?

2 A. Subdivisions?

3 Q. Yeah, or is it --

4 A. I don't know. It's a lot.

5 Q. Is this the only one? I mean, no, is it, is it --

6 A. Nine desks. As an assistant chief?

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. I've got all nine desks that I have to oversee.

9 Q. So you see all of them?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. So they all have -- you got different things happening?

12 A. Eight desks. We got eight or nine. I can't remember. Yeah.

13 Yeah, we got everything happening different, so --

14 Q. And day of the incident, were you aware of the signal  
15 suspension?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Was there any discussion about it?

18 A. Yeah, the chief actually -- we had a discussion like a day or  
19 two before about it. That day, when the dispatchers come in, they  
20 -- before they come on duty or come on -- you know, or once they  
21 got transferred, they called the chief dispatcher, and he went  
22 over everything with them about the signal suspension.

23 Q. Do you know what kind of discussion that they --

24 A. No, I don't know nothing. That was between them.

25 Q. Okay. So he goes over for the train dispatchers, so --

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. So what's the protocol when there's going to be a signal  
3 suspension? How does it start, you know? How does it get  
4 originated?

5 A. Yeah, general bulletins will come out. I mean, you know, of  
6 course, it starts way above us. But when it -- when they decide  
7 they're going to do one, general bulletins come out stating  
8 probably, what, 3 or 4 days?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

10 MR. HESTER: At least a week almost beforehand, saying  
11 there's going to be a signal suspension on this day. They have  
12 numbers for -- that we'll call when they come on duty, to contact  
13 that person to go over it. And then if there's any messages extra  
14 need to put out, we put them out before so they'll be on the  
15 bulletins.

16 BY MR. TORRES:

17 Q. So you'll -- there's notice in advance before it actually  
18 takes effect?

19 A. Yes. Yes. Yeah. Yes, sir.

20 Q. Do you recall what the limits were that day?

21 A. I want to say from Cayce holdout -- I'm not saying 100  
22 percent, because I mean -- Cayce holdout all the way to Woodruff,  
23 is what I'm thinking there. I knew it was at that stretch of  
24 territory. I don't know what exact SAS signal or NAS signal it  
25 started at, but I know that was pretty much the limits, so --

1 Q. Okay. So when there's a signal suspension going from  
2 controlled track to suspended signal system, can you explain what  
3 the transition is? You know, from going from signal indication to  
4 a non-signal?

5 A. Yeah. The crew will call the -- they're supposed to call the  
6 dispatcher before they get to a certain point, a certain signal.  
7 The last signal that lined it in, that actually governs their  
8 movement into the signal suspension. They have one last signal.  
9 When they get there, they'll stop. They'll call the dispatcher.  
10 He'll give them the limits on the EC1 from point A to point B,  
11 wherever that might be. It could be mileposts or whatever.  
12 They're in dark territory, they don't go signal to signal because  
13 officially there's no signals, but they can go up to a milepost.  
14 You know, he may have two or three trains in the same direction,  
15 release them behind each other.

16 So he gives them from point A to point B. They read it back  
17 to him. He reads it to them; they read it back to him; he okays  
18 it, time and initials. They understand, they repeat his time and  
19 initials. Then they have to understand that this is their only  
20 track they have. This is -- they can only go from point A to  
21 point B. And once they do it, then he locks them into the signal  
22 suspension.

23 Q. And how many trains can operate in that signal suspension?

24 A. Depends on how much territory there is. And you know, every  
25 how the dispatcher wants to -- he usually just lets one train run

1 the whole thing, you know. But normally, we try to keep trains  
2 moving, so we'll roll it up behind them as a report by, which is  
3 part of our system. They can report by -- if he got -- if he has  
4 given them the authority from A to C, they can report by B. And  
5 say, they're going south, in a south direction, from south to  
6 point B. So once they do that, time and initials and everything.  
7 Then he gives the next train from A to B only. So that train gets  
8 up to B, waits till the other train clears C.

9 Q. Okay. And when the train -- how do trains handle switches,  
10 you know, in that area?

11 A. In dark territory?

12 Q. Yes.

13 A. They got to ask for permission. We give them permission on  
14 the switch. When they -- I've never been a conductor, but I mean,  
15 from what we do, they're supposed to document when they handle --  
16 when they open it and document when they close. And with times,  
17 with their times.

