

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

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: ROY RODRIGUEZ

Tuesday,  
February 6, 2018

## APPEARANCES:

TOMAS TORRES, Rail Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

MICHAEL HOEPF, Ph.D., Human Performance Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

MARY PAT McKAY, M.D., Chief Medical Officer  
National Transportation Safety Board

SHANE RICHARDSON, Operating Practices Inspector  
Federal Railroad Association

GREGORY DRAKULIC, Chief Inspector  
Federal Railroad Association

MARCUS LANDY, Railroad Safety Inspector  
Office of Regulatory Staff

STEVE AMMONS  
CSX Transportation

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STEPHEN REAVES  
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BRYAN ALDRIDGE  
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

MATT CAMPBELL  
SMART Transportation Division

JERRY POOLE, Union Rep  
UTU  
(On behalf of Mr. Rodriguez)

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I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. TORRES: Okay, this is an informal NTSB interview. My  
3 name is Tomas Torres, T-O-M-A-S, T-O-R-R-E-S, with the NTSB.  
4 Today's date is February the 6th, and we're going to interview the  
5 conductor -- assisting conductor on Amtrak that was involved in  
6 the accident that occurred on February the 4th, 2018. Accident  
7 number is RRD18MR003.

8 The purpose of the investigation is to find out what  
9 happened, not to assign fault or liability. The interview will be  
10 transcribed and be placed in the docket.

11 And do you have a representative that you wish to have?

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

13 MR. POOLE: That'll be me. I'm his local UTU chair.

14 MR. TORRES: Okay. Do you understand that it's -- the  
15 interview is being recorded?

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

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

18 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Roy, R-O-Y, Rodriguez, R-O-D-R-I-G-U-  
19 E-Z, Jr., J-R.

20 MR. TORRES: Okay, and your representative?

21 MR. POOLE: Jerry Poole, J-E-R-R-Y, P-O-O-L-E.

22 MR. TORRES: Okay. Dr. Hoepf?

23 DR. HOEPF: Michael Hoepf, H-O-E-P-F, with the NTSB.

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

25 DR. MCKAY: Mary Pat McKay, M-c-K-A-Y, with the NTSB.

1 MR. DRAKULIC: Gregory Drakulic, D-R-A-K-U-L-I-C, with the  
2 FRA.

3 MR. RICHARDSON: Shane Richardson, R-I-C-H-A-R-D-S-O-N,  
4 Operating Practices, FRA.

5 MR. ALDRIDGE: Bryan Aldridge, A-L-D-R-I-D-G-E, BLET.

6 MR. CAMPBELL: Matt Campbell, C-A-M-P-B-E-L-L, SMART  
7 Transportation Division.

8 MR. LANDY: I'm Marcus Landy, L-A-N-D-Y, Office of Regulatory  
9 Staff, Operating Practices Inspector.

10 MR. HINES: Jonathan Hines, H-I-N-E-S, Amtrak.

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

12 INTERVIEW OF ROY RODRIGUEZ

13 BY MR. TORRES:

14 Q. Okay, Roy. Do you go by your first name, Roy?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay. Can you -- this is Tomas with the NTSB. Can you give  
17 us a brief description of your work history with Amtrak, what your  
18 duties are?

19 A. Okay. Starting from my original hire date?

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. Okay. My original hire date was June 10, 2013. I started as  
22 a clerk/usher in New York. Transferred to the Florida area as a  
23 clerk, ticket office, in March 2015. I went to -- came on the  
24 conductor seniority April 14, 2017, and graduated conductor school  
25 in July of last year, 2017.

1 Q. So you're a conductor?

2 A. An assistant conductor. Sorry.

3 Q. Assistant conductor.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. How long was your training?

6 A. It was 2½ months in Wilmington, Delaware.

7 Q. Okay. So on the day of the incident, now where did you go on  
8 duty?

9 A. We went on duty at Hamlet, North Carolina at 10:43 p.m.

10 Q. 10:43 p.m.?

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. When you go on duty, what takes place, you know, between you  
13 and your crew members?

14 A. Right from the beginning, we sign in the ledger. One of  
15 us -- it happened to be me -- get the safety rule, operating rule.  
16 One gets the orders from the printer, and we start looking through  
17 all the orders, what pertains to our route. And then we start  
18 briefing together with -- about the briefing in detail all the way  
19 from -- at this point it would have been from Hamlet to Savannah,  
20 as we were supposed to switch engineers in Savannah.

21 Q. Okay. And was this your first engineer that was involved in  
22 the accident? Was he the original engineer on it?

23 A. From what I understand, no. He was extra-board, I believe.

24 Q. No, but he went on duty with you?

25 A. Yes. He came up with me the previous day from Savannah to

1 Hamlet. Yeah.

2 Q. Okay. And he is an extra-board engineer?

3 A. I believe so, yes.

4 Q. Have you worked with him before?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And how about the conductor?

7 A. No, it was my first time, but I've seen him.

8 Q. Is he a regular on this route?

9 A. Yes. Yes.

10 Q. Okay, and you said you reviewed your paperwork, right?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Which is --

13 A. They're bulletin orders, yes.

14 Q. Bulletin orders and what you guys have to comply with  
15 throughout the route?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. And what territory did that cover? I mean --

18 A. It covered from Hamlet, Hamlet Subdivision, Hamlet Terminal,  
19 all the way up to the Columbia Subdivision, right up until -- we  
20 were covering all the way up until Savannah, even Savannah  
21 Subdivision.

22 Q. So can you describe what was on it? On the bulletins and  
23 stuff?

24 A. I can describe it. I can show you also. I have it.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. It had, it had a few -- from what I remember, a few speed  
2 restrictions. It had the instructions about the signal suspension  
3 that we were going to encounter, on which we got briefed at the  
4 Hamlet Station by one of our -- I think he's a road foreman out of  
5 Jacksonville. And he talked us through it. We also followed the  
6 -- the bulletin numbers that pertain to that signal suspension, we  
7 had it out and were following along with the manager that was  
8 briefing us, because it pertained to this area. And we were -- as  
9 he was briefing us, we were just following along with the three  
10 bulletin orders we had. I think it was 105, 106 and 107 was what  
11 we were following.

