

DCA-06-FR-004

**Norfolk Southern Rear-end Collision
Derailment**

Train No. 226 & Train No. 22R

Lincoln, AL

January 18, 2006

**Interview (1/20/06) of BLET
Representative**

12 pages, including cover sheet

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

* * * * *
Investigation of: *
*
NORFOLK SOUTHERN REAR-END COLLISION *
LINCOLN, AL *
JANUARY 18, 2006 * Docket No.: DCA-06-FR-004
*
*
*
*
* * * * *

Interview of: M.D. FRANK

Comfort Inn
Lincoln, AL

Friday,
January 20, 2006

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to
notice.

BEFORE: RUSSELL GOBER

APPEARANCES:

RUSSELL GOBER, OPERATIONS GROUP CHAIRMAN
National Transportation Safety Board
DuPage County Airport
31 West 775 North Avenue
West Chicago, Illinois 60185
[REDACTED]

TOM MCAVOY
Federal Railroad Administration

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of M.D. Frank, BLET Local Chairman:	
By Mr. Gober	4
By Mr. McAvoy	5
By Mr. Gober	7
By Mr. McAvoy	9

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MR. GOBER: Friday, January 20th, 2006, Lincoln,
3 Alabama, Comfort Inn. We're interviewing Mr. M.D. Frank, BLET
4 Local Chairman, in regard to Norfolk Southern Track Authority
5 changes that are going to be made.

6 (Off the record.)

7 (On the record.)

8 INTERVIEW OF M.D. FRANK

9 BY MR. GOBER:

10 Q. Okay, Mr. Frank, could you explain to us what the NS
11 Track Authority Form TA1-1 is and what their system is?

12 A. It replaces the two forms from the old system, the
13 23A and the track -- What they're for is a little bit in
14 conjunction with the dispatch system at Norfolk Southern. It's
15 going to roll out on their entire railroad, but they're doing
16 it piecemeal over at UTCS (ph.).

17 Q. Okay. When is Norfolk Southern going to put that new
18 system in?

19 A. On the entire Alabama Division it will be turned on
20 February the 1st.

21 Q. Okay. Has the Norfolk Southern had operating rule
22 classes with the training crews to advise them what the new
23 operating procedures will be?

24 A. No.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. They do not have rules classes. They have -- the
2 east end crews were given -- they'll watch a training video and
3 give them these books to use on the territory that they were
4 traveling, and that was currently the UTCS system. Probably
5 also in Atlanta.

6 BY MR. MCAVOY:

7 Q. Excuse me. I'll just -- so you're saying that this
8 new system that's -- and this new form, TA1.1, is currently in
9 effect on another -- on another subdivision?

10 A. It is currently official at the Georgia Division.

11 Q. Do you know how long it's been in effect there?

12 A. I must say -- and this is speculation, because I
13 don't work for the east end very much, but I will say six
14 months.

15 MR. GOBER: And this is Mr. Tom McAvoy with the FRA
16 who is asking questions along with Russell Gober.

17 BY MR. MCAVOY:

18 Q. If any -- in effect, as you far as you know, in the
19 Georgia Division for approximately six months?

20 A. Yeah, that's --

21 Q. Okay. Are you aware of any problems associated with
22 this new system over at the Georgia Division?

23 A. Oh, the Georgia Division, since the UTCS system has
24 been installed, seven or eight dispatchers have been
25 disciplined or dismissed for dispatcher error since this system

1 has been installed.

2 Q. Has there been any incidents, accidents, as a result
3 of these errors?

4 A. I couldn't tell you that. I don't know. The Georgia
5 Division has a huge number of -- since '05. I can't attach
6 those two to dispatcher error.

7 Q. Okay. I understand you earlier to state that this
8 particular form, this TA1.1, this new form, that is, will
9 replace two forms that are currently in effect in most of the
10 divisions. Well, what is -- can you tell me what is the
11 advantage of this? Is there an advantage other than just
12 having one less hard copy to deal with? Is this way this is
13 formatted, that it'll make your job easier?

14 A. No, sir, it doesn't make my job easier because they
15 have not really educated us on this system. Whether they
16 intend to, I don't know.

