

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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NEW JERSEY TRANSIT TRAIN #1614

ACCIDENT AT HOBOKEN TERMINAL

AT HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY

ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2016

Accident No.: DCA16MR011

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Interview of: JARED EAGLE, JOSEPH STEIDLE and
JOSEPH ARGUELLES

South Kearny, New Jersey

Tuesday,
October 4, 2016

APPEARANCES:

DAVID BUCHER, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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

PATRICK VEDDER, Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration

BRUCE PARKIN, Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

FRED MATTISON
New Jersey Transit

RANDY FANNON
Safety Taskforce
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLET)

WILLIAM BATES
SMART, Transportation Division

STEPHEN HAMER
SMART, Transportation Division

MICHAEL KNAPP
General Chairman, American Train Dispatchers Association
(Representative on behalf of interviewees)

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I N T E R V I E W

(2:30 p.m.)

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3 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher, Rail Accident Investigator
4 for the National Transportation Safety Board, and this is the
5 interview of Jared Eagle, Joe Steidle and Joe --

6 MR. ARGUELLES: Arguelles.

7 MR. BUCHER: -- Arguelles, relative to the accident that
8 occurred on September 29, 2016, at Hoboken, New Jersey. The
9 accident number is DCA16MR011.

10 The disclaimer, the purpose of this investigation is to
11 increase safety, not assign fault, blame or liability. NTSB
12 cannot offer any guarantee of immunity from legal or certificate
13 actions, New Jersey Transit.

14 A transcript of this or summary of the interview will go into
15 the public docket, and the interviewee can have one representative
16 of the interviewee's choice, Mr. Knapp.

17 We'll go around the table and introduce ourselves. To my
18 left --

19 DR. JENNER: I'm Stephen Jenner, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, J-e-n-n-e-r,
20 with the NTSB.

21 MR. MATTISON: Fred Mattison, F-r-e-d, M-a-t-t-i-s-o-n, New
22 Jersey Transit.

23 MR. FANNON: Randy Fannon, R-a-n-d-y, F-a-n-n-o-n, BLET
24 Safety Taskforce.

25 MR. VEDDER: Patrick Vedder, P-a-t-r-i-c-k, V-e-d-d-e-r,

1 Inspector, FRA.

2 MR. PARKIN: Bruce Parkin, B-r-u-c-e, P-a-r-k-i-n, Inspector,
3 FRA.

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

6 MR. HAMER: Stephen Hamer, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, H-a-m-e-r, SMART
7 TD.

8 MR. KNAPP: Michael Knapp, M-i-c-h-a-e-l, K-n-a-p-p, General
9 Chairman, American Train Dispatchers Association.

10 MR. ARGUELLES: Joseph Arguelles, J-o-s-e-p-h, A-r-g-u-e-l-l-
11 e-s, train dispatcher.

12 MR. STEIDLE: Joseph Steidle, J-o-s-e-p-h, S-t-e-i-d-l-e,
13 train dispatcher.

14 MR. EAGLE: Jared Eagle, J-a-r-e-d, E-a-g-l-e, train
15 dispatcher.

16 MR. BUCHER: Thank you, gentlemen, for coming in.

17 INTERVIEW OF JOSEPH ARGUELLES, JOSEPH STEIDLE AND JARED EAGLE

18 MR. BUCHER: I guess let's start with Jared, and if you --
19 maybe give a little brief description of your operation, your
20 desk, and then tell us what your interaction with the 1614 train
21 was on Thursday, the 29th, as little or as much as you can
22 remember. We're just trying to get --

23 MR. EAGLE: The operation, what I normally do during the day?

24 MR. BUCHER: Yes.

25 MR. EAGLE: I work terminal dispatching area in Hoboken. I

1 generally deal with east end interlocking and the south side of
2 the terminal. You know, and then I'll run north side or west end
3 if necessary, but on a daily basis that's what I do.

4 As for 1614, I mean, basically it's similar routes every day,
5 you know. Most of the time I have those signals fleeted for him
6 to come east. He runs the same every day unless they're running
7 late, which he wasn't, or he was pretty close to on time. So as
8 far as I remember, the signals were fleet from the east and he
9 pulled into the depot, 5 depot, on like any other normal day.

