

**DCA-06-FR-004**

**Norfolk Southern Rear-end Collision  
Derailment**

**Train No. 226 & Train No. 22R**

**Lincoln, AL**

**January 18, 2006**

**Interview of Conductor of  
Train No. 22R**

**13 pages, including cover sheet**

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

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

Interview of: MATTHEW KING

Comfort Inn  
Lincoln, Alabama

Thursday,  
January 19, 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

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P R O C E E D I N G S

INTERVIEW OF MATTHEW KING

BY MR. GOBER:

Q. Okay, Matthew, give me your name, address and phone number, please.

A. My name is Matthew Lloyd King. I live at 16 --

Q. Give me the company address.

A. I'm sorry. 1400 Norfolk Southern Drive, Birmingham.

And the phone number is [REDACTED]

Q. Okay. How long have you worked with Norfolk Southern?

A. It'll be a year this month coming up.

Q. Okay. You started out as a conductor?

A. Yes, sir, a conductor trainee, of course.

Q. Okay. Because you already told me how old you were, which is not on the record, what did you do for the first 12 years of your working career?

A. The first 12 years, I did four years in the Marine Corps in the infantry, and then I worked at a wood shop a little bit, and then I worked at Steel City Crane, a crane company in Birmingham, and then I worked at Hydra Services, Incorporated, which is located 80 miles down, which is a pump company that do watering pumps. Then I worked for -- and then I came here.

Q. So you've had a varied career and I'm sure that you are happy with the railroad.

A. Very happy. I love it.

1 Q. That's good. On the 18th, can you tell me what your job  
2 was?

3 A. On the 18th I was -- I was a conductor on the 22R.

4 Q. And the 22R operates from where to where?

5 A. It originates -- well, we get on at Birmingham and we  
6 take it to Atlanta, Amblin (ph.) Yard.

7 Q. Okay. Did you do that yesterday?

8 A. No, sir.

9 Q. What did you do?

10 A. I got on the train at Birmingham and we had a covered  
11 (ph.) door open on the train. The people on the track told us we  
12 did. So we stopped at Leeds and we were going to pick up  
13 Mr. Tipton, the road foreman, to ride with the engineer trainee.  
14 And just by chance, we had the covered door open, so we told him  
15 and whenever I got up to the engine he said okay, shut the door  
16 and then meet us up at Lincoln because we got to do some switching  
17 up there.

18 Q. Okay. And what kind of switching were you going to do  
19 at Lincoln?

20 A. We had 14 cars for Lincoln.

21 Q. Is that a Honda plant?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Okay. Okay. So you got off and closed the door at  
24 Leeds and then what happened?

25 A. I closed the door at Leeds. I watched the train -- got

1 in the vehicle and I drove up to him.

2 Q. Okay. Were you on the train when the accident occurred?

3 A. No, sir.

4 Q. Okay. How did you find out about the accident?

5 A. I went to -- I went to the Embury end of the siding to  
6 bring the vehicle over to Mr. Tipton and Jeremy. At that same  
7 moment, the fire chief of the EMT chief, whoever the official was,  
8 he just came up at the same time and said, we got to go. We got  
9 to get you down. We got to cut the crossing now. We got to get  
10 fire trucks on the other side of your train. Your train's on  
11 fire. He kept saying somebody hit your train and I didn't  
12 understand.

13 So I just got in the vehicle and I said just go, you  
14 know, and he shot me down there and I got to the crossing and the  
15 car was on fire, I mean right there and I said we got to go, you  
16 know. And I got three -- trucks, so I take care of that. And  
17 when I got to the crossing, I cut the angle cock out and I cut the  
18 car out and I looked on my -- I had a sheet of paper with the car  
19 numbers and knew that the rear five cars, which were the ones that  
20 were damaged, and I said okay, I'll release my preset forearm, and  
21 Paul said, we go on. They let us move. I said, the cars are on  
22 fire. He said, we can't move. And then --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. --

25 Q. Okay. So your crew did not move the train after the

1 accident occurred?

2 A. I don't -- I wasn't on the head engine. I'm sure they  
3 didn't move it. I don't know.

4 Q. Okay. How -- you were still in the road foreman's  
5 truck? And were you in the fireman's truck or the road foreman's  
6 truck when you went back there?

7 A. When I was back there, I was in the fireman's truck --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- because he rushed me back there.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. But we got back in the vehicle to get Paul at the  
12 engine, so we rushed up there in the road foreman's car to get  
13 Paul at the engine, because there could be serious damage or  
14 something.

15 Q. Okay. And Paul is engineer that's with you?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. Okay. Where was the road foreman at this time?

18 A. He was -- he dropped us off over at the -- the Lincoln  
19 building, the little shack with the computers, and he drove off.

20 Q. Okay. Did he tell you to help in the emergency effort  
21 or did he tell you anything?

22 A. He didn't tell me anything.

23 Q. Okay. Have you ever had an occasion before to where a  
24 road foreman or a trainmaster perhaps gave you the key and told  
25 you to drive along side of the train and meet them at another



1 point?

2 A. No, sir.

3 Q. This just happened to be a unusual happenstance?

4 A. I think what it was, was the situation of blocking all  
5 the crossings. The train was fairly long. We knew we had to  
6 switch at Lincoln, so we were going to -- I was going to meet him  
7 up there --

8 Q. Okay, okay. So this is just an efficiency move?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Okay. Did you have any -- I understand that the road  
11 foreman had a radio on his car.

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Could you hear the radio communications going on while  
14 you were driving his vehicle?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Did you hear any unusual -- anything unusual while you  
17 were out there?

18 A. I didn't hear anything unusual, no. I heard Jeremy call  
19 -- I heard him call the signal that tells you -- and I can't  
20 remember what signals they were, but it seemed to be normal.

21 Q. Um-hum. Okay. Did you hear the crew on the 226 at all  
22 on your radio?

23 A. I heard them call the signals, but I don't know which  
24 ones they called. I don't remember the clears or the approaches  
25 or anything like that.

1 Q. Did you feel that there was any unusual activity going  
2 on from what you could hear on the radio?

3 A. No, sir, I didn't. I couldn't tell.

4 Q. Okay. Tell me what you think about what occurred. Do  
5 you know of anything that could've been done any differently that  
6 would be better?

7 A. I think that if I could do it again, I would've -- I  
8 would've told Paul to pull on the train and just taking the  
9 consequences to save whatever cars that didn't catch fire, because  
10 it was the rear five cars that were affected. I was about 80 feet  
11 from the flames, trying to get the train pulled out -- If I could  
12 do it again, I'd pull and say go.

13 Q. The rear cars on the train, some of the sustained  
14 damages they wouldn't have if you've been able to pull them out?

15 A. I don't know. -- I just knew that my role is to the  
16 train away from that crossing --

17 Q. Your decision would've been to move just --

18 A. I was just following orders.

19 Q. Okay. As a military man, that's what you do, right?

20 A. Yes, sir. I'm not paid to make --

21 Q. To think?

22 A. --

23 MR. GOBER: Okay. Mr. McAvoy (ph.), do you have any  
24 questions?

25 BY MR. MCAVOY:

1 Q. Yeah. What door was open? What car?

2 A. It was an MVC (ph.) car. I don't remember the number,  
3 but I do remember the initials. It was a red, a red car. A red  
4 box.

5 Q. A boxcar?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. And did you have to switch at the Honda plant? I  
8 understand you said you had 14 cars for them?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. And you had some coming out, too?

11 A. I don't know if we had any coming out, but we had 14.

12 Q. Okay. I just missed one thing here. You said that you  
13 drove the road foreman's car up to Lincoln.

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. And then you were notified by a fireman?

16 A. I drove the car to Lincoln and I said that Mr. Tipton  
17 called me on the radio, because I could hear on his radio in the  
18 car. He said meet us at the siding. I think -- the delay in  
19 time, something had happened and he wanted me to come down because  
20 the train went into emergency.

21 Q. And so you went this fireman?

22 A. The fireman pulled up at the exact moment I to that  
23 siding, came at the split, exact --

24 Q. Okay. So --

25 A. And I got in his car and we hauled butt down to the

1 other -- the crossing down there and --

2 BY MR. GOBER:

3 Q. Did the fireman, by chance, mention how they got  
4 notified of the accident?

5 A. No, sir. I didn't know -- I didn't understand how we  
6 got hit by train and it kind of disturbed me, so I mean, I was  
7 pretty worried. I saw the smoke and I didn't realize it was the  
8 train. I thought somebody was burning tires or something.

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. A lot of people burn around that area.

11 MR. GOBER: Okay. Mr. McAvoy, any more questions?

12 MR. MCAVOY: I believe that's about it.

13 MR. GOBER: Do you have any questions?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Not a thing.

15 MR. GOBER: Okay, we appreciate you coming in. If we  
16 need to contact you, we'll call the trainmaster and get in touch  
17 with you that way.

18 MR. KING: Okay.

19 MR. GOBER: We don't have any more questions.

20 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled matter  
21 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: Norfolk Southern Rear-End Collision  
Lincoln, AL  
January 18, 2006  
Interview of Matthew King

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-06-FR-004

PLACE: Lincoln, AL

DATE: January 19, 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.

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David Martini  
Transcriber