17 Q. Okay. And you said that'll be in effect on February,
18 February the 1st --

19 A. February 1st --

20 Q. -- down in the Alabama Division?

21 A. -- it'll be turned on in their Alabama Division --

22 Q. And then there's no forthcoming training planned that
23 you know of?

24 A. Not that I'm aware of. The first place they turned
25 it on was the Georgia Division and they went through

1 extraordinary effort to train anybody that might possibly come
2 in contact with that system. They had people in Birmingham.
3 There are 12 miles of rail that we operate on. I have not --
4 you can't find these forms --

5 BY MR. GOBER:

6 Q. And, Mr. Frank, you said they're going to change the
7 -- some things on the dispatching system. You can use this
8 form on CTC and DARP (ph.) territories, is that correct?

9 A. The CTC -- DARP territory, anywhere you're at.

10 Q. Okay. From a standpoint of a form, is it self-
11 explanatory to where an engineer can copy a form? I would like
12 to say a track warrant, but it's not a track warrant. It's a
13 track authority.

14 A. If it was to be filled out as a track warrant, it
15 would be more easy to understand its application as a track
16 warrant, but if it's used as a 23A, I'm not sure what block is
17 supposed to be filled out and which one is --

18 Q. Well, customarily, the train dispatcher, when they
19 issue a directive, they will tell you what number that the
20 record is and it's -- and to who it's to and where you're
21 located. So basically, they would tell you the track authority
22 number and tell you what blocks to check. Is that the way it's
23 normally done?

24 A. On the track warrant scenario, it is. A 23A doesn't
25 have any blocks. The old style didn't have any blocks to

1 check.

2 Q. Okay. But on the track authority, TA1-1 -- .1, it
3 has 13 numbered blocks and then it has several different
4 additions to those blocks, different things you can do with it,
5 where you can go to more than one place -- It's kind of like a
6 track warrant authority. Is that the way you would see it?

7 A. If that's the way it was advertised. I assume that
8 the training tape that we watched was not how to fill out the
9 form. It was about how wonderful the system would be when it
10 was implemented. It didn't have anything to do with how you're
11 going to apply it in the field, and that's what no training, on
12 the Alabama Division, on how you would fill this form out.

13 Q. Well, has anybody given you guys any advice on what
14 kind of changes the dispatching center is making in order to
15 implement it? Are there any changes on the signal circuitry or
16 anything like that?

17 A. Today, as we speak, the UTS -- UTCS system has been
18 on the Alabama Division for about a year in a testing mode.
19 It's on a separate console right now in the dispatch center.
20 But from that separate console, any signal on the Alabama
21 Division can be controlled. The east end dispatcher could
22 control her signals from her console or they can be controlled
23 from the UTCS computer console. But -- console. But I guess -
24 - I don't know why it takes a year for them to figure out that
25 they can turn off, but it's been in the dispatch center for at

1 least a year.

2 BY MR. MCAVOY:

3 Q. May I? This is Tom McAvoy again, FRA. I was just --
4 I wanted to make sure I had this right. You said that the only
5 training that the NS has offered in connection with this new
6 form, is a film focusing on the positive aspects of the
7 changeover and not really on the -- how the system and these
8 forms actually work in conjunction with this new system.

9 A. Yes, sir, that's absolutely correct.

10 Q. Did they ever have that and offer that video to all
11 Norfolk Southern employees?

12 A. He played -- washroom to who was willing to listen.

13 Q. He --

14 A. They had an individual stage it in the engineers'
15 washroom and the conductors' washroom in Norris Yard for two
16 days. They were handing out these forms and playing this video
17 and that's -- the video just showed these happy dispatchers
18 with this wonderful new dispatch system, where they turning a
19 train out at point A, and if you go through five different
20 divisions and all the meters are set and everything's just
21 running just like you'd never seen it before.

22 Q. So they had no makeup for anyone that was -- on
23 vacation --

24 A. Yes, sir, that's true.

25 (Phone rings.)

1 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled
2 matter was concluded.)

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: Norfolk Southern Rear-End Collision
Lincoln, AL
January 18, 2006
Interview of M.D. Frank

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-06-FR-004

PLACE: Lincoln, AL

DATE: January 20, 2006

was held according to the record, and that this is the
original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been
compared to the recording accomplished at the hearing.

David Martini
Transcriber