10 MR. BUCHER: Okay. Dave Bucker. Jared, did you notice
11 anything unusual that day --

12 MR. EAGLE: No.

13 MR. BUCHER: -- concerning the operation of 1614?

14 MR. EAGLE: No.

15 MR. BUCHER: Well, we'll go with Mr. Steidle. If you could
16 just give us the same thing, a little description of your position
17 and, you know, any interaction with the 1614?

18 MR. STEIDLE: All right. Well, I generally work -- you know,
19 like I said, we all work the same district, but I generally
20 control 11 depot to 1 depot, north side of the terminal. I deal
21 with the field track and the yard tracks, the A yard and the B
22 yard. When necessary, I also deal with east end, help Jared out
23 on the south side, or west end where Joe works.

24 That day, 1614 normal. I mean, it was normal. I did a fuel
25 move just before 1614 arrived, from 9 depot to the fuel pad, B12.

1 I lined up for him and there was nothing abnormal.

2 MR. BUCHER: Do you remember what track he went in?

3 MR. STEIDLE: Yeah, he went into 5 depot. Same track every
4 day.

5 MR. BUCHER: Okay. Joe number 2, do you want to --

6 MR. ARGUELLES: Joe 2, Arguelles. I work out of the west end
7 of the terminal and sometimes I help out with these guys, east end
8 or terminal north or terminal south. And basically I give trains
9 to main line or M&E going west.

10 So 1614, I just gave the signal from Secaucus, split 6 from
11 Secaucus to east end, and then just traveled from east end to
12 terminal, and nothing peculiar. Just same old, normal day.

13 MR. BUCHER: Okay. Dave Bucher. Thanks.

14 To the group, I just want to clarify that you control from
15 Secaucus to the terminal, that's it?

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Depots.

17 MR. BUCHER: Terminal depot tracks.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Actually west end. We don't control
19 Secaucus.

20 MR. BUCHER: Okay.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The west end.

22 MR. BUCHER: The west end is Secaucus to --

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, they leave Secaucus and come to
24 us. The first time we get them is when they hit west end
25 interlocking.

1 MR. BUCHER: Okay. West end interlocking, okay. Thank you.

2 Great. Okay. I'm going to pass it off to Dr. Jenner.

3 DR. JENNER: Great. Thank you.

4 Did any of you have any type of communications with the
5 engineer on this day?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

7 DR. JENNER: Would you have expected to have any type of
8 radio communications?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If they -- if we have to switch a
10 track with them, we call them on the radio. Or if we're being --
11 if he's being held at the terminal or east end or west end, we
12 generally reach out to them and let them know, but for the most
13 part, no. That day we didn't reach out to them at all. We didn't
14 need to.

15 DR. JENNER: So there's no need for you to reach out. Was
16 there any need that you know of for him to reach out to you?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Not that I --

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Not that I'm aware of.

20 DR. JENNER: Under what conditions might an engineer reach
21 out to you after departing Secaucus?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If he needs some sort of assistance as
23 far as a lift for a wheelchair passenger, ADA, or if he has some
24 sort of mechanical problems, he'll reach out to us or reach out to
25 the yardmaster or MW in charge and let him know.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Maybe a bad signal or something.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Or if he doesn't have a signal.

3 Sometimes if they're stopped, they'll complain about that, but --

4 DR. JENNER: Okay. But was signals an issue at all this day?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No issues.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, actually --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Everything was smooth that day, like

8 everything was on time, all the plans that we usually have that

9 we'll -- everything was smooth. Just surprising.

10 DR. JENNER: Okay. Did you know the engineer involved in the
11 accident?

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

14 DR. JENNER: Okay. Do the three of you work the same --

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It separates --

16 DR. JENNER: -- depot? Yeah, how do you separate? Did you
17 work --

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's separated into C -- like I'm C, I
19 come in at 6:00. Jared's B, 6:15, and Joe's A, 6:30. We're all
20 qualified.

21 DR. JENNER: Right.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We could run another one, you know
23 what I mean, if we had to, which is usually on the weekends. But
24 that's just the way it's separated, A, B, C.

25 DR. JENNER: All right. Okay. Jared, you mentioned you do

1 11 through 1.

2 MR. EAGLE: Yeah.

3 DR. JENNER: Do you do that routinely?

4 MR. EAGLE: Every day.

5 DR. JENNER: Every day. And you do your own --

6 MR. ARGUELLES: C, which is west end.

7 DR. JENNER: -- section -- okay.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, because it gets really busy, so
9 it's just easier for us, like with the main line, to separate it
10 to keep the workload lower so there's no confusion that way.

