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 * Accident No.: RRD18MR003
FEBRUARY 4, 2018 *
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Interview of: PAUL SINSEL

Dispatching Center
Jacksonville, Florida

Wednesday,
February 21, 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

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

MR. TORRES: Okay, this is an NTSB informal interview. My name is Tomas Torres, T-O-M-A-S, T-O-R-R-E-S. Today's date is February the 21st, 2018. We are at a CSX train dispatching center in Jacksonville, Florida interviewing a CSX -- what was it? Contractor?

MR. SINSEL: Correct.

MR. TORRES: In connection with the accident that occurred in Cayce, South Carolina on February the 4th, 2018. The NTSB accident number is RRD18MR003.

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

The interviewee can have one representative of the interviewee's choice. Do you have somebody, you know, you want to sit next to you? No?

MR. SINSEL: No.

MR. TORRES: And do you understand this interview is being recorded?

MR. SINSEL: Yes, sir.

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

MR. SINSEL: Paul W. Sinsel. P-A-U-L, S-I-N-S-E-L.

MR. TORRES: Thank you.

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

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

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

MR. BUCHER: Dave Bucher, B-U-C-H-E-R, NTSB.

MR. PAGE: Ricky Page, P-A-G-E, NTSB.

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

INTERVIEW OF PAUL SINSEL

BY MR. TORRES:

Q. Paul, can you please give us a brief description of your history, you know, with the railroad industry? What you've done, what you do?

A. I worked for CSX Railroad for over 40 years, about 40½ years, in capacity of the Transportation Department, train order operator, train dispatcher, assistant chief dispatcher, chief dispatcher and superintendent of train operations. I worked in Jacksonville here as a train dispatcher for about 18 years, I guess it was, and then transferred to Baltimore, where -- as a chief dispatcher, I went to Baltimore and was promoted to superintendent of train operations in Baltimore, and retired from CSX in Baltimore in 2011.

Now, since 2011, I've been working as a consultant for Xorail Corporation. I have a contract with them as a consultant to work with them on signal suspensions.

Q. Okay. You said you were a superintendent of operations with

CSX?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Can you describe those duties or, you know, what -- your job description?
A. Basically, you're the manager in charge of the dispatcher's office for that particular division. You supervise -- I had five directors of train operations, managers, and approximately 35 train dispatchers under -- and a chief dispatcher under the umbrella there as a superintendent. And you oversaw the operations.

Also you worked planning curfew, track curfews. You worked planning signal suspensions, any kind of outages or any of that type of thing. When you had like a derailment, you would be there to shut the railroad down, start the railroad back up. Also the superintendent, I did the investigations. We did -- I did the rules classes for the officers and the dispatchers, just to name a few things that encompassed that position.

Q. So currently now you deal -- as a contractor, what do you deal with?
A. I am the voice or go-between between the signal people in the field and the transportation people here in the dispatcher's offices. Before they centralized, we would travel around to the different offices. There's four of us that did it. And we would get on a bridge line, and we would talk directly with the project manager. And the project manager and I would brief in the morning

as to what they were going to need that day to get this project up and running, and what they would need throughout the day from the dispatcher. And then I would give them train line-ups that I would get as far as what they had to be cleared for or what would be interfering with anything that they had to be doing.

So all day long, anything they needed, they would contact me and I would either -- I'd go to the dispatcher and see if I could get that for them. Anything the dispatcher needed, he would give it to me and I would relay it back to them, for them to, you know, clear up or whatever we needed. And also, I would be in the -- on the conference calls for the planning part of the signal suspension. And basically, I wouldn't be really part of that planning process, other than I'd be gathering the information as to what that signal suspension was going to be. So I would know before I went in there, you know, what we were -- the area was going to be and what challenges we may have.

Q. Okay. On this particular signal suspension -- that was on February the 3rd?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. When did the plans start, you know, the planning started?

A. Well, I do a lot of signal suspensions over a period of years, so -- and they're all similar, you know, pretty much as far as the planning process. We're going to take the signals down from this point to this point for this amount of time. And they tend to start running together after I've done so many, so I can't

remember specific dates. I mean, if I did some researching through the help-a-proc, I could figure out when that -- but usually we're -- or try to do it around 2 weeks prior to the start of the signal suspension, when we have the first planning call. And we'll go through the whole process of reading the signal suspension bulletins and find, you know -- getting all the T's crossed and I's dotted, so to speak, to get everything correct. Then a week before the signal suspension, we'll do what they call a final call. And that's just to make sure that nothing's changed and everything is good to go.

So I would say, like I say, probably somewhere 2 weeks prior to February 3rd that we had our initial planning call.

Q. Okay. You say that you're like the go-between between the signal department and train dispatchers?

A. Yeah, just the voice, so to speak. Somebody, a representative here in the signal department would have to talk to. Because the dispatcher, you know, has more territory than just that one particular territory that's being suspended. He can't be readily available for the signal department to contact and say, I need to put this location in local, or I need to know if I can do this or that, or when's this area going to be clear? So they'll contact me, because I sit on a bridge line, and they'll say, would you ask that dispatcher when I can get track time here or can I put this location in local?