12 Q. Do you recall -- can you describe what he told you? I mean  
13 what, you know --

14 A. I know that we were going to get a stop signal before we  
15 entered the signal suspension limits, and we had to get paperwork  
16 to pertain to it. I believe it was milepost 362, is where it  
17 started. And I knew that was just outside the Columbia Station.  
18 That we were told switches and track were lined for our movement  
19 through this territory. It looked like it was, it -- from what I  
20 gathered, it was about 20 miles, maybe a little bit more, of  
21 section that was suspended. That if we had to move any switches,  
22 to notate the time on the SPAF form, the switch -- I forgot what  
23 the P is.

24 Q. Position.

25 A. Switch position awareness form -- sorry -- provide the time



1 we put it in, moved it around and back, and then report it back to  
2 dispatch. And when we got to the end of the limits, we were to  
3 release the authority back to CSX dispatch.

4 Q. Okay, can you describe your trip, you know, from the  
5 original --

6 A. From where we started?

7 Q. Yeah. Yeah.

8 A. From in Jacksonville, you mean? Okay.

9 Q. Yeah, and the stops you made and --

10 A. You want me to start with the previous -- the first trip or  
11 this one?

12 Q. This one, this particular trip.

13 A. This one. Okay. Well, I know from waiting in Hamlet the  
14 train was 20 to 30 minutes late. I know we boarded everybody in  
15 Hamlet. We got into Camden. I spotted the train into Camden  
16 because the platform's short. We picked up a couple passengers  
17 there. We could pull into Columbia. We made up some of the  
18 lateness time, and from what I saw, we picked up some passengers  
19 there.

20 And I know -- the conductor was in the back doing the bags  
21 with the station agent, and had come up in the golf cart to  
22 -- I was pretty much in the middle right by the station building  
23 in Columbia. He came up to me and I saw him. Everybody was up in  
24 the train by that time. And he told me he was going to the head  
25 end with the engineer to talk him through the suspension, because

1 he didn't feel comfortable, him being by himself. I said all  
2 right, fine. I saw him go up and I called we were clear. And  
3 that's when we moved along and stopped at the red signal at 362 to  
4 get their authority to go through.

5 Q. So when you're at Columbia, that was the last station stop  
6 before --

7 A. Before everything happened, yes.

8 Q. Okay. So at Columbia, what took place -- when did you get --  
9 is that when you got authority, EC1 authority?

10 A. No, it was out at the -- at that red signal, just where the  
11 authority start is, where we get the permission.

12 Q. So you came to a stop?

13 A. Right. We came to a stop at the stop signal. The engineer  
14 then -- the head end went to the dispatcher channel. I stood on  
15 the road channel to listen out for traffic and everything like  
16 that. I remember calling the stop signal, our location and where  
17 we were on the radio, and I know they were going back and forth to  
18 try to reach the dispatcher. Because I heard him click back to  
19 our channel and talk to Cayce Yard: Can you get a hold of the  
20 dispatcher? And then they flipped back to dispatcher channel.

21 And then -- and I watched my watch. So the 15-minute time  
22 limit to re-announce our location, that -- we didn't come close to  
23 that time, and the guys were back on our channel already. And  
24 when they got the permission, I heard something similar to, like,  
25 Roy, are you okay in riding? Yes, I am. And then we started

1 going.

2 Q. Okay. So when you stopped there at the signal, how long were  
3 you stopped there?

4 A. I don't really remember a time. I mean, I can guess --

5 Q. I mean --

6 A. I can kind of guess for you. I know I didn't call that stop  
7 signal a second time, so it had to have been less than maybe 15  
8 minutes or so. But I knew they were going back and forth trying  
9 to get --

10 Q. Trying to get ahold of --

11 A. But I don't know what conversation was being held, so I can't  
12 tell you to that, though.

13 Q. Do you recall what time you got the EC1 authority?

14 A. That I do not --

15 Q. You do not.

16 A. -- recall.

17 Q. So when the conductor went to -- riding that locomotive, you  
18 know, what did he say to you?

19 A. He told me he was going to the head end to be with the  
20 engineer to talk him through the authority, because he was there  
21 by himself in the head end. That's why he specifically went up  
22 there with him, to talk him through the TWCD limits.

23 Q. And is that a rule requirement or he just took the  
24 initiative?

25 A. That, I think, was an extra safety precaution for us. That's

1 what it was, yes.

2 Q. So the conductor took initiative to --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. -- go up that way. So once they got the authority, they --  
5 you guys proceeded then. And can you describe what happened, you  
6 know, how the trip went from there?

7 A. Oh, boy. As we were -- after we stopped and we started  
8 rolling along, I kept looking at my watch and clocking. I,  
9 knowing we stopped at 362, was trying to time it 1 mile a minute  
10 kind of thing, time it, because we had a notice in the bulletin  
11 that the Gaston defect detector was temporarily out of service.  
12 And I was going to do it as a precaution to call them and remind  
13 them of it. Where our baggage car ended up being at the milepost  
14 367, I was about to key the mic when it happened.

15 And I fell out of the café chair and onto the floor.  
16 Initially it felt like, you know, I tripped on something and  
17 busted myself. I was about -- because the lights were still on in  
18 the café at the time, and I was going to dust myself off, okay,  
19 nobody saw me; I'm not embarrassed kind of thing. And that's when  
20 everything happened so quickly.

21 The café started closing in on itself. It went dark. I had  
22 a passenger in that car. I heard him screaming, and I got jostled  
23 around pretty good into a table. I got knocked onto the floor.  
24 Apparently I hit my head on something because I had a mark here on  
25 my forehead, right forehead. And was sliding towards where the

1 café was caving in on itself and was holding on to prevent me from  
2 sliding even further.

3       When everything came to a stop all of a sudden -- I didn't  
4 initially know we hit something else. I don't know what it was.  
5 The passenger in that car was concerned of his cell phone and  
6 screaming, hurt. And I tried to find it for him and was like, we  
7 have to go. So eventually, he was sitting at the end door --  
8 because he was crying in pain, we had him sit there. And I had to  
9 almost jump with assistance of the handholds to the next car to  
10 get on the ground, and that's when I started my radio transmission  
11 emergency. I went to the back of the baggage car. Because I saw  
12 a milepost marker. I couldn't see what it was. When I got up  
13 close to it with the flashlight, I saw it was 367, and I called it  
14 on the radio.

15       I tried to call it -- "Emergency, emergency, emergency"  
16 several times, and it felt like nobody was listening, but somebody  
17 was. I know that. And my onboard attendant supervisor came on  
18 and started helping -- all the attendants got dressed in a hurry  
19 and we started evacuating the train. We were trying to triage  
20 everybody, non-injured on one side, per EMS direction, and injured  
21 on one side. One of the car attendants that was supposed to wake  
22 up from his rest and replace the other one with me in the coaches  
23 had asked me, did you call 911? I said, I've been calling on the  
24 radio. Call them. They were asking for a specific location, and  
25 I told them, this is milepost whatever. And it's like, I don't

1 think they're going to know what a milepost is; they need a  
2 location.

3 My conductor device is the only device I had on with me as  
4 far as communicating stuff like that, the scanner to scan tickets.  
5 And I had to use the GPS function on that to pinpoint an accurate  
6 location for EMS to get to us, and I gave -- I showed it to the  
7 seat attendant while I was trying to go to the head end to find  
8 them.

9 I started to walk towards the head end. And I remember  
10 saying this -- I don't know if it was at this time. I remember  
11 saying this: "91 AC to the head end." I didn't hear him.

12 Q. Okay. We can take a break.

13 A. Yeah, I'm going to keep going. I have to.

14 And I called it a second time, knowing they were probably  
15 gone. I called it again, 91 AC to head end. I was like, guys,  
16 something; click the mic. I'll run up there; please something. I  
17 called it a third time; nothing.

18 I got halfway up towards where the engine was. I saw it was  
19 flat on its side, and I saw diesel leaking. And I says, wait a  
20 minute; I can't find them because I don't think it's safe. I saw  
21 diesel leaking and it was smelling. So I had to try to keep it  
22 together for my onboard crew and the passengers. So I went back  
23 to them and we started evacuating. That's when EMS came. They  
24 came very quickly. And we actually -- the passengers we had on  
25 the, at the time, the fireman's side of the train, we had to --

1 the EMS couldn't get to us on that side. They were on the other  
2 side. So we had to get some passengers up through the stairs in  
3 the vestibule on the other side to evacuate them.

4 I remember going through the sleeper cars with the police and  
5 clearing the train, looking at every nook and cranny for  
6 everybody. We cleared those cars, and then we went to the coaches  
7 and cleared all those cars except the second one, because EMS was  
8 trying to stabilize somebody in that car. It was a lady who was  
9 screaming. When I got out of that car, the café attendant was  
10 there. And I says, I have to go up there and I have to find them.  
11 I haven't been able to reach them. He goes, you want me to go  
12 with you? I said yes. He found them first, and then I saw them  
13 there on the ground, like that.

14 And the whole time throughout this, the dispatcher was  
15 calling me and I was telling him what was going on. And I said,  
16 listen -- you know, I remember saying on the radio our tail end is  
17 at, right at that marker, 367. And if it helps even more to  
18 pinpoint where it is -- I remember saying this, is I see a CSX  
19 engine on the adjacent track, engine number so-and-so. And I  
20 think he said, okay, I know where you are. I didn't know -- even  
21 when I found them, the guys like that, I didn't know we hit  
22 another train. Because the train -- the engine I saw like that  
23 looked like it was intact. It was dark out there.

24 Right after that, we got everybody we could off the train,  
25 and then EMS wanted somebody in charge of the train to go to the

1 staging area. I said, fine, it'll be me. When I crossed over to  
2 the other side is when I saw the other two engines all a mess, and  
3 I had thought there was crew on that train also. And I had to  
4 have somebody else take responsibility to be the authority at the  
5 command center because I was -- it felt like somebody kicked me in  
6 the chest, and I was -- you know, like you got winded. And I had  
7 to keep it together, so at that point I went to the hospital and  
8 got checked out. And that was, that was the end of it.

9 Q. Now you mentioned it was really dark. There was no lighting,  
10 street lights or anything like that?

11 A. No, it was -- on the side of the train we are when we started  
12 evacuation, it was dark. When you crossed over to the other side,  
13 it was a little bit lit more, more lit. But even more when  
14 emergency -- everybody showed up. But on our side, the fireman's  
15 side where we evacuated everybody, it was dark on that side. Yes.

16 Q. So the direction of travel would be to your left?

17 A. Yeah, on the left side. Yes. Yes.

18 Q. Now you mentioned you had authority on the -- not authority,  
19 but you had a bulletin on the suspension?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. What's your understanding of, you know, the suspension? You  
22 know, how did you understand it? How did it apply?