11 DR. JENNER: Do engineers ever talk to you about challenges
12 or complaints they have about coming into the terminal?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Such as?

14 DR. JENNER: For anything. Under what circumstances would an
15 engineer say I'm having a tough time coming into the terminal?

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Only if there was an equipment issue,
17 a signal issue, or if they don't have a signal, complaining that
18 they may be stopped waiting for a signal. But otherwise, no.

19 DR. JENNER: Do you recall if this engineer had clear signals
20 from Secaucus into the terminal?

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I couldn't recall 100 percent but I'm
22 pretty sure.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, I don't recall. But like I
24 said, I didn't see -- I don't foresee any like problems of that
25 day.

1 DR. JENNER: Okay. Okay. Thank you.

2 MR. MATTISON: Fred Mattison, New Jersey Transit. Thanks,
3 guys. I know this is the end of your day and you'd like to go
4 home. I appreciate you taking your time to come out and answer
5 our questions.

6 Joe Arguelles, you said that it was a normal move, normal day
7 for 1614, a normal route that he took from Secaucus to west end.
8 Do you know off the top of your head what that route is, like
9 which tracks?

10 MR. ARGUELLES: It depends. 1614, he should have come on
11 Track 1, 1 to 3.

12 MR. MATTISON: 1 to 3, yeah, at west end?

13 MR. ARGUELLES: 1 at -- 1 main line. 1 main line, and then
14 3 --

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, 3 east on the main line.

16 MR. ARGUELLES: 1 to 3.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. It comes east on 3. It comes
18 east on 3 from Secaucus, down the -- from the main line, and
19 generally goes to Track 3 all the way straight into terminal, and
20 then we go straight in 5 depot usually.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Usually. But that day he didn't come
22 Track 3. That day he came Track 1.

23 MR. ARGUELLES: Yeah, I can't recall. I mean, there's so
24 many moves, you know.

25 MR. MATTISON: I understand.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, what it is, it's just a regular
2 day, so no one's not really --

3 MR. MATTISON: Nothing remarkable about it so you don't
4 remember?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right, it's not like it was this
6 change and that change.

7 MR. MATTISON: Okay.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You know, sometimes if there's an open
9 track you can move faster, you move a little faster.

10 MR. MATTISON: Okay. Do either of three of you recall if
11 there was or wasn't anything? You just -- there wasn't anything
12 remarkable about it?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. Unless a train's late, we
16 generally --

17 MR. MATTISON: Okay. Well, let's talk about that for a
18 second then. The engineer reported to us that he was 6 minutes
19 late at Secaucus. When we interviewed him, he said he was 6
20 minutes late because he had heavy travel coming down the line. Is
21 that typical for that train or is that -- would that be a little
22 bit out of the norm?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Was he?

24 MR. MATTISON: Yeah.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Was he 6 minutes late?

1 MR. MATTISON: That's what he told us.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I know. But I'm sure you guys looked
3 at it.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If he's not, if he's not -- if they're
5 not showing late, then we're not --

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, we --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- we're not counting if he's 2
8 minutes late or 5 minutes late or 3 minutes late or exactly on
9 time.

10 MR. MATTISON: So you just handle the trains as they come to
11 you; you don't really look at their --

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: As long as they're --

13 MR. MATTISON: -- their time schedules?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, as long as they're not late.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I look at their time schedules.

16 MR. MATTISON: Do you?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If they're late, it would turn yellow,
18 but it stayed for the most part, if I recall, it was green.

19 MR. MATTISON: So if it turns yellow on your board, then you
20 might reach out to them or you just let supervision --

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We check, maybe check to see where he
22 lost time, what's going on, and deal with it from there.

23 MR. MATTISON: But this time you don't remember if it was --
24 changed time at all or not?

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, I know he was 4 late getting
2 into the depot because I keep track of them coming in.

3 MR. MATTISON: You do know. Okay.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: For the most part I thought he was
5 green. I thought he was on time.

6 MR. MATTISON: Okay. All right. One last question. You
7 know the fat in the schedule, the padding, the Shirley time or
8 whatever, the extra time, do you know if that -- does that usually
9 make up a difference in the -- can you explain to us what Shirley
10 time is and if it makes a difference on your model board if a
11 train's late or not?