When we first come in in the morning, we have to put all the

switches within the limits in hand throw. You have to take all the switch locations out of remote. They'll contact me, and I'll go down and I'll have a talk with the dispatcher: Hey, when this area is clear of all traffic, we'd like to take the switches and put them in hand throw position, and take all locations out of your control; are you okay with that?

And the dispatcher will say yes or no. If he says yes, then I'll say okay, well, don't run any trains till I come back to you and tell you that they have confirmed they have everything lined and locked according to the bulletins that are issued.

I'll give that to the project manager. He'll have his people do his thing, put all the locations in offline, switches lined and locked according to the way the bulletin states. He comes back, tells me that that is the way it is. I go back and give it to the dispatcher and say, okay, everything is good; the signal suspension's in effect and you can start running trains under signal suspension.

So that's the start of things. And then, like I say, throughout the day, there's certain locations -- say, the entrance or exits to the signal suspension are still under the control of the dispatcher, but in order for the dispatcher to get a signal into that location, a lot of times the signal people have to go out and take that location into the local. They set what they call a stick. And that allows the dispatcher to get that signal into that signal suspension or exit that signal suspension. So I

will get that time for them and then give it back to the dispatcher when they're done with it.

And maybe they want to put a switch on power, test it. I'll go down and talk to the dispatcher and say, hey, they'd like to know if they can get permission to put this particular switch on power. And if he gives me the okay, I go back, I give it to the project manager. He gives it back to me, and I give it back to the dispatcher. So that's the type of thing that we do throughout the day for the duration of the suspension.

When the suspension is over or ready to be completed, they'll call me. I'll go with the dispatcher, and we try each and every location that was suspended. We put all the local switches back on power, all the locations back to the dispatcher. And we'll try each switch and each signal, make sure he has control of them and make sure the signal's lined. And as we go through, then I'll give it back to the project manager. According to the dispatcher's board, everything looks like it's working the way it was intended. Then he can tell me, all right, then we're ready to release the signal suspension. And at that time, I tell the dispatcher, they're done with the signal suspension; you can take the signal suspension down.

And that's kind of a brief synopsis of how a day or a signal suspension goes.

Q. So are you involved in writing the bulletins that are issued to the --

A. No.
Q. -- engineers and conductors?
A. No, sir. No, that is done by Brock Lucas, who's over -- well, he's a -- I think he's a contractor that works for Xorail to write the bulletins. I just listen to them and read them. And like I say, if I see any anomalies in there that I think need addressed, like, say, it should be west and it's east, or there's -- you know, whatever it might be. There's a switch tender here or there's not a switch tender there, that kind of thing. I just kind of keep an eye out for it and say, hey, you know, this needs to be addressed. Or maybe like they give you a little map, I might go over the maps and fine tune those, but as far as the writing part, no.
Q. Oh, so he's the one that writes them --
A. Yes.
Q. -- and he's the one that puts out the information, like the pamphlets and stuff?
A. Yeah. He writes it for the approval of the Transportation Department. They have to finally approve it. They're the ones that actually issue the official bulletin, someone here in Transportation from the division. Or I shouldn't say the division sends it to someone to have it issued. But he just writes up a draft. We go over that draft, and then it's up to them to make it official.
Q. And who determines whether they're going to have flagmen out

there or not? Is he it, or --
A. No, it's the -- whoever the transportation officer is that's representing the division. It could be the superintendent. It could be the chief dispatcher. Whoever they have on the conference call to decide that, whether they'll have flagmen or switch tenders or something, officer in charge of that. As I used to do when I was a superintendent.
Q. Okay. Is there a reason they didn't have any? I mean, what do you know? Why didn't they have any flagmen or switch tenders --
A. Well, this is just from experience. The heavier the traffic is on the subdivision, the more demand they have for switch tenders. This particular subdivision, according to the division officer, didn't warrant enough traffic to have a switch tender. That's just their own decision of whether they need one or not, because there wouldn't be a lot of meet and passes during the signal suspension, is the way I understood it.
Q. Is that like a -- is that written in a policy or is that just a judgment call that's like --
A. That's a judgment call.
Q. -- just, you know, they decide --
A. It's the experience of the officer knowing his territory, whether or not he determines whether it's going to be detrimental to the operation or not, to have or not have a switch tender. Sometimes it depends on the territory. It could be due to the

fact they just don't have the manpower.
Q. And so you say that's CSX Transportation, is the one that makes that --
A. Yes.
Q. -- that department --
A. They make that decision.
Q. Okay. On February the 3rd, when the signal system, signal suspension system took place, can you describe what time you went on-duty and what transpired throughout the day, how things were working out?
A. Well, like I say, like, as I recall, I got on the bridge with Mark somewhere in the neighborhood of 7 a.m., 10 till 7, so to speak. And we had a little briefing, and I, as I always do, wouldn't let -- I told him, when you have all your people in position, let me know, and I'll go talk to the dispatcher and see if we can put this thing in signal suspension.

So he did. I think it was somewhere -- it was before 8:00, but I can't exactly tell you when it was that he called and told me he was ready. Went down, talked to the daylight dispatcher and said, okay, they're ready to put this thing in signal suspension. At that particular time, there were no trains within the limits, which is what you want in order to put this thing into signal suspension. And he told me yeah, that'd be fine; you go ahead and have them put the switches in hand and line them according to the bulletin and let me know -- let him know when I -- they have them

that way. So I said okay, don't run any trains or don't let any trains within the limits until I come back to you.

I went back and gave that information to Mark. He had his people put the switches in hand according to the bulletin, reported back to me. I went back to the dispatcher, said, all right, everything is lined and locked according to the bulletin, and we're now officially in signal suspension, which -- I gave Mark a time and the dispatcher a time, but I don't record that. So whether Mark does or that project manager records that time, I'm not sure whether they do or not. But the -- I think that call is recorded too. I'm not sure if that bridge line --

Q. Were you --

A. Then -- huh?

Q. Oh, go ahead.

A. Well I mean, that's basically the way we start one up, and that's the way that day particularly started. And like I said, there weren't any trains within the limits. And then they started their work and, later on, I believe within an hour or two, he asked me for that information that -- the entrance to the north end of that signal suspension, which I believe was 367 something as the control point. That was the last absolute location the dispatcher had control of to enter the signal suspension. We got local control there. He set the stick so the dispatcher could get signals into that location. Gave that back to him.

And sometime later that morning, there was -- the first train

was a local, I think, out of Cayce that was going down to the auto ramp to start to work. And of course I gave that information to Mark that, hey, there'll be a southbound local coming out of Cayce to go down to the auto ramp there at Richland holdout. They understood that, and then they begin to test the areas that they could test. I just wait for him to, you know, contact me for whatever he needs, or the dispatcher.

Q. So that local was the only train that entered those limits during the day?

A. Near as I can remember, he was the one that went down, got to Richland holdout and began to spot that location. And we tested all around him, or they tested all around him. And like I say, I don't recall -- these run together, but I don't recall any other traffic through that territory. There could have been, but if it was, it didn't impact us that much. I just remember the local because he's the one that went down and held the main track. Any through train, it don't affect you that bad. You can test around them, behind them. So you don't really recall those so much as impacting the -- what they need to do.

But the local did, because he had the track circuit down in that location all day. And that didn't allow them time to go down there and test that particular area because of this track circuit that this guy held down all day. And I went back to the dispatcher several times and asked him, hey, about this local, when do you see him clear up? He said, well, when he goes down

there, he's usually there for hours, so I can't tell you how long he's going to be.

So I go back, and he -- later that afternoon, and like I say, we're talking maybe 4:00, I went back to the second trick dispatcher: Hey, when do you think this local might clear? He said, well, we got a second trick local that's taxiing down to relieve the first trick local, and he's supposed to get that train and bring it back to Cayce. So I'm thinking, okay, well, if that guy's going to take it back to Cayce, we'll get a window of opportunity here. Well, that never happened either. He never did leave there before we all are -- those guys on hours of services still had that track circuit down.

And they had a Q train setting up at 367. Because he told me, he said, once the local leaves, this Q train's going to come down. He's going to spot -- because this was an auto train. He's going to work there. So you got a small window of opportunity here. Once this guy clears, we got to bring this guy down to get this track tested. Well, he never did leave there before -- like I say, I left here after 7:00, after these guys went on the law. They were done for that day. So they never did get an opportunity to test in that area there.

Q. And if it wasn't for those trains, would they have completed their tests during the signal suspension?

A. That's something you'd have to ask them. I mean, like I say, I don't know -- I don't get that involved in what their time is --

you know, they just tell me when they're done or what they need. I know that that evening he told me, that's what we'll have to get to tomorrow to get this thing completed. He got a couple little things he had to do around Cayce that weren't going to take that long. But that was the area for that particular, that didn't allow them to get that done that evening, because he -- I think his intentions were to try to get it done that evening, but because we didn't get test time in there, he wasn't able to.

So like I say, I don't know if that's a fact or not, but that's what he led me to believe, that -- because he kept asking me, hey, could we get this -- when's this local going to get out of here? And I kept going back and asking the dispatcher, and that was the information I was getting from them. So, you know, like I say, I don't know if he would have got it done, but he'd have had a better shot at it.

Q. Right. So say, for example -- they weren't able to complete it, but could they have given back -- the tracks back to the train dispatcher and finished, you know, the following day or --

A. Well, again, that's an opinion, and I can't state for sure. That would just be my opinion, not a fact that I know for sure, you know. So I can't give you that answer.

Q. Right. Okay. Understood.

A. As a fact.

Q. So as far as you know, there was only that one local that entered the limits for those 12 hours?

A. Yes, sir. He had the main track blocked. They couldn't have run anything else through there if they wanted to. And he was on that -- near as I -- as I recall, he was the one that was -- held that track for the whole day.

Q. Okay. Are you familiar with the PIM? I think that's what they call it. The dispatcher's guide?

A. Somewhat, yes.

Q. I mean, there's a -- they do have something for signal suspension. It says, "When a signal system is suspended and an alternate method of operation is in effect" -- and we'll jump straight to number 2. "If necessary, instruct the first movement through the limits to stop at all power-operated switches, secure the switches in hand position as outlined either by dispatcher message or special instructions."

It says "if necessary." So when would the dispatcher, you know, instruct a train, you know, to approach -- I know this is written in reference to power switches. But when would -- can you give an example --

A. Well, I think --

Q. -- of when they would instruct a train to --

A. My take on that would be, if it's a non-planned signal suspension. If you had some sort of catastrophic event that would take out your signal system, whether it be a storm or whatever, and you had to put some sort of an alternate method of operation in effect until you got your signal system back, then yeah, that

first train probably at that situation would have to go down.

Under a planned signal suspension, where it's spelled out on the dispatcher's bulletin, I don't think that's necessary. Because the signal department has gone out and they have physically put those switches in hand position and lined and locked them physically. So they know those switches are lined the way they're supposed to be because that was part of the plan to put that in signal suspension. But under an emergency situation where you don't have signal people out there and you got to get trains running through the territory, then each crew -- that first crew would have to stop and examine those switches because -- you know, make sure they're all lined the way they're supposed to be.

Q. Okay. As a consultant, you're up-to-date and current with the methods of operation as far as the train dispatcher and --

A. Well, I -- like I say, I gave rules classes to train dispatchers and I gave rules classes to officers. And then when I went to work for Xorail, I went to their office and I had to pass the CSX operating rules and the NS operating rules. And as time goes on through these signal suspension calls, we'll go over any changes in rules that have taken effect since, you know, I had last taken that -- those tests. But that's how I keep current on them.

Q. I'm just going to ask you. Are you, as a train dispatcher -- you've been a train dispatcher, right?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And did you work under any signal suspensions?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. So when you're looking at the screen during a signal suspension, what would your screen look like, you know?
A. Well, the thing about the signal suspension, the screen really doesn't come into play anymore because all that territory doesn't belong to you anymore as far as you having control over it. The only thing that screen is for you now is a reference to where you put your EC1. And it comes up from this location to this location. But that's basically all it is, is a reference to where you've authorized this verbal authority.
Q. And when you say EC1, you're referring to a track warrant control authority or --
A. Yeah. The old DTC-type trick.
Q. Right. And then, so when you say the screen will show that it's not active or, you know --
A. Right. The screen will show a lot of things. I mean, when they're doing a signal suspension, you'll see switches flashing, you'll see signals lined, you'll see signals in time. And some dispatchers, if they're new, that kind of alarms them. And you got to kind of, as a transportation officer, you got to kind of say, listen, you can't pay attention to this anymore because what you're seeing is not actually what's going on. You know, that switch may look reversed out there, but it's not. If they didn't ask to reverse that switch, it's not; it just looks it. So ignore

what you see on that screen as far as signals and switches, and just keep your EC1 authorities. That's your reference of where you've authorized to, and that's it.

Q. Well, in this case, you know, the train crew contacted the dispatcher, right, to release their EC1 authority? And in the course of the conversation, you know, they transmitted to the train dispatcher that they lined the switch back to normal position.

A. That's what I understand.

Q. Right. So if it was still left open, you know, for -- lined for the siding, would he still have a track indication?

A. No. Not under signal suspension, no.

Q. So he -- so you --

A. And even if he did, he couldn't go by it because, like I say, you don't know -- sometimes the signal department puts track circuits down for testing purposes. It may come back up, it may not. You can't trust what you see on that screen when it's under signal suspension.

Q. But in this case, the signal group was not there anymore --

A. No.

Q. -- at 1:50. So it's only the train crew that's out there.

A. Right.

Q. And he still has an indication. So they don't -- there wouldn't be a reason for him to say, you know what, double check or, you know --

A. I don't know if he had an indication.
Q. -- I have an indication, or something like that.
A. Yeah, I can't tell whether he had an indication or not. I don't -- you know, I wasn't --
Q. Yeah. No, I know. I'm just asking you.
A. Yeah. And under signal suspension, I don't think he should have had an indication which way that switch was lined or -- you know, that there was anything other than what the conductor told him. From what I know, what I experienced as a train dispatcher, as a -- you know, working these types of systems that CSX has, I don't know that there's any way of a dispatcher telling which way that switch is lined. Other than what, like I say, they're verbally told by the conductor or engineer. Just as he gave the verbal information; it's all verbal. You can't look at that screen and trust that screen to tell you anything.
Q. So that -- in that case, I mean, is there -- you say you do risk assessment or mitigation, you know, for the signal suspension. What are those? You know, what is it that you look for?
A. I don't understand your question.
Q. So, you know, during the signal suspension, right, I mean, what risk assessments are taken into account as to what could go wrong or what needs to be addressed, you know? I mean, is that discussed or --
A. Well, in the job briefings. I mean, they have job briefings

with the train crew before they ever depart their originating terminals. At least they're supposed to. Amtrak has people, I think, that represent them that job brief their crews. CSX has people that's assigned 24 hours a day to job brief the CSX crews. Of course, the maintenance of way department and the signal department do their own job briefings.

And you have the map reference that they pass out to everybody that's just basically a tool to use to help you -- or look at something to understand how that signal suspension's working and the limits of it. And then you have your bulletins. But as far as everything else, it's covered pretty much by operating rules. And you hope that everybody understands the job briefing, and you hope that everybody complies with the operating rules. And that's all you can do in a signal suspension.

Q. So it's a --

A. Anytime you change the method of operation, you've -- yeah, you've added an element of a risk out there, because the crews aren't used to it sometimes and you don't have that added protection.

Q. And that's what I'm getting at. You know, there is an element of risk that's added. So is that talked about or addressed or discussed?

A. Only, like I say, in the effect that Brock always ends all of his calls, and he's very adamant about the fact, to remind everybody, you know, that you have to have these job briefings.

You have to make sure that you get the first trick, second trick and third trick dispatchers. Somebody has to physically go down to job brief these dispatchers and make sure they understand and answer any questions. And again, the field operations take care of their -- and that's basically all you have as a backup other than your operating rules for the risk through all of these, you know, is trying to make sure everybody's on board with what's going on out there.

Q. So it's job briefings and rules compliance.

A. Right.

Q. Great.

MR. TORRES: Okay, that's all I have for now.

MR. AMMONS: Hey, Steve Ammons, A-M-M-O-N-S, CSX. Paul, just a couple questions.

BY MR. AMMONS:

Q. When you're under a signal suspension, you mentioned that the signal workers out in the field on the afternoon or evening of the 3rd went home or done around 1900?

A. Yes.

Q. 7 p.m.?

A. Right.

Q. Is anything -- do you know if anything is relayed to the dispatcher that's over that territory that signal work is done for the night, or does it just remain under signal suspension and they're not really told when the signal workers are out there?

A. Well, I usually go down and tell the dispatcher, which is the second trick dispatcher -- okay, well, these guys are done for the evening. They're not going to be calling and asking for anything else. This railroad belongs to you. Continue to run trains through until we come back in the morning.

And that's basically -- I give them a little synopsis like that. There's nothing -- you know, they're not going to leave anything as it's not intended to be. Switches are all lined the way they're supposed to be. And like I say, there may be an indication where they say, okay, well, that circuit's going to be left down tonight or they may have a crossing that they've taken out, or a defect detector. None of that is going to change throughout the night from that point, and that's basically all we --

Q. When that happens, would you expect the dispatcher's methodology to change around what they see on the CAD screen under a signal suspension?

A. No.

Q. Do you know if the second shift dispatcher received any kind of updated briefing that the signalmen had gone home for the evening?

A. Only when I had gone down and told him that they were going -- you know, that'd be all they'd be testing, there'd be no more testing that evening.

Q. And do you know if the second shift dispatcher relayed that

to the third shift dispatcher --
A. No.
Q. -- that there were no signalmen?
A. No, I don't. That should have been part of that third trick job briefing.
Q. Are you familiar with the location -- I'm sure you are, but I'm just going to ask. Are you familiar with the north end of Silica Siding there, what type of switch that is?
A. No. I really -- I'm not -- no, I can't really say, because I've not physically ever been there.
Q. Do you know if it's a power-operated switch or an electric lock switch?
A. No, sir.
Q. If it was an electric lock switch, would that show up on the CAD screen?
A. Not under signal suspension, no.
Q. Does that -- would that switch necessarily show up even during normal operations?
A. If somebody was to open it and reverse it, yes.
Q. No, I'm just saying does that -- does the actual switch, the siding, the track there show --
A. Oh, not necessarily, no.
Q. Right.
A. All electric lock switches don't show up on the screen.
Q. So if there's a track light in that area between the SAS at

Dixiana and the next control point -- I don't even know what it is. Now I can't remember.

A. Richland. I think it's Richland holdout.

Q. Richland holdout. Correct. Thank you. There's a track light in that area. Does that necessarily mean that the switch is opened at the north end of Silica Siding?

A. No, not necessarily. Could be any kind of a track defect. But you know, an electric lock switch is not supposed to be operated without permission of the train dispatcher. So if somebody's going to open that switch, they should contact the train dispatcher first for permission to open that switch. Once they got that permission, then the dispatcher should know what that track circuit is. Had that track circuit come up without the dispatcher's involvement, then the dispatcher's got to treat it as a track defect and comply with the rules.

Q. Okay. Thank you.

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

BY MR. REAVES.

Q. When the signal suspension is basically turned on, whenever the field relays to you or -- that they want to take the signals or the switches off power and put them in hand, when that occurs, does the dispatcher verify on their screen that everything is set for the signal suspension?

A. No. Once that signal -- once those signals are taken out of his control, he has no way of verifying. Like I say, that screen

is dead to him, basically. He can't trust anything he sees within those limits because that information is relayed from the project manager to me that everything is according to the way the bulletin states it's supposed to be for the signal suspension to go into effect. Sometimes -- well, some signal suspensions, you may line a switch reverse because that's the route that they want to run to keep them off of a certain track. So you specify that in the bulletin, and then you specify that to the dispatcher when you give it back, when you give it to him.

But in most cases, in this particular case, single track railroad, all the switches are lined toward the main track and locked in hand-throw position. I go back and I relay that to the dispatcher that the signal department has confirmed that all the switches within the limits of the signal suspension are lined and locked according to the bulletin. And that is his key to know that he's okay to run trains, everything the way it's supposed to be under verbal permission.

Q. So if one of the switches was left on power, the dispatcher wouldn't know by their screen that it was left on power or not?

A. No, he wouldn't. Because even if the switch was still on power, the location that he controls would have been taken down, so he wouldn't have control over the switch.

MR REAVES: That was the only question I had. Thank you.

MR. MARSHALL: Adam Marshall, M-A-R-S-H-A-L-L, FRA.

BY MR. MARSHALL:

Q. How many signal folks are on the ground during -- were on the ground during the signal suspension?
A. I have no idea for sure. It depends on the size of the suspension. We've had as many as maybe 50 down to 20.
Q. On a signal suspension of this size that was, I think, 23 miles, what would the typical number of signal be on the ground?
A. Usually he has at least one to two people at each location that is suspended. So you have to count the amount of absolute locations within that signal suspension and kind of figure from there. Plus himself, and he usually has at least one or two people in his trailer with him, assisting him. So that was kind of the basis on how you might determine how many people are out there. But I never know how many people are out there.
Q. Are those generally local folks, or do they bring a signal suspension team in?
A. I believe it's a mix of mostly people brought in with a little bit of mix of some locals.
Q. Okay. When we showed up on-site, we couldn't find anyone from the signal suspension. We were told that they were sent home for -- they were sent home for, I guess, the weekend. And a statement was made to us that there was only -- they only needed an hour, like, another hour to get what they needed to get done and the signal suspension would have been completed, but they couldn't get the time to do it. Do you know if that's true or not true?

A. I don't remember him relaying that particular amount of time. I just know that he told me he needed that particular area. He needed time to test in that particular area. He kept impressing on me that, you know, that would be the part that would be the key to get this thing back. I kept impressing on the dispatcher that's what we need to get this signal -- and the assistant chief asked, are we going to get this back tonight? I said, not until we can get this particular area tested. We can't get that area tested? No, you can't get it back tonight, because that's what left.

How much time he needed, I don't recall him particularly relaying that to me. He just asked for time there. And usually, once that area's clear, then he's specific about -- I'll say, how much time do you need? He'll give that information to me, whether it be -- I can take 30 minutes now and 30 minutes later, or I can take an hour and get it all, or an hour and a half, whatever it may be. But like I say, I knew that was the area that they needed to get it done, but I didn't know how much time in particular they needed.

Q. Do you know that, if they were -- if the signal team was getting close to hours of service, where they weren't going to be able to work anymore, was that talked about?

A. No. Like I say, we were kind of waiting for that second trick local to come down and get this train moved out of that limit, and the clock just kept ticking. Well, then I knew once

that -- we got into the 6:30 hour, that train hadn't moved, that we were pretty much doomed and we weren't going to get any time in that location that day.

Q. Okay. Since they didn't -- if they were -- since they didn't get it completed that Friday or -- I'm sorry. That Saturday night, correct? Yeah, that would have been Saturday night.

A. Saturday night.

Q. Saturday night. Did that mean that they would come back on Sunday or not until Monday?

A. Sunday.

Q. They would've been back out there Sunday? Okay.

A. Yes. And somewhere in the neighborhood around -- before 7. I was still there at 7, so it was just a few minutes before 7, maybe 6:30, Gary Gore, a superintendent, came by where I was working and said, we'll get that time for them first thing in the morning at that location. I think he was made aware somewhere that evening that that's what they needed. But he didn't talk to me about it, but he knew about it when he came to me. He knew that that's what they needed to get it done. And he said, we're going to give it to them first thing in the morning so they can wrap this thing up. And I said, well, great, that's what they'll need, and we'll be ready to go first thing in the morning at that location.

So yeah, they would have come back out Sunday. And like I say, they would have left there at 7 that evening. Because

they're under hours of service, they couldn't have come back until 7 the next morning.

Q. Okay, thank you.

MR. MARSHALL: That's all I have.

MR. BUCHER: Dave Bucher, NTSB. Thanks for everything. This is really detailed. Appreciate it.

MR. SINSEL: Sure.

BY MR. BUCHER:

Q. My question is a little more general, about the signal outages and your part in those. I don't expect you to know exact numbers, but when did you start this project for your company and doing the whole signal outage upgrades for -- this one was for positive train control, but here for CSX.

A. When did I start?

Q. Yeah. Yeah, when did the project start, or when did the contract start or whatever they're called?

A. For me? For work as a consultant?

Q. Yes.

A. October of 2011. It was -- I retired in September, and they contacted me -- Xorail contacted me a couple weeks after I retired and asked me if I was interested.

Q. Okay. And on top of that, then, I guess boiling down to this -- to the upgrades that you're doing now, when did this current project start in the center? Or have you been here for 6 years doing the same thing?

A. Pretty much the same thing for 6 years, yeah. Just -- I mean, PTC projects, CSX capital projects, you know, their own projects. I can do -- we do both, so --
Q. Both. Okay.
A. Yeah.
Q. I'm just trying to get an idea of where we're at and how often it's happening.
A. Right. Yeah, anytime the signal suspension -- anytime the signals are going to be suspended and affected that Xorail's involved in -- which they're involved in most of all the upgrades to CSX signal system, then we're involved. That's who they have as their representative, I guess you might say, to help -- because we are -- I had worked in all the dispatcher centers, worked with all of the officers at that time, I had a rapport with them.
Q. Right.
A. So to go into the -- to be able to come back into the dispatcher offices, which CSX had a pretty strict policy about who they would or wouldn't let in here, was an advantage to Xorail to have somebody that they could get into the CSX train dispatcher offices that, like I say, knew the people, knew the rules, knew the operation. And so that's why they contacted me.
Q. Okay, great. If you had to say how many projects you've helped CSX with, could you give me a ballpark?
A. You mean since I've been retired?
Q. Yes, since you've been retired. We're not going to count all

the ones before.
A. Yeah, right. It averages out about -- we'll just say 24 a year, 2 a month, for -- what? Six years? Yeah.
Q. Okay, great. Thank you. I just want to ask a couple questions since you've been involved in so many. You mentioned that sometimes you have a switch tender involved depending on the project.
A. Right.
Q. I understand that. If a switch tender is involved, what are typical switch tender duties with a signal outage?
A. Well, a switch tender is strictly under the direction of the train dispatcher. It's as if the train dispatcher now had control of that switch, as he would if the signals were in service. The switch tender is kind of his eyes and ears for that particular switch. Switch tender is responsible for whatever that dispatcher directs him to do with that switch: reverse it, normal it, for train needs or for whatever.

And that switch tender is now responsible for filling out the switch position awareness form. He relieves the crew of that responsibility because he's in charge of that switch now. So he lines it for the crew, confirms with the crew the switch is lined according to the way the dispatcher wants it, gives the dispatcher the time he reversed it, time he normaled it. According to the rules.
Q. Okay. So it would be -- typically in any case, he would go

work with whatever crew was working on -- wherever they were working. It wouldn't be like he was on either end of the entrance or the exit flagging trains?

A. Right. Now in some cases, they'll put a switch tender in charge of more than one switch. So he could be down at this end lining a switch, and then maybe have to go to the other end and line a switch. Or, you know, depending on the distance and if there's easy access between the switches. But most of the time, they try to keep it down to one switch.

Q. Okay.

MR. BUCHER: All right. I think I'm -- that's all of mine.

MR. PAGE: Page, NTSB.

BY MR. PAGE:

Q. Just to clarify, you were not present at the time of the accident?

A. No, sir.

Q. Thank you. Before you left, you said you briefed with the second trick dispatcher; is that correct?

A. Yeah, I just told him that we were done for the evening, there would be no more testing.

Q. Did you offer CSX or Xorail the opportunity to stay as a go-between after the signal personnel went home? To stay on?

A. Me?

Q. Yes, sir.

A. No, sir.

Q. All right. What does go-between mean? You said that that's your job there.

A. Yeah, that just is a -- like I say, there's a -- signal department has a lot of requests throughout a signal suspension throughout the day. And early on, way back when we did signal suspensions, we tried to do it through the dispatcher and have the signal department contact the dispatcher. Well, like I say, the dispatcher is a busy man or a woman, had a lot of other territory to take care of. And they could never get a hold of the dispatcher when they needed in a timely fashion, just to get maybe 15, 20 minutes of time. By the time they get a hold of the dispatcher, that window is gone. So they needed someone that could be in the office that could go down and talk to that dispatcher and get that information quicker for them to get what they need and help coordinate the signal suspension so that it benefitted them as well as it benefit CSX.

So they came up with this idea of the consultants to go into the offices and be their voice to the transportation -- or the managers and dispatchers and say, hey, this is what we need to get it done. And then also, that gives the dispatcher and the manager a voice directly to them: Hey, you need to tell them to give me this track back, or you need to tell them I need to run this train and I need it now. You know, because again, they're trying to get a hold of somebody in the field, and those guys are out there not answering the radio or phones or whatever.

So it just made the transition between those in the field and these -- the people in the office go a lot smoother. We would get the signal suspensions done a lot quicker. And like I say, I -- from experience also, because I worked it when we didn't have people in the offices, as to -- and those things lasted 3 days. And now we're down to, most of the time, a day, day and a half, 2 at the most.

Q. So could we say that it's an exchange of pertinent information between the signal department and the operations department, dispatching department?

A. It's pertinent in the sense that it helps expedite to get the work done, yes.

Q. Okay. The time of the signal suspension, was it planned?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do you remember what the suspension time was?

A. Well, it's going into effect at 7:59 that morning, is the plan, according to the bulletin. Or I'm sorry. It goes into effect at 0800. They'll put the signal change bulletin out that it's effective at 7:59, and then 1 minute later, we'll suspend the signals at 0800. And then it continues with no -- duration until they tell us it's complete. And then we -- I should say the dispatcher issues a train message that cancels that signal suspension bulletin, which puts the signals back in service.

Q. Do you know if it was planned to run into the 4th, all the way into the 4th, to the next day? Or was it just for Saturday?

A. They way it, like these -- a lot of these signal suspensions, you know, I've worked. And as near as I can recall, this was planned to be more than 1 day. From that initial call, he thought it would take him more than 1 day -- day and a half -- to get this work done.
Q. All right, thank you.
A. But those vary. Like I say, you know, they can say it's going to take 2 full days, and all of a sudden, we get it done in 1 day. You can say it's going to take 1 day and it takes 2 full days. So it's not a perfect science. The challenges of if they run into problems with their equipment or their -- whatever they loaded into it, or we have more train traffic, or train goes to an emergency and is in the limits for a long time -- there's a lot of things that vary that can cause a signal suspension to be a success as far as getting it 1 day or bleed over into more than 1 day.
Q. You mentioned that you have done several of these prior to this one; is that correct?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Is it common to leave a signal suspension overnight with no signal personnel on duty?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. We talked about flagmen and switch tenders. In your experience, do flagmen or switch tenders tend to hand throw switches or dual control switches only, in your experience?

A. Well, it would handle just the dual control switches, I would think, within the signal suspension that the dispatcher normally would have control over, would be the one that the dispatcher would instruct him to handle.
Q. Okay. And you just stated that sometimes we have to switch tenders or, during signal suspensions you have switch tenders during signal suspensions and sometimes you don't. Who makes that decision again?
A. The manager that's representing the division, whether it be the superintendent or the chief dispatcher. It could be either one that I've dealt with that -- or his representative for the division on the planning calls.
Q. Do you assist the dispatcher with screen icons or markers or lights, track occupancy lights?
A. In what way do you mean assist?
Q. In identification, what it means, on their dispatcher screens.
A. I can, as far as what I have knowledge of local control, maintenance lockouts, employee call lights, that type thing, yes. Or if we're back in service and you have a track circuit down, that's pretty obvious. You can identify that, that shouldn't be there. I don't know of any other indications that you might be referring to.
Q. Are you aware that the dispatcher screen would track the train movement during a signal suspension through track occupancy

lights?
A. I'm not aware that it will, no.
Q. Are you aware that a hand-thrown switch would leave a track occupancy light on if it was opened and reversed?
A. Under signal suspension, no.
Q. As a dispatcher, you said you had over 40 years' experience with -- as a dispatcher and working in the dispatcher's office. Under normal circumstances, with the signals operating properly, and a train proceeded from a yard, for instance, down to a siding to a hand-throw switch, and then got in that siding and then cleared his track warrant or cleared his time, and it left a track occupancy light on, what would you assume?
A. He didn't normal the switch. That's what I would assume.
Q. If under a signal suspension -- under a signal suspension, if the dispatcher could also track those track occupancy lights, and a train took a siding and then cleared his time and the track occupancy light was left on, what would you assume as a dispatcher?
A. I don't know of a case where, if you're under signal suspension, you would have that ability to do that, because the -- again, that -- you've taken that ability, you've taken that protection away from the dispatcher of being able to see what is actually going on out there and believe what he sees.
Q. Thank you. Who do you report to at Xorail and CSX?
A. Xorail would be -- basically work under Brock Lucas, and

Jason Schroeder here at CSX.

MR. PAGE: I have no more questions at this time. Thank you.

MR. TORRES: Tomas Torres with the NTSB. I don't have any questions, but I'll go around the table, see if there's any follow-ups.

MR. AMMONS: Steve Ammons, CSX. I've just got one follow-up question.

BY MR. AMMONS:

Q. The switch tender position that you spoke of earlier, Mr. Sinsel, is that -- what craft are those -- fills those positions?

A. Conductors.

Q. Conductors?

A. Um-hum.

Q. So the person -- if we had a switch tender, the person that would be the switch tender is qualified on the same operating rules as any normal conductor that's working a local in the field?

A. On that territory, right.

Q. You mentioned that they still use the switch position awareness form?

A. Yes, sir. They're required to use the switch position awareness form anytime they move the switch.

Q. So the switch tender is no different than a conductor lining a switch in the field?

A. That's right.

MR. AMMONS: Thank you. That's all I have.

MR. REAVES: I don't have any further questions. Thank you.

MR. MARSHALL: Nothing further.

MR. BUCHER: I have nothing either.

MR. TORRES: Tomas Torres with the NTSB. No further questions. This will conclude the interview. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	COLLISION OF AMTRAK TRAIN #91 AND A STATIONARY CSX TRANSPORTATION TRAIN NEAR CAYCE, SOUTH CAROLINA FEBRUARY 4, 2018 Interview of Paul Sinsel
ACCIDENT NUMBER:	RRD18MR003
PLACE:	Jacksonville, Florida
DATE:	February 21, 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.

[redacted]
Transcriber