23 A. From what I understood was it was about -- when I calculated  
24 in my head at the time really quickly, I understand it was about  
25 20 miles in length. We were the -- I understood it as we were



1 supposed to be the only one on that main track at the time until  
2 we released authority back to dispatcher. It was going to be  
3 everything lined up for us straight away, and if for some reason  
4 we had to touch a switch, you know, fill out the appropriate forms  
5 and the time. We touched a switch and put it back normal, and we  
6 were supposed to line the switch back to normal and then release  
7 the authority back at the end of the limits to dispatcher, is what  
8 I was told. And I knew that -- again, I knew that the defect  
9 detector was out of service because it was within the limit of  
10 that suspension. It was taken temporarily out of service at that  
11 time. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. So you've been an assistant conductor for how long?

13 A. Since July.

14 Q. July. And you're familiar with this route?

15 A. I've done it a few times, yes.

16 Q. Okay. And when Amtrak's traversing the -- you know, from A  
17 to B, do you guys usually stay on the main track or, you know, how  
18 is the traffic controlled out there?

19 A. A lot of times -- sometimes we have to, depending on -- like,  
20 going northbound, if the southbound train is late, sometimes one  
21 of us has to sit for one to pass, or a freight train or something  
22 like that. But normally it's -- on our normal -- I mean, a normal  
23 day, if it's we're on time, everything like that, you know, we're  
24 usually pretty -- going right along.

25 Q. So freight trains are usually out of the way? I mean,

1 they're --

2 A. Yeah. From my experience going through this route, yes.  
3 Usually they're sitting to wait for us to pass or we're waiting  
4 for them to pass, or even our -- if I'm the northbound, the  
5 southbound to pass, or the reverse, vice versa, yeah.

6 Q. Okay.

7 BY DR. HOEPF:

8 Q. I really appreciate you coming in and talking to us. I know  
9 it's not, I know it's not easy. Can we just kind of just talk a  
10 little bit more generally? So you're an assistant conductor. Can  
11 we talk about just -- so who are the Amtrak people on this train?  
12 How many crew members are there in total?

13 A. It would have been -- if you count the guys that were in the  
14 front, it would have been three of us in T&E and then five onboard  
15 service crew at the time. But we ended up getting lucky that day.  
16 We had an extra one, who was an onboard supervisor, who was on the  
17 train as well. So he was in addition to the crew as well.

18 Q. Okay. And I realize this is kind of a long ride through a  
19 question, but can you maybe just kind of walk -- just a sentence  
20 or two about each one of those roles and what they do, and maybe  
21 kind of how you interact with the other people?

22 A. Well, as you know, the engineer, he's up there at the head  
23 end driving the train. Conductor, he's the one who's -- so, I  
24 mean, he's the one to act on the EC1 because he has the authority  
25 of it. I mean, I'm here as his backup.

1           We start with our seat attendants. This time of night, we  
2 only have one at night while the other one sleeps on his or her  
3 rest. And they will assist me to try to, at station stops, to get  
4 the passengers off, as at this time of night, as they're sleeping.  
5 And the cleanliness of the cars and things like that. And keeping  
6 the passengers comfortable and informed of anything that goes on a  
7 route. The same thing with the two sleeper car attendants in the  
8 back; they do pretty much the same thing for the -- like they do  
9 in the coaches, but for the sleeper cars, maintain the sleeper car  
10 rooms and things like that.

11           The café attendant, who we call the LSA, is responsible for  
12 that café, serving drinks, food in his car; the food prep, the  
13 money and all that stuff that is involved with selling and  
14 distributing the food in that café.

15           And the onboard supervisor, he was their supervisor. So I  
16 think he was there helping them out as an extra hand or observing.  
17 I'm not sure exactly.

18 Q.   Okay. So I'm kind of just -- just to kind of break that down  
19 just a little bit more. So you've got some attendants, there's a  
20 café attendant, sleeper car attendants. Their supervisor's on  
21 board. Is it -- are you all kind of -- I mean, you're all Amtrak  
22 employees. But, I mean, do you directly -- do you work with these  
23 attendants for anything that, like, specifically related to your  
24 job, or is it a little bit different as far as like train movement  
25 people and then, you know, the attendants who are managing

1 other -- you know, managing customers and all that kind of thing?

2 A. We work with them hand in hand, because all of us manage and  
3 deal with the customers. So we all -- all of us on that -- I  
4 mean, even the whole entire onboard staff, including myself, the  
5 conductor -- or I guess assistant conductor and the conductor, we  
6 all work all together for the passengers, you know. We all, we're  
7 all together, yeah.

8 Q. Okay. So it's really only the engineer who's --

9 A. Who's separate from us, yes.

10 Q. -- sort of separate and off doing his own thing?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. So you said you were, like, kind of like a backup  
13 conductor in this instance?

14 A. No, I'm an assistant conductor. I would be backing up the  
15 conductor if he needed me to, you know, like, take over the radio  
16 communications, things like that, so --

17 Q. Like if, hypothetically, he were to become incapacitated, if  
18 he were to become ill and just needed to go to the restroom or  
19 something, would you be qualified to do everything that the  
20 conductor normally does in an emergency situation, or --

21 A. Technically yes, but because me being new, I'm not yet --  
22 because the process of me getting the territory and qualification  
23 hasn't started yet. It starts in a couple months.

24 Q. Okay. Okay. I'm kind of just trying to get a general idea  
25 of --

1 A. I know.

2 Q. -- like, you know, are you sort of more, you know, managing  
3 customers or is it also your responsibility to be aware of all the  
4 train movement and procedures --

5 A. Yes. That is -- yes, that is part of my responsibility, yes.

6 Q. Okay, okay. I got you. I got you. Okay. So this train --  
7 just to cover some basics, and I'm sorry, Tomas, you covered this.  
8 What time did you leave and what time -- where were you going?  
9 Can you just give me a general idea of this?

10 A. We got on the train in Hamlet. I know we started at 10:43,  
11 we got on the train. The train was supposed to be in Hamlet  
12 around 11:10, 11:13? We got on it, I want to say, 11:35, 11:40.  
13 And myself and the conductor were going to Jacksonville. The  
14 engineer was getting off in Savannah. We were getting a new  
15 engineer in Savannah; Savannah, Georgia.

16 Q. Okay, okay. I got you. And so at Hamlet, then, you knew you  
17 were going to be going into an area where the signals were  
18 suspended?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And you talked about if you had to move any switches. Is  
21 that -- was that more so in terms of like if there's something odd  
22 that happened, or were you anticipating having -- like do you mean  
23 physically get out and move a switch?

24 A. Yeah. Yeah.

25 Q. Like so there could be a situation where you would have to

1 stop the passenger train, get out, and move -- physically move a  
2 switch, and then go through it?

3 A. Yes, that's only -- yeah, that was only if something odd were  
4 to happen, yes.

5 Q. Okay. So you weren't anticipating that happening that --

6 A. No. We were anticipating that it would be straight track for  
7 us the whole way up until just before we got to Denmark, which was  
8 our next stop. Yeah.

9 Q. Okay. Okay. I got you. I got you. And then just to talk a  
10 little bit more about that, like, signal suspension. Is that  
11 pretty -- is that a common thing? Is that an uncommon thing? Is  
12 that -- I guess --

13 A. I mean, I guess it could be an uncommon thing. With me,  
14 since I've started, it seems like it's a common thing, you know.

15 Q. Right, right. Yeah. Okay. So in terms of the communication  
16 about this signal suspension, did somebody talk to you about that?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Your supervisor that --

19 A. Yes. We got, we -- the briefing from that finished, I  
20 remember I wrote it down, at 11 o'clock. Yeah, because we talked  
21 -- all three of us talked about it. They went at length, line for  
22 line, about the suspension, the mileposts and what was going to  
23 happen with that territory. We were going to release it back when  
24 we reached the end of the limits. We were supposed to stop before  
25 we entered, and the switches and things like that was discussed.

1           We even took out our -- the three subdivision bulletins. I  
2 think it was 105, 106, 107, like I said earlier, because it had  
3 the signals that were out, and some were getting renamed and  
4 things like that. And we went over those as well, all three of  
5 those pages. Yeah.

6 Q.   Okay. So was it something you were worried about, going  
7 through? I mean, going through that --

8 A.   No. No. I think all three of us had been through signal  
9 suspensions before, but we knew -- we weren't worried about it,  
10 no.

11 Q.   Okay. Okay. So yeah, I mean, so you were comfortable with  
12 it? You felt like --

13 A.   Yeah.

14 Q.   -- you were sufficiently trained, prepared and everything  
15 like that?

16 A.   Yeah, we were -- yeah, we were comfortable.

17 Q.   Okay. Okay.

18       MR. HOEPF: That's all I got for right now.

19       MR. AMMONS: Steve Ammons, CSX.

20       BY MR. AMMONS:

21 Q.   Roy, I'm sorry you have to be here today. I appreciate that  
22 you're going to make us all better for it.

23 A.   Yeah.

24 Q.   One thing to clarify for me. Earlier you said that at  
25 Columbia Station, the conductor passed you in a golf cart. He was

1 heading towards the head end to be up there with the engineer  
2 under the signal suspension, and they -- it was because someone  
3 didn't feel comfortable or --

4 A. My talk with the conductor on the platform, he didn't feel  
5 comfortable having the engineer by himself through the suspension.  
6 So he wanted, as -- he took it upon himself as an extra safety  
7 precaution to have an extra set of eyes up there to talk him  
8 through the limits, yes.

9 Q. Okay. So it wasn't that the engineer was uncomfortable or  
10 that he was uncomfortable.

11 A. No.

12 Q. He just wasn't comfortable having him by himself up --

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. -- and he wanted to help.

15 A. Correct. He was being proactive in that part, yes.

16 Q. You used the term earlier SPAF, switch position awareness  
17 form. Are you familiar with the switch position awareness form?

18 A. I've seen the form. They told us about the form in rules  
19 class. I know it's just like a form, you know, you -- you would  
20 write the switch name on it. I know that you have to write the  
21 time you handled it and the time you switched it back, and it has  
22 to get faxed into -- faxed or sent to the dispatch some way when  
23 you're done with that particular switch.

24 Q. Have you personally ever used a SPAF or seen anybody use a  
25 SPAF?



1 A. No.

2 Q. Had you had to stop and line a switch in the signal  
3 suspension, would you have felt comfortable doing so and using a  
4 SPAF?

5 A. Yeah, I would have felt comfortable. If I had to, yes.

6 Q. Can you talk a little bit about your familiarity training or  
7 use of ECIs?

8 A. I know -- I'm extra-board, as you guys obviously know. So  
9 during training, we kind of practice filling out an EC1 because  
10 someday we're going to have to do it. Usually I'm on a train  
11 where a conductor and, like, my representative, Mr. Jerry Poole,  
12 is there. If I -- since he's on the dispatch channel and I'm on  
13 the road channel and we're next to each other, and I hear the  
14 dispatcher relay an EC1, a lot of times I'll copy it down as  
15 practice for me, so when it gets ready for me to do it on my own,  
16 I know how to fill it out. So I'm familiar with filling it out,  
17 if that's what you're asking, yes.

18 Q. So would you say it's somewhat common practice for an Amtrak  
19 conductor to fill out an EC1 or use EC1?

20 A. For the conductor, yes. Yes.

21 MR. AMMONS: Okay, that's all I got.

22 BY DR. MCKAY:

23 Q. Thanks for taking the time to meet with us, Roy. Mary Pat  
24 McKay, NTSB. When you were -- I have a couple questions about the  
25 position you were actually in the train during the event. So you

1 were in the café car.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Seated at a table?

4 A. Yes, seated at the last table, right behind the -- we  
5 describe it as almost like a phone booth. It's the conductor's  
6 station. Yeah. It was the last seat, yes. And that's the back  
7 half of the café.

8 Q. And are you facing forward?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And do you remember striking the table or other --

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. -- things in particular?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Were there anything, luggage or anything else, flying around?

15 A. My luggage was. I mean, because it was sitting -- my luggage  
16 and my lunch bag was. It was -- even my prescription lenses got  
17 lost and knocked off of me. Everything was all next to me. My  
18 conductor's cooler bag also was tossed around. And like I said,  
19 there was a passenger also in that car with me. He was sleeping  
20 at the time, and he was getting tossed around also. He was facing  
21 backwards on the last -- on the seat just before the café  
22 attendant's work station.

23 Q. So he was sort of in the front half of the car?

24 A. Yeah. We were both in the back half of the car, but he was  
25 in the front part of the back half of the car, yes.

1 Q. Okay. Okay. And he was injured, but he was able to get up  
2 under his own steam and --

3 A. He was. He was -- I can tell he was in pain with all the  
4 screaming. He was, yeah. And lucky he was not pinned because it  
5 was -- where he was, it was -- he could have easily been pinned.  
6 Yeah.

7 Q. Okay. And then my other question really is about switches.  
8 Have you had practice using switches and moving switches?

9 A. Yes. Right. We did that in a mock-up yard in Wilmington,  
10 Delaware in training. During car handling, we did that as well.  
11 On my qualification trips out here, I've done it with -- I've done  
12 it a couple times also.

13 Q. As practice, not as --

14 A. No, it was part of a movement. We had to do it. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay. So you've actually had to do it --

16 A. Live, yes.

17 Q. Live.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. And what during this signal suspension, in theory,  
20 could have left your train in need of managing switches? How  
21 would that -- I'm not a railroader, so I'm asking out of  
22 ignorance.

23 A. It could be any sort of thing. Maybe the engineer saw debris  
24 ahead on the tracks and we stopped and there happens to be a  
25 switch. So we go around it on the siding or something so we won't

1 strike debris or something like that. Maybe that's one -- the  
2 first thing that pops into my -- it could be any number of things  
3 that we may have to handle it. But usually that would be an  
4 abnormal thing in a signal suspension, because we -- you know,  
5 especially this one where we were told everything was supposed to  
6 be lined for our movement the entire way. Yeah.

7 Q. And then I'm curious, too, about the conductor saying I'm  
8 going to go up and sit with the engineer so he's not by himself  
9 and just be another pair of eyes and ears. You said that you've  
10 been through signal suspensions before.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Any other conductors do that?

13 A. I know a couple times, yes, they've done it to be proactive  
14 with somebody being up there.

15 Q. Okay. And any sense that that might be because these two  
16 hadn't worked together before --

17 A. No.

18 Q. -- or didn't know each other very well or --

19 A. They've worked with each other before. I've worked with --  
20 like I said, I worked with Mike, the engineer, several times. So  
21 they've worked with each other before. It wasn't because of that,  
22 no.

23 Q. Okay.

24 DR. MCKAY: Okay. I think that's all the questions I have.

25 MR. DRAKULIC: This is Greg Drakulic with the FRA. Just a

1 couple questions.

2 BY MR. DRAKULIC:

3 Q. After the accident took place, the power went out, head end  
4 power went out.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Of course. Emergency lighting, did that work in all the  
7 cars?

8 A. When I -- yes, it was on. In my café car, it was completely  
9 gone. Yeah.

10 Q. But did you or any of the other attendants make any kind of  
11 PA announcements?

12 A. We didn't at the time because we thought they -- I mean, I  
13 thought it was completely gone, and it would have been like me  
14 talking to myself kind of thing. But we did go -- I know that  
15 sleeper car attendants knocked on every room and went car to car,  
16 got everybody out, so --

17 MR. DRAKULIC: I had five questions, and they were pretty  
18 much answered already, so that's it. Thank you.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have anything.

20 MR. RICHARDSON: I don't have anything. Just want to thank  
21 you for being here. You've been a great help.

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. Thank you.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have anything either.

24 MR. HINES: Need a break? You good? We could take 10.

25 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, we could take a little bit --

1 MR. HINES: Let's do that.

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yeah.

3 MR. HINES: You okay with that, Tom?

4 MR. TORRES: Yes. We're taking a break.

5 (Off the record.)

6 (On the record.)

7 DR. HOEPF: All right, we are back on the record. And who's  
8 turn it was?

9 MR. TORRES: Oh, Amtrak. Amtrak was --

10 MR. HINES: Yeah.

11 BY MR. HINES:

12 Q. So just a few questions to clarify, Roy. The OBS supervisor,  
13 what employees does that person supervise?

14 A. They supervise the onboard service crew, the café attendant,  
15 the seat attendants and the sleeper car attendants.

16 Q. Are you a promoted conductor yet?

17 A. No.

18 Q. No. So you're not certified as a conductor, you're assistant  
19 conductor?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. Are qualified on this route?

22 A. As far as territory, you mean?

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. Not as of yet, but that process was about to start in a  
25 couple months.

1 Q. Okay.

2 MR. HINES: That's all. Thank you.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have any questions.

4 BY DR. HOEPF:

5 Q. Hey, Roy, just a couple of, sort of, follow-up questions. So  
6 you know there was a signal suspension going on. And I understand  
7 you're kind of new to your position and kind of coming on board  
8 here, so -- but just based on your experience, is dark territory  
9 something you've -- is that a phrase you're familiar with?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. Can you describe what dark territory is?

12 A. It's basically an area where you -- I describe it as kind of  
13 flying blind almost; no signals, nothing. You're there on your  
14 own and you just got to stay in that territory in accordance to  
15 the rules in that particular area.

16 Q. Is that very common from what you've seen? Is there a -- can  
17 you give me like an idea of what percentage is considered dark  
18 territory versus regular?

19 A. I can't give you a percentage of that. I mean, usually it'll  
20 happen during a suspension or something like that, but -- like the  
21 other routes that I do, I've -- it's not common to have an area  
22 like that.

23 Q. Okay. Okay. Does that sort of put you on edge when you're  
24 going through it?

25 A. No. No.

1 Q. Okay. So I'm just trying to get an idea of, you know, is  
2 there any precautions you have when you're going through dark  
3 territory?

4 A. I mean -- you mean like operating through it or --

5 Q. I mean just has anything, like -- I mean, I know you're kind  
6 of, you're -- so correct me if I'm wrong, but you use EC1  
7 authority any time --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. -- there's no signals.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Is there anything else you need to do to take precautions as  
12 you're proceeding through those areas?

13 A. I know from what I've seen with the crews I went through, I  
14 know their awareness is extra heightened through that area to -- I  
15 guess -- I mean, it's -- I've seen that their awareness is extra  
16 heightened through that area because you're in that area without  
17 signals or anything like that. You don't know if anything's in  
18 there or, like, another train or what else is happening. So  
19 you're always trying to be extra aware in that are, because you  
20 don't have nothing to tell you, hey, something's blocking the  
21 track ahead or something like that. You just never know in that  
22 area. That's what I've seen.

23 Q. Okay. So just generally, you've seen people just try to be  
24 more careful?

25 A. Yeah.



1 Q. Okay. But there's nothing, like, specific that they're doing  
2 differently?

3 A. No. Not that I've seen, no.

4 Q. Okay, okay. And also just to describe -- I mean, if you're,  
5 if you're going through a dark territory -- well, let's say it's a  
6 signal suspension. Just walk me through what do you see in  
7 this -- what's the engineer seeing as he is going by? Well, I  
8 mean, you're on the train too. So what do the signals look like?

9 A. I don't know. I can't see it from --

10 Q. Oh, you can't see it. Okay.

11 A. No, I can't see it because I'm in the body of the train. I  
12 can't see it. I'm not in the front. I won't be able to tell you  
13 that, no.

14 Q. Okay, got you. Got you. Okay. And I don't want you to, you  
15 know, speculate on something you're not comfortable with.

16 So Amtrak has to, sort of, interact with other railroads as  
17 you're going through different territory.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Does that present any challenges that you're aware of, at  
20 least, you know, in your position? Or maybe does it present any  
21 challenges for the engineer and the conductor that you're aware  
22 of?

23 A. Not that I'm aware of, but I can see it could be a challenge  
24 with communication-wise, you know, try to get everybody all on the  
25 same page, if it's -- especially if you're running in an area with

1 a lot of multiple railroads, yeah.

2 Q. Can you just kind of walk me through? I mean, do you ever  
3 hear anything directly from a different railroad -- to pick  
4 something less than randomly, CSX? I mean, do you ever personally  
5 communicate with anyone from CSX? Anyone from CSX, anyone from  
6 their safety department, or is that -- those communications sort  
7 of take place above you in, you know, the administrative  
8 managerial level?

9 A. Communication-wise, you mean like radio transmission stuff or  
10 like --

11 Q. Let's say there's like a safety bulletin or something going  
12 around, or let's say like, a job briefing. I mean, I'm just  
13 wondering, like, do you ever interact with people from other  
14 railroads personally?

15 A. A couple of times. You know, they had CSX do, like, the book  
16 check on you to check your paperwork and your books. That would  
17 be one interaction with them. Other than hearing their trains and  
18 the dispatcher talk to us on the radio, that's -- and using their  
19 system to get bulletins and update our books, that would be the  
20 only other thing I could think of that we had interaction, that I  
21 would have an interaction with them.

22 Q. I mean, does it -- does working with another railroad have --  
23 complicate your job at all?

24 A. I don't think so, because I was trained on that railroad's  
25 rules. Like, in this case, CSX, so you know.

1 Q. Okay. The last thing I just wanted to talk to you about, and  
2 I realize this is, you know, particularly difficult talking about,  
3 you know, the accident itself. Just in, I don't know, the -- in  
4 your walking around prior to or maybe in your -- if you had any  
5 discussions in the hospital with any of your co-workers or  
6 anything, did you hear about what anybody else was doing? You  
7 know, if the other crew members were awake, sleeping; were they  
8 walking around? Do you know -- if we were to talk to them and  
9 interview them, do you think they'd be able to provide us with any  
10 information that would be -- any key information or anything  
11 you've heard of that might be important?

12 A. I don't -- interview them, like, yeah, you would say -- I  
13 mean -- you mean interviewing them like you're doing with me now?

14 Q. Yeah. Yeah.

15 A. I don't know if you would get anything further than that. I  
16 did hear from a couple crew. I was worried about a couple of  
17 them, which I didn't see them in the hospital at the time. I know  
18 the coach attendant, Franklin Sanchez, was on his sleep downtime  
19 and was about to wake up and replace Javier, and it was Javier's  
20 time to go back to sleep. I know when he woke up, the impact --  
21 his knee went into the wall of his sleeper car pretty hard and I  
22 know he was worried about his leg.

23 I know that the other sleeper car attendant, the fairly  
24 new -- Sondra, was on her downtime. And the other sleeper car  
25 attendant was Fred; he was up. And I know that the café attendant

1 was -- went on his sleep break at midnight. So. I mean, he hasn't  
2 said anything to me as far as what happened with him in his  
3 particular car. The only one I really heard about was Fred. And  
4 the onboard supervisor, George, I didn't see him at the hospital.

5 And those were the two -- actually, those were one of the  
6 three I was concerned of. Because when I was getting checked out  
7 in the hospital, sleeper car -- the sleeper car attendant, Fred,  
8 was in the bed adjacent to me, and I was worried about him too  
9 because, from what I understood, he got kept in the hospital an  
10 extra day or so, you know.