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Shirley time is extra time given from
13 a certain spot to another spot getting into the depot. So if a
14 train's say like 7 minutes late, he might be 3 or 4 late on his
15 final.

16 MR. MATTISON: Okay.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's just extra padded time.

18 MR. MATTISON: Okay. So that might explain why he went from
19 6 minutes late to operating normal to the depot to being 4 minutes
20 late then?

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It could be.

22 MR. MATTISON: There's just a little extra padding?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Could be.

24 MR. MATTISON: Okay. That's cool.

25 Thank you, guys. I have no more questions.

1 MR. FANNON: Randy Fannon, BLET. Just one question. Were
2 you involved in any way after the incident? Did anybody contact
3 you after the incident that you had to do anything in your duties
4 following the incident?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Like after we left work?

6 MR. FANNON: No, at -- after 8:45 in the morning when the
7 incident occurred.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We were told -- we were notified
9 through our STO, Mike -- what's his last name?

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Dennis.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Dennis. Yeah, that's it. There's so
12 many Mikes in our office.

13 Yeah, we were notified via him, he was -- somebody called him
14 and that's how we were notified. Nobody told us.

15 MR. FANNON: Nobody contacted you on the radio?

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On the radio, no.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Total radio silence. We had no idea.
18 The yardmaster didn't even know.

19 MR. FANNON: Thank you.

20 MR. PARKIN: Did either of you hear any conversation between
21 the crew members over the radio?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, just complete silence. Like we
23 said, complete silence, like nothing at all, until someone called
24 us and just said, you know --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, I didn't hear anything. Nothing

1 on the radio. No transmission.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's what's totally shocking to all
3 of us is like total radio silence after this happened, like not
4 even -- nobody said emergency, emergency, nothing. We knew
5 nothing. It was odd.

6 MR. PARKIN: Okay. Thank you.

7 MR. BATES: William Bates. Who was the first one that got
8 notification of the accident?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mike Dennis, our STO, the supervisor
10 on duty.

11 MR. BATES: He was the one. You all, you all didn't know
12 anything about it until he advised you all of it?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

14 MR. BATES: Okay. All right. That's all I have. Thanks.

15 MR. HAMER: Steve Hamer, SMART TD. You guys still have
16 closed-circuit TVs upstairs on your desks?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What is that?

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Like only we can see it.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do we have -- camera-wise? Yeah, we
20 have a couple cameras in certain locations.

21 MR. HAMER: do you ever use them to monitor the trains?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From time to time, yeah.

23 MR. HAMER: Anyone of you ever recall looking to see if 1614,
24 if you ever had any issues --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

1 MR. HAMER: -- if you could see anything?

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

3 MR. HAMER: Anything out of the ordinary?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Even in the yard, nothing. You can't
5 tell like nothing happened even after this happened. It's as if
6 we were trying to zoom in and we can't -- we didn't see anything.
7 The only thing we saw was the police responders and first
8 responders (indiscernible) left out there onto the bus. That's
9 all we saw was that, so we knew something definitely happened.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We really use them on specific, if we
11 were specifically looking for something. We don't monitor them as
12 we go because we're paying attention got the board itself and
13 whatever we're doing. If we specifically wanted to see something
14 going on, we would use it, but otherwise, it's just kind of there
15 for that reason only.

16 MR. HAMER: Okay. Thank you.

17 MR. BUCHER: We'll go around one more time. I have no more
18 questions.

19 DR. JENNER: Yeah, after you were notified, just to be clear,
20 were you involved in coordinating with the emergency responders at
21 all?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, the only thing we did was to have
25 -- stop train traffic.

1 DR. JENNER: If you can walk me through that, what's the
2 process for that?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You basically -- any -- you talk to
4 the trains on the radio. Anyone moving, you just ask them to a
5 safe stop when they can and then tell them to stand by for further
6 instructions.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, and we were told to reverse them
8 back to Secaucus, and that was it.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And then no trains, no more trains
10 into the depots, and we just did the turns from west end.

11 DR. JENNER: Any problems communicating with any of the
12 trains?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, not at all.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

16 DR. JENNER: Okay. That was it. Thank you.

17 MR. MATTISON: Fