

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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NEW JERSEY TRANSIT TRAIN #1614

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ACCIDENT AT HOBOKEN TERMINAL

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Accident No.: DCA16MR011

AT HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY

\*

ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2016

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Interview of: MARIANNA TROPEANO

South Kearny, New Jersey

Monday,  
October 3, 2016

## APPEARANCES:

DAVID BUCHER, Railroad Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

STEPHEN JENNER, Ph.D., Human Performance Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

NICHOLAS WEBSTER, M.D., Medical Officer  
National Transportation Safety Board

PATRICK VEDDER, Inspector  
Federal Railroad Administration

BRUCE PARKIN, Inspector  
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

FRED MATTISON, System Train and Engine Compliance  
Officer  
New Jersey Transit

RANDY FANNON  
Safety Taskforce  
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLET)

WILLIAM BATES  
SMART, Transportation Division

STEPHEN HAMER  
SMART, Transportation Division

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I N T E R V I E W

(2:00 p.m.)

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3 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher, rail accident investigator  
4 for the National Transportation Safety Board. It's October 3,  
5 2016. And this is the interview of Marianna Tropeano, New Jersey  
6 Transit Police Department. The interview is relative to the  
7 accident that occurred on September 29, 2016, Hoboken, New Jersey.  
8 The accident number is DCA16MR011.

9 Let's see. For the purpose of this -- the purpose of this  
10 investigation is to increase safety, not assign fault, blame or  
11 liability. However, NTSB cannot guarantee confidentiality or  
12 immunity from legal or certificate actions for the purposes of  
13 this interview because it's going to go in our docket. Okay. A  
14 transcript or summary of this interview will go in the docket.

15 And what I'd like to do is go around the table and introduce  
16 the group for the record. To my left I have --

17 DR. JENNER: Stephen Jenner, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, J-e-n-n-e-r,  
18 with the NTSB.

19 MR. FANNON: Randy Fannon, R-a-n-d-y, F-a-n-n-o-n, BLET.

20 MR. VEDDER: Patrick, P-a-t-r-i-c-k, V-e-d-d-e-r, inspector,  
21 FRA.

22 MR. PARKIN: Bruce Parkin, B-r-u-c-e P-a-r-k-i-n, inspector  
23 in FRA.

24 MR. WEBSTER: Nicholas Webster, N-i-c-h-o-l-a-s  
25 W-e-b-s-t-e-r, Medical Officer, NTSB.

26 MR. BATES: William Bates, W-i-l-l-i-a-m, B-a-t-e-s, SMART

1 TD.

2 MR. HAMER: Stephen Hamer, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, H-a-m-e-r, SMART  
3 Transportation Division.

4 MR. MATTISON: Fred Mattison, F-r-e-d, M-a-t-t-i-s-o-n,  
5 System Train and Engine Compliance Officer, New Jersey Transit.

6 INTERVIEW OF MARIANNA TROPEANO

7 BY MR. BUCHER:

8 Q. Okay, Marianna, just like I said in the hallway, if you could  
9 go back to the day of the accident, the 29th, and any interaction  
10 with the train crew on the 1614 accident train. Take us through  
11 it.

12 A. Okay. I responded and began to gather witness statements out  
13 by the triage area, which was set up in the bus lanes of the  
14 Hoboken Terminal. When the engineer was brought out, he was  
15 placed into an ambulance. That was at about approximately 0945  
16 hours. And I accompanied him in that ambulance. The ambulance  
17 number was 492. We -- Mr. Gallagher, the engineer, was  
18 transported to the Jersey City Medical Center at that time, and I  
19 accompanied him in that ambulance to the medical center.

20 While on board the ambulance, I identified myself as a  
21 detective from the Jersey Transit. I told him my name, and I  
22 asked him what happened. At that time he told me that he only  
23 remembered operating the train and didn't recall anything else.  
24 He then asked me where his safety glasses were, and I told him  
25 that they were probably still on the train, if he was wearing

1 them. I asked him if they were prescription lenses. He stated  
2 that they were. And then I asked him if he had another pair of  
3 eyeglasses with him. He said that they were in his backpack along  
4 with his cell phone and his wallet that had his identification in  
5 it.

6 Upon or arrival to the medical center, I met with several  
7 Jersey City police, uniform officers, and the chief of police  
8 there. He assigned a Jersey City detective to work alongside me  
9 at the hospital.

10 Mr. Gallagher was immediately treated. He was brought into  
11 -- to do several lab tests. I was told he was in CAT scan, he was  
12 going directly into CAT scan. When he came out of his testing and  
13 back into his room, he now appeared to be alert. He was awake and  
14 he was speaking clearly. I asked him again if he recalled what  
15 had happened and he told me that he remembers the train being  
16 crowded. The train was running approximately 6 minutes late. He  
17 said that he remembered passing Terminal Tower in Hoboken at  
18 approximately 10 miles per hour, and that he had activated the  
19 train horn and the bell as he was passing Terminal Tower. He  
20 remembered that his door was closed and that he was sitting alone  
21 in the cab car. The next thing he remembers after that is looking  
22 up at a fireman who was standing over him.

23 I asked him if he understood what had happened. He stated  
24 that he began to realize what had occurred after seeing the  
25 fireman inside the train. And he had no idea how this could have

1 happened.

2 And that was basically his statement to me. I asked him if  
3 he had gotten a good night's rest. He stated that he did. He  
4 stated that he is not on any type of medications and he has no  
5 medical issues. He said, in fact, he had just passed his New  
6 Jersey Transit yearly physical, which includes medical evaluation  
7 and blood tests and things like that. He said he had passed that.  
8 And he was not feeling fatigued or -- was feeling in good health  
9 generally.

10 I later spoke to his wife, who confirmed that he had slept  
11 well and had no medical issues.

12 Mr. Gallagher, I asked him if he would consent to have his  
13 blood drawn for the purposes of this investigation. He agreed.  
14 And Detective Lopez from Jersey City and I, we located the  
15 necessary medical personnel for that. We had a blood kit. Blood  
16 was drawn in our presence, and then it was packaged and secured in  
17 a refrigerator back in Newark.

18 As far as my interaction with Mr. Gallagher, that was it.

19 Q. Great. Thank you. You mentioned that you may have also  
20 talked to Mr. Mari. Did you?

21 A. Yes, I did.

22 Q. Okay. Could you describe for us that conversation?

23 A. Yes. When I returned to the medical center, I returned there  
24 to attempt to get any toxicology results from Mr. Gallagher, and I  
25 saw that Mr. Mari was in a hospital bed in the emergency room

1 waiting, and he agreed to speak with me. It was an unsworn  
2 statement as well, just a verbal statement.

3 And he stated to me that he first saw Mr. Gallagher when they  
4 were reporting for duty earlier that morning. He seemed as he  
5 usually is, alert. He didn't seem fatigued. He seemed perfectly  
6 normal.

7 He said that as their trip -- as they were going towards  
8 Hoboken, the train became increasingly crowded. It became  
9 extremely crowded; that they were one car short that day. But  
10 prior to the train becoming very crowded, he had seen  
11 Mr. Gallagher in his cab car with the door closed, by himself in  
12 there. And that it was a regular trip. There was no -- nothing  
13 unusual, nothing out of the ordinary from any other day.

14 Mr. Mari then stated to me that he does not remember the  
15 train slowing down when it approached Terminal Tower and he  
16 thought that the train was still going a little fast. He doesn't  
17 remember hearing the train horn or the bell. And then he suddenly  
18 felt the train crash and the lights go out.

19 The impact pushed him forward. He began to assist people in  
20 exiting the train, and instructed one passenger on how to operate  
21 a mechanism which opened all the doors so the passengers could  
22 safely get out of the train. And that was my -- the extent of my  
23 interview with Mr. Mari.

24 Q. Very good. Very good. Thank you very much. Wow. Okay.  
25 Just I have just a couple of questions, and then we'll go around



1 the table. We heard earlier that the engineer was transported out  
2 either on a backboard or a gurney. Is that where the engineer  
3 when you first saw him?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. He was on a backboard.

7 Q. On a backboard. Okay. And did you actually go in the  
8 station or you just were in the triage area?

9 A. I was in the triage area. When we first arrived, I walked  
10 into the area of the scene, but one of our captains, Captain  
11 Noble, was escorting everyone including police out of the area  
12 because of safety factors.