18 So once they do that, before they can report by, if the  
19 switch is in that limit they're reporting by or they're giving up,  
20 they have to give us the switch first. They tell us, okay,  
21 switch, you know, ABC was handled at 10:20 -- I mean, reversed at  
22 10:20, normaled at 10:40. And so that tells us it was reversed  
23 against traffic and normaled back for normal traffic. So --

24 Q. Okay. And those times, they're like -- are there specific  
25 times? Like, you know, can he do it like 2, 3 hours earlier or,

1 you know, does a time have to correspond when he's releasing his  
2 authority as to when he lines that switch back to normal?

3 A. No, no. He may -- that switch may be in the middle of B, so  
4 when he lines it back at 10:40, he may not be able to clear C  
5 until 1200. But once he clears, he has to give us that time, you  
6 know, of the switch.

7 Q. Of when he normaled it?

8 A. Yes, of when he normaled it.

9 Q. So when he calls you that he's ready to release his EC1  
10 authority, which is what? Track warrant?

11 A. Yes. Track warrant. Yes.

12 Q. When it's a track warrant, he tells you that -- he notifies  
13 you that the switch is back to normal.

14 A. Yeah, he tells us the time and -- reversed and normaled. We  
15 got to have both, time reversed and normaled.

16 Q. And you repeat it back?

17 A. And then we repeat it back to him. Or yeah, we repeat it  
18 back to him, and then tell him okay, times copied; reverse to  
19 normal on the switch so-and-so. And I give my initials. You  
20 know, for my sake, it would be SNH, but -- and then he said okay,  
21 and then they go proceed on to releasing the track authority.

22 Q. Okay. You're familiar with your -- what is it, PIM? PIM?

23 A. PIM, yes.

24 Q. With the signal suspension procedures?

25 A. I'd like to say yes, but it's been a while since I've looked

1 at it. Yeah, you know --

2 Q. Well, I'll read you the first line. And this is, "When a  
3 signal system is suspended and an alternate method of operation is  
4 in effect" -- and I'm going to go to 2. This pertains to power  
5 switches, okay?

6 A. Okay.

7 Q. "If necessary, instruct the first movement through the limits  
8 to stop at all power-operated switches, secure the switches in  
9 hand position as outlined either by dispatcher message or special  
10 instructions." So if necessary. So when would you instruct  
11 somebody to approach a -- to inspect a switch? You know, when  
12 would that be proper, or when --

13 A. If -- I mean, you know, when they come to the -- you know,  
14 when we tell them, they should be -- should tell them to check it  
15 right when they come to it. Or, you know, how you need to check  
16 this switch, make sure it's lined for your movement on a power-  
17 operated switch. Usually after it's been handled, you know,  
18 sometimes we tell them. But, you know, if we got the time and  
19 initials from the crew, then --

20 Q. So if you have time and initials, then it's not necessary to  
21 ask them to approach the switch and --

22 A. Right. Yeah, if the crew's telling us -- yeah, because that  
23 crew's telling us they verified the switch is lined. They're on-  
24 scene. They're telling us it's verified for main line movement.

25 Q. Do you ever use this procedure for manual-operated switches,

1 or is it just -- does it only pertain to power switches?

2 A. That would be power switches. I mean, it must be if the  
3 power switch is out of correspondence or something, so --

4 Q. Well, I guess my question is, why is there a difference? You  
5 know, if it's suspended --

6 A. Right.

7 Q. -- you know, and it's basically a manual switch, why doesn't  
8 that apply to other, you know, hand-throw switches?

9 A. I'll be honest. I have no clue why, I mean, it wouldn't be.  
10 I mean --

11 Q. No, I'm just --

12 A. I mean, I don't know. I mean, I can't remember right  
13 offhand.

14 MR. STEWART: I think because signals -- sometimes signals  
15 might throw up when they do it suspended, and it might not  
16 indicate as properly. So it's just got to be verified.

17 MR. BUCHER: You got to spell your name and --

18 MR. STEWART: Oh, this is Matt Stewart, S-T-E-W-A-R-T. Just  
19 to verify when it's come off a signal and it's no longer remote.  
20 And it's kind of hard to understand exactly where the switches  
21 are, so the first train through a signal suspension normally got  
22 to check, make sure everything is lined up properly.

23 BY MR. TORRES:

24 Q. Okay. So you mentioned earlier that when there's a signal  
25 suspension, right? That when you're looking at your screen, you



1 don't see any indications, you know, track indications, like  
2 switches open or broken rail or --

3 A. Right.

4 Q. -- anything on the track?

5 A. Right. No.

6 Q. I mean, what do you see? I mean, what do you usually --

7 A. All we see is the EC1 that we give them, which is green. It  
8 tells them the limits. They know it shows -- it pulls up -- we  
9 can put our mouse over it and it'll show us the limits. And we  
10 see their train ID. So it does not track through. So --

11 MR. TORRES: Okay, thank you. I'll pass it on to Ricky.

12 MR. PAGE: Ricky Page, P-A-G-E, railroad accident  
13 investigator.

14 BY MR. PAGE:

15 Q. What was your duty on the day of the accident, Shawn? May I  
16 call you Shawn?

17 A. Yeah, that's fine. Yes, sir.

18 Q. What was your duty on the day of the accident?

19 A. I was assistant chief dispatcher.

20 Q. And how many dispatchers did you have under your supervision  
21 at the time?

22 A. Eight.

23 Q. Thank you. Correct me if I'm wrong, but earlier in your  
24 statement you said that you cannot track the location of trains  
25 under signal suspension.

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. So you don't see any block lights or -- as the train  
3 progresses?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Block light being a track occupancy light?

6 A. No. Unless it's right at the entrance, and sometimes they  
7 have an approach. I guess that's what it's called. Would that be  
8 it? Yeah, like an approach to let us know they're at the signal  
9 coming out of, or when they're first go onto. But once they get  
10 past that -- no. We do not.

11 Q. What about under a signal suspension if a switch was  
12 reversed? Would you see any indication of that on your screen?

13 A. No.

14 MR. PAGE: I've got no further questions.

15 MR. BUCHER: Dave Bucher, NTSB.

16 BY MR. BUCHER:

17 Q. I have a couple questions just regarding the emergency  
18 response. Okay. When you found out that the accident had  
19 occurred, who was responsible for first notifying emergency  
20 responders? Did that come out of your office or --

21 A. Yeah, I would have normally been, but the yardmaster had  
22 called the PSCC, so --

23 Q. Okay, now his -- the PSCC is responsible for the emergency  
24 response plan that CSX has, and following it? Is that --

25 A. I mean --

1 Q. Well, he can't really answer for you. If you don't know,  
2 that's fine, but --

3 A. Well, I mean, on to -- when we have an emergency or anybody  
4 calls us with something going on, we call PSCC. They get a hold  
5 of the local authorities.

6 Q. Okay. Okay, that's cool. So the PSCC is the entity that  
7 notifies the local responders?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. That's fine. I'm just trying to get that clear.

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. So once you notify the PSCC, you just go on to notifying the  
12 local supervisors --

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. -- or the managers and --

15 A. Try to get everybody included. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Okay. All right. Okay. And to the best of your knowledge,  
17 there was no delay in that notification? In other words, that  
18 yardmaster called as soon as he found out and --

19 A. Yes. From what he told me, he called --

20 Q. From what he told you.

21 A. -- before he even called me. He called PSC before he called  
22 -- I'm thinking before he called the trainmaster, he called PSC  
23 first, then the trainmaster, then me.

24 MR. BUCHER: Okay. That's all the questions I have.

25 Mr. Turnbull?

1 MR. TURNBULL: No, I have no questions.

2 MR. MARSHALL: No, I have no questions.

3 MR. REAVES: This is Stephen Reaves with Amtrak, R-E-A-V-E-S.

4 BY MR. REAVES:

5 Q. Just a few questions. During a signal suspension, what would  
6 the dispatcher screen look like?

7 A. There is, I think, the flashing -- I think flashing "SS" for  
8 signal suspension across the screen where it's actually taking  
9 place. Other than that, it looks pretty normal. I mean, except  
10 for the part, you know, you can't line the signals.

11 Q. Okay. Whenever the dispatcher gives the EC1 form for a  
12 segment of that track, what does that look like when they --

13 A. Once they get it?

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. Once they start -- once we get the information that we need  
16 from them for milepost location and who's copying, and we hit  
17 enter, it starts flashing on our screens so we know -- my personal  
18 way of doing it, I'll look at the screen to make sure it's  
19 flashing in the spot I want it to flash. And make sure, and then  
20 I correspond it and I'll check it again to make sure I got the  
21 route limits. And so -- and then on the screen, like I said, it's  
22 just green. So it's just flashing, and then once we okay it, it  
23 turns solid. So it's just a green line.

24 Q. Green line across for that --

25 A. Yes, that one segment.

1 Q. -- limits of the EC1?

2 A. Yes. Yes, sir.

3 MR. REAVES: That was all the questions I have. Thank you.

4 MR. AMMONS: Shawn, Steve Ammons, A-M-M-O-N-S. CSX.

5 BY MR. AMMONS:

6 Q. Have you ever -- you said you were qualified to work as a  
7 chief -- assistant chief or a dispatcher, correct?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. Have you ever worked as a dispatcher in a signal suspension  
10 before?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. If a crew in a signal suspension -- call it a local crew like  
13 the F777 that night, was performing similar moves under a signal  
14 suspension while you were working -- well, have you ever had a  
15 local crew handling switches?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. You have? Okay. So in that case, that crew reports the  
18 times that they initially reversed and then finally restored the  
19 switches under the signal suspension. Did you -- have you ever  
20 required or thought there was a need to require the next -- or the  
21 first train through that signal suspension to approach those  
22 power-operated switches and prepare to stop?

23 A. No.

24 MR. AMMONS: Okay. That's all I've got.

25 MR. CLAYPOOL: I have no questions.

1 MR. TORRES: That's all I have myself. Anybody else?

2 MR. PAGE: If I may, I'd like to ask another question. Page,  
3 P-A-G-E.

4 BY MR. PAGE:

5 Q. Shawn, under the signal suspension, did you -- were you  
6 issued a job briefing package for under signal suspension?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Do you remember what it consisted of?

9 A. The limits, it was like three or four pages long. It has  
10 diagrams of what it's going to look like, where it starts, you  
11 know, just a -- it's just got a lot of information about the, you  
12 know, signal suspension.

13 Q. Did you -- did it have an issue of general bulletins?

14 A. Yes, sir. Usually a general bulletin release.

15 Q. And did it issue CAD special instructions?

16 A. CAD special instructions? I don't know. That's usually  
17 general bulletin. I mean --

18 Q. Did it talk about job briefings with T&E employees?

19 A. I don't remember.

20 Q. Job briefings with train dispatchers?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Did it have any issued CAD special instructions?

23 A. I'm not -- I don't remember.

24 Q. Did it talk about distribute the briefing package with other  
25 train dispatchers and train crews?

1 A. Not that I remember, no.

2 Q. Go back to the earlier question about track lights under  
3 signal suspension. Do you recall being able to see a track -- any  
4 track occupancy lights under the signal suspension --

5 A. No.

6 Q. -- on that dispatcher screen? I know you weren't the  
7 dispatcher that night.

8 A. No. Oh, you're talking about in that territory?

9 Q. In that territory, yes.

10 A. No, sir.

11 Q. All right.

12 MR. PAGE: I have no further questions. Thank you.

13 MR. TURNBULL: Can I ask a couple quick questions?

14 MR. BUCHER: After mine.

15 MR. TURNBULL: Oh. Okay. Sorry.

16 MR. BUCHER: Dave Bucher. Were there any other signal  
17 suspensions on Columbia Division at the time?

18 MR. HESTER: No, not on -- that was the only one.

19 MR. BUCHER: Okay, that was the only one? Are there any out  
20 there now?

21 MR. HESTER: No.

22 MR. BUCHER: Okay. That's all.

23 MR. TURNBULL: And this is Mike Turnbull, T-U-R-N-B-U-L-L. I  
24 just have two clarifying questions.

25 BY MR. TURNBULL:

1 Q. Do you remember, at the point of the derailment collision,  
2 was that a manual-throw electric lock switch or was that a power  
3 switch?

4 A. It's a manual throw, isn't it? Because it's not indicated on  
5 our board.

6 Q. All right. So I'm clarifying that because of the position  
7 about, if the power came back on, it won't manually throw itself.

8 A. Right.

9 Q. And then the other question is a clarification of the first  
10 question asked about the signal system and seeing the position of  
11 switches. I think, when you answered it, you were actually  
12 considering more like the end of sidings where you can see the  
13 switches. What about like an electric lock switch? If it was  
14 left open, would that be -- that's something you would have any  
15 indication of?

16 A. During the signal suspension?

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. No. Because all -- if I'm not mistaken, I think all power is  
19 cut through there. So, I mean, they -- we wouldn't -- that's why  
20 we don't see track lights or anything.

21 Q. All right, very good. I just wanted the clarification.

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Thank you.

24 MR. BUCHER: I got one more if anybody else doesn't. Have  
25 you -- Dave Bucher, NTSB.



1 BY MR. BUCHER:

2 Q. In your past experiences with signal suspensions, has there  
3 been suspensions where you have lost all track diagrams? In other  
4 words, the power's off and it's completely dark on your board, or  
5 you still have a line diagram? Is that always -- is that typical?  
6 I'm just --

7 A. Yeah. No, I've never experienced it. We've always had a  
8 line showing what each train has, what each -- length of track or  
9 you know, EC1 they have.

10 Q. I don't want to put words in your -- it might not indicate  
11 anything, but the line is still there?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. That's what I'm trying to get at.

14 A. Right, right. Then again, the line is always there. I've  
15 never seen it where it disappeared, no.

16 Q. Okay. All right.

17 MR. BUCHER: That's all I have.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have any other.

19 MR. TORRES: Okay. I just got a couple of questions, you  
20 know.

21 BY MR. TORRES:

22 Q. Do you ever get tested, like efficiency tests? Or do you  
23 conduct efficiency tests on train dispatchers?

24 A. No, the chief and the -- I don't -- well, now they changed  
25 the people. The chief would do it. But the chief -- I said the

1 chief would do it, not the assistant.

2 Q. Okay. And do you know what -- can you explain what type of  
3 test? Do you know how you get tested? When's the last time you  
4 got tested?

5 A. I don't know. They don't -- we just -- they do it without us  
6 knowing. So I don't even know what they -- they just test on the  
7 rules. I guess they have their list of what they go through, and  
8 they listen to our calls and -- because they come by and watch us  
9 and stuff, is all I know.

10 Q. So you're never told whether you pass, fail or you did good?

11 A. Oh, if you failed -- you'll know if you fail. But they never  
12 tell you if -- if you don't fail, then you never know.

13 Q. Is there any documentation that you can refer to, like, you  
14 know, what your history would be?

15 A. No. Not that I know of.

16 Q. Did your training prepare you for the requirements of the  
17 job?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. Is this a safe place to work?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Is there anything that you might suggest that might need  
22 improvement? You know, anything you want to add?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Okay, thank you.

25 MR. TORRES: Okay, if there's no more questions, this will

1 conclude the interview. And thank you very much. Appreciate it.

2 MR. HESTER: Thank you.

3 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

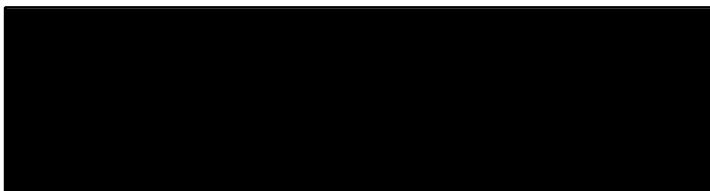
IN THE MATTER OF:            COLLISION OF AMTRAK TRAIN #91 AND  
   A STATIONARY CSX TRANSPORTATION  
   TRAIN NEAR CAYCE, SOUTH CAROLINA  
   FEBRUARY 4, 2018  
   Interview of Shawn Hester

ACCIDENT NUMBER:            RRD18MR003

PLACE:                         Jacksonville, Florida

DATE:                          February 20, 2018

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.



Transcriber