11 Q. Got you. Got you. Yeah, so, you know, obviously we're  
12 concerned about them and hoping they're -- hoping they, you know,  
13 recover well. It sounds kind of like they're, like you, you know,  
14 they weren't up in the locomotive and weren't really -- didn't  
15 really have anything to do actively with controlling the train or  
16 weren't really probably aware of any of the planning or the  
17 coordination of the train movements. Is that a fair  
18 characterization?

19 A. Yes. They weren't anywhere -- yeah.

20 Q. Yeah. And I mean, as far as you yourself, again, at the time  
21 you were, you said, in the café car?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. So I mean, you weren't involved in the planning or the  
24 movement of the train or --

25 A. Not at the time.

1 Q. -- communicating with -- did you communicate with the  
2 conductor or engineer recently? Did they say anything to you, you  
3 know, prior to the accident sequence that you remember?

4 A. Other than when we were at the stop signal and they were  
5 making sure that I was up and riding in a safe place, and I  
6 communicated back to them I was. And me being proactive to call  
7 out that defect detector, I mean, that was the last time I talked  
8 to them. But I was going to talk to them again to remind them  
9 about the defect detector that was temporarily out, and I didn't  
10 get a chance to. So, you know, the last time I talked to them was  
11 at that stop signal when they made sure I was in the -- ready to  
12 go.

13 Q. Again, can you just rehash that one more time? You said you  
14 contacted them about the defect?

15 A. I was about to when we had the impact. I didn't get a chance  
16 to. I was about to radio it to be proactive, and I didn't get a  
17 chance to.

18 Q. Okay. Okay. But before that, you had talked about that?

19 A. No, before when we were at the stop signal and we were going  
20 to start moving, they wanted to make sure I was ready to go in the  
21 back. So they asked me, are you up? Something like that, up or  
22 up or right. At the time I don't remember what he said, but he  
23 said something similar to that. And I said yes, and we moved on.

24 Q. Okay. Okay, thanks, Roy. Okay, Roy, we just have a couple  
25 just concluding things that Tomas is going to ask you. Just some

1 final questions. Before we do that, though, just -- do you have  
2 any recommendations to improve safety just in general, related to  
3 this, related to anything we've talked about?

4 A. Yeah. A lot of us would like to see the second engineer back  
5 in the head end. We recently went through a lot of shuffling  
6 around, and that's the reason why we switch engineers at Savannah.  
7 It used to be -- before I even came on, it used to be you had the  
8 second person up there going this long a route. Just having a  
9 second set of eyes up there, like a second engineer, something  
10 like that, would have helped. I mean, that would be my only other  
11 concern right now. I can't think of anything else.

12 MR. TORRES: Okay. Tomas with the NTSB.

13 BY MR. TORRES:

14 Q. Just some basic questions. What was the train ID?

15 A. P091-03.

16 Q. Okay. Do you take any prescription medicines, over-the-  
17 counter medicines?

18 A. As far as prescription, no. Over-the-counter, yes. Like the  
19 seasonal allergy stuff, you know. Prilosec for acid reflux, but I  
20 haven't taken it in months.

21 Q. Did you use your cell phone, personal cell phone during the  
22 trip?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Do you have a company cell phone?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And is that what you used to contact, call 911 or --

2 A. The seat -- the car attendant, Javier, called 911 on that  
3 phone. I had it when I had to call our operations center to let  
4 them know what happened. And I used it to call the FE dispatcher,  
5 because I know that the time they were asking me if I was able to  
6 get a hold of the guys in the front, and I said something similar  
7 to this: Not right now. We're in the middle of evacuating. I'll  
8 get back to you.

9 And when the officer told me they were gone, that's -- being  
10 respectful and -- at the time I thought it was being respectful to  
11 the guys and not appropriate for me to tell them what I heard from  
12 the cops over the radio, so that's why I called FE. I couldn't  
13 get a hold of the FF dispatcher. I said, let me call FE and have  
14 them relay it to them. And I told him over the -- over the  
15 company phone.

16 Q. I understand. Is it a safe place to work?

17 A. For me, it is. I mean, when I started at Amtrak as an usher,  
18 it's always drilled into us with this -- the safety program we had  
19 before -- it's renamed now different, but it still has the same  
20 concept and same ideals. It says -- it's drilled into us from day  
21 one. Even when I was a little station agent at the ticket office,  
22 and it's always -- you know, you walk in the door in one piece and  
23 that's the same way you have to walk out, and you got to do what  
24 you got to do to keep yourself safe, is pretty much what's been  
25 drilled into me about, from everybody, from management, everything

1 like that.

2 Q. Okay. Did your training prepare you for your job?

3 A. That, so for -- before it had happened, I knew how to -- the  
4 previous industry I was in helped with this too, because I was a  
5 former flight attendant. So that helped in this situation too.  
6 And a combination of what I was trained in Wilmington.

7 Q. Okay. Is there anything else you want to add?

8 A. No.

9 MR. TORRES: Okay, then, any -- is there any more questions?  
10 No?

11 Okay. This will conclude the interview. Thank you.  
12 Appreciate it.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, guys.

14 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)  
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CERTIFICATE

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

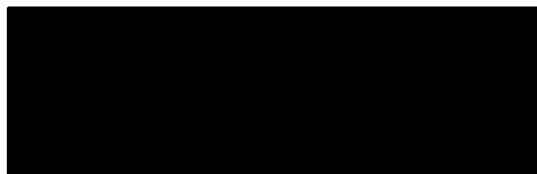
IN THE MATTER OF:           COLLISION OF AMTRAK TRAIN #91 AND  
                                  A STATIONARY CSX TRANSPORTATION  
                                  TRAIN NEAR CAYCE, SOUTH CAROLINA  
                                  FEBRUARY 4, 2018  
                                  Interview of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

ACCIDENT NUMBER:           RRD18MR003

PLACE:

DATE:                         February 6, 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