13 MR. BUCHER: Okay. Cool. That's all I have. I'm going to  
14 pass it off to Mr. Jenner.

15 DR. JENNER: Okay. Steve Jenner.

16 BY DR. JENNER:

17 Q. Thank you for your statement there.

18 A. Thank you.

19 Q. Okay. Just to go back a bit. When you were in the ambulance  
20 with him, you asked him, do you know what happened, and he -- he  
21 just knew that he was operating the train, gave you no other  
22 response?

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. Right. Did you have any other conversation back and forth  
25 during the ride?

1 A. No. I just -- I, you know, introduced myself as a police  
2 officer to him, and he -- the other conversation basically had to  
3 do with him wanting to know where his safety glasses were.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. He did seem very dazed at that point, a little bit in shock  
6 still.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I let the emergency medical technician do most of the talking  
9 with him.

10 Q. Okay. Did you overhear any of that conversation between the  
11 EMT and him?

12 A. They were just -- yes, I did, and they were general questions  
13 just about his pedigree information, his date of birth, where he  
14 lived, things like that.

15 Q. Was he able to answer those questions?

16 A. He partially answered certain questions. He seemed very  
17 dazed. So he didn't fully answer.

18 Q. How long was the trip to the hospital?

19 A. I would say it was approximately 5 minutes.

20 Q. At what point did you observe that he was getting some of his  
21 capabilities back?

22 A. After he came out of CAT scan, we immediately went to his  
23 bed, and at that point he seemed much more alert. Yes. He seemed  
24 actually very normal at that point.

25 Q. Was a TV on, do you recall? Was he aware of any of the news

1 coverage or radio coverage of the incident?

2 A. There was no television. This was still in emergency room  
3 area. There was no televisions, and I don't believe he was aware  
4 of any news coverage yet.

5 Q. Okay. At any point that evening did you see him watching the  
6 news unfold?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And as a matter of fact, if I can add, when I spoke with his  
10 wife a little bit later after he was released, I asked her to  
11 please refrain -- to try and refrain from any social media or  
12 watching any type of news.

13 Q. Okay. Do you know if he followed those, you know, advice  
14 from you?

15 A. I don't know. At that point I believe they were home  
16 already.

17 Q. Okay. You spoke to his wife as you mentioned. She had  
18 commented he was a good -- he slept well.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And he was in good overall health. And any other insightful  
21 information she provided?

22 A. No. She stated that there was -- it was like any other day,  
23 and everything was as it is every day of their lives when they  
24 wake up and get ready to go to work.

25 Q. Okay. I'm sorry. Back to the hospital. When you requested

1 specimens, was that for police purposes?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. Do you know if other specimens were taken for required  
4 railroad testing?

5 A. Yes. Carolyn Robinson and a gentleman that she was with,  
6 they work for New Jersey Transit and they're in the Drug and  
7 Alcohol Program. If you excuse me, to check my notes for a  
8 minute, I'll give you their --

9 MR. BUCHER: Not a problem.

10 MS. TROPEANO: -- exact -- the New Jersey Transit Drug and  
11 Alcohol Program manager, Carolyn Robinson, and her assistant is  
12 Jamie Germilo (ph.). They advised that they were requesting to  
13 have a separate sample of the engineer's specimens collected for  
14 their purposes. I didn't witness that occur. I was already on my  
15 way to drop off my evidence.

16 BY DR. JENNER:

17 Q. Okay. Do you know how he got -- you may have mentioned this  
18 -- how he got back to his residence?

19 A. I'm not sure if he was police escorted back to his residence  
20 or if his wife drove him back themselves. I can find out, but I'm  
21 really not sure if there was a police escort or not.

22 Q. Did his wife and family arrive at the hospital?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Did you -- were you in a position to overhear any of their  
25 conversations?

1 A. I was -- I did not overhear any of their conversations, but I  
2 did speak with his wife.

3 Q. After she had met her husband?

4 A. No. Before she had met her husband.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Yeah, before she saw him.

7 Q. But you didn't talk to her afterwards in the hospital area?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Okay. Okay, great. Thank you very much.

10 A. Thank you.

11 MR. FANNON: Randy Fannon, BLET. I just have one question.

12 BY MR. FANNON:

13 Q. When after loading in the ambulance and you left, can you  
14 describe the appearance? Was it a lot of dust, debris on his  
15 face?

16 A. No, not at all.

17 Q. Okay. Thank you.

18 MR. PARKIN: Bruce Parkin, FRA.

19 BY MR. PARKIN:

20 Q. You said that after he went through some examinations and CAT  
21 scans he came back, and he seemed more aware of things.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay. At any point would you describe him as being upset or  
24 distraught over what had taken place, you know, his frame of mind?

25 A. Yes, he was upset. He was upset. He first asked me how his

1 crew was, if everyone was all right, and I said that they were.  
2 And he asked me if anyone died, and I said no. I didn't tell him  
3 anything about that. But he did seem upset but very controlled.  
4 He wasn't very emotional, outwardly emotional, I would say, but he  
5 definitely expressed his concern.

6 Q. And when you were in his company at all, did he give you or  
7 did you hear him say any explanation as to what had happened,  
8 whether it was a mechanical problem with the train or any  
9 indication of what had taken place?

10 A. No. He never mentioned any explanation. He mentioned  
11 nothing about maybe something malfunctioned on the train. Nothing  
12 like that at all. He had no idea how it could have happened.

13 He swore that he came into Terminal Tower, which is just  
14 before you enter the terminal. He swears he was operating at 10  
15 miles per hour going through there, and that he sounded his horn  
16 and his bell as he was going through there.

17 Anyone else that I spoke to about this, people that were on  
18 the train and the conductor, all say that they thought the train  
19 was going faster. And I don't believe anyone that I interviewed  
20 heard any horns. One person heard brakes squealing just before  
21 the crash. But there was one witness that was in the first car,  
22 third row, and he said he was looking out the window, and he  
23 suddenly thought to himself, oh, my God, this train is still going  
24 a little too fast, and then he braced himself against the chair  
25 just before the crash, and because he did that, he had absolutely

1 no injuries to himself. But he saw it coming.

2 Q. So the people that you -- approximately how many people did  
3 you interview that were on board the train, passengers that were  
4 on board?

5 A. Six people.

6 Q. And did anyone -- you said the people never heard the horn?

7 A. Yes. Most people that I interviewed -- I'm going to say  
8 most. I'm going to look really quick. But one woman said she  
9 heard a loud squeal that she thought was the engineer attempting  
10 to brake just before the crash. A couple of people just felt the  
11 train shimmy, and they felt bumping prior, just prior. One person  
12 heard absolutely no brake noise. Two people stated they heard no  
13 brakes being applied and heard no horn.

14 MR. PARKIN: Thank you. I have no other questions.

15 DR. WEBSTER: You've asked all my questions, so --

16 MR. BATES: William Bates.

17 BY MR. BATES:

18 Q. During any time did he have any type of head trauma?

19 A. It looked as though his -- the area of his forehead looked a  
20 little swollen, and he had some redness on the left side of his  
21 face from what I could see that -- I photographed him, and it --  
22 the photographs depict just a little bit of redness and maybe what  
23 you would consider a little bit of swelling, but nothing really  
24 dramatic. And he had a cut -- he had some blood around one of his  
25 fingers on his left hand, I believe, from a cut. But that's all I

1 could see.

2 MR. BATES: Okay. Thank you.

3 MR. HAMER: Stephen Hamer, SMART TD.

4 BY MR. HAMER:

5 Q. I just want to confirm that, as you said, he said he  
6 remembers operating the train at 10 miles an hour past Terminal  
7 Tower, blowing the horn, putting the bell on. But I just want to  
8 make sure that he didn't say anything about "I had some brakes on"  
9 or "I had brakes on" or any other type of running type of  
10 conversation as to how that train operates or how he was operating  
11 the train?

12 A. No. He didn't mention anything of that sort.

13 MR. HAMER: Okay. Thank you.

14 MR. MATTISON: Fred Mattison, Jersey Transit.

15 BY MR. MATTISON:

16 Q. Thank you for coming.

17 A. Thank you.

18 Q. How are you doing --

19 A. Pretty good.

20 Q. -- through all this?

21 A. I'm okay. Thank you though.

22 Q. Okay, good. You said you spoke to a number of passengers  
23 after the accident.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. One, you said, they were in the third car or the third seat



1 in the control car and he brakes for impact and wasn't injured  
2 when he realized what was going on. The other five that you  
3 interviewed, did they mention where they were on the train in  
4 relation to --

5 A. Yes. Yes, I have one female who was sitting in the second  
6 car, eighth seat.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. She's the one who heard the loud squeal.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. And then another female, who was sitting in the fourth car  
11 when she felt the train shimming back and forth. And another  
12 female, who was in the fifth car, who said she thought the train  
13 was going a little faster than usual, and she felt the train car  
14 shimmy and then hit a bump just before it crashed.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And then there is another male, who he was also in the first  
17 car, third row, and he said that the engineer never slowed down.  
18 That's all he had to say.

19 And then there was another gentleman that was in the first  
20 car standing by the bathrooms, who said that -- he said he was  
21 standing next to the bathrooms in the first car, and the train was  
22 unusually crowded, but everything else to be -- appeared to be as  
23 usual. And he takes this train every day. He felt that the train  
24 was operating at the usual speed, but then he suddenly felt the  
25 train shaking and bouncing just prior to the crash. And he did

1 not hear the engineer activate the train horn and did not hear the  
2 brakes being applied.

3 He said that at the time that pieces of steel came and  
4 penetrated through the train car where he was standing, but he was  
5 able to avoid being struck by the debris.

6 Q. And you interviewed all these passengers after you returned  
7 from the hospital or prior to getting in the ambulance?

8 A. Prior to getting in the ambulance. That's why some of the  
9 interviews were just very brief. I was just trying to get, you  
10 know, basic information from people. But I took everyone's  
11 addresses and phone numbers to, you know, pass along to you if you  
12 care to go further.

13 Q. Did you interview anybody from the train after you arrived  
14 back in Hoboken from the hospital or did you -- well, did you  
15 return from Hoboken after you returned from the hospital, and did  
16 you interview anyone from the train or did you just worry about  
17 securing the area?

18 A. After I returned from the hospital, I did not interview  
19 anyone further. I -- yeah.

20 Q. Okay. Cool. All right. Is there any recommendation that  
21 you can make in your opinion that Jersey Transit should do to help  
22 out training either of crews or other employees or officers to  
23 prepare to respond to an incident like this going forward in the  
24 future?

25 A. That is -- at this time, being that we're really not sure

1 what happened in this case, I'm not sure I could really answer  
2 that.

3 Q. For a response. Like not exact -- you know, how if there's a  
4 better way we could respond to it or train our employees to handle  
5 an emergency situation of that sort.

6 A. That would be a better question for the command staff, I  
7 believe, that were present there.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Yeah. And actually maybe Captain Noble, who is in charge of  
10 the emergency management, that would be a very good question for  
11 him.

12 Q. Okay. We can explore that.

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Okay, cool.

15 A. Okay.

16 Q. That's all I have. Thank you.

17 A. Okay.

18 MR. BUCHER: Wow, very detailed. Thank you. We'll go around  
19 one more time, and getting close.

20 BY DR. JENNER:

21 Q. Just a couple more questions.

22 A. Sure.

23 Q. Besides family members and official New Jersey Transit  
24 people, did you see anyone else come and talk to the engineer?  
25 For instance, did an attorney show up or did a union

1 representative show up?

2 A. I saw union representatives as I was leaving the hospital.  
3 They were coming in. And there were the two New Jersey Transit  
4 drug and alcohol managers that came to take his specimens. I  
5 didn't hear any conversation between them though.

6 Q. What time was that approximately?

7 A. That the drug and alcohol people showed up?

8 Q. Yeah, yeah.

9 A. That might have been maybe about 12:15 in the afternoon, I'm  
10 going to guess.

11 DR. JENNER: Terrific. thank you.

12 MR. PARKIN: No further questions. Thank you.

13 MR. HAMER: Steve Hamer, SMART TD.

14 BY MR. HAMER:

15 Q. You talked to his wife and she said that he had a good  
16 night's sleep and everything seemed normal. I'm stretching it a  
17 bit, but did she give you any indication how or how his sleep  
18 habits are --

19 A. No.

20 Q. -- at that particular time? No?

21 A. No, she didn't, and I didn't ask.

22 MR. HAMER: Okay. Thank you.

23 MR. BUCHER: Okay. Dave Bucher, and this concludes the  
24 interview of Ms. Tropeano.

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:           NEW JERSEY TRANSIT TRAIN #1614  
                                  ACCIDENT AT HOBOKEN TERMINAL  
                                  AT HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY  
                                  ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2016  
                                  Interview of Marianna Tropeano

DOCKET NUMBER:           DCA16MR011

PLACE:                       South Kearny, New Jersey

DATE:                        October 3, 2016

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.

---

Katherine Motley  
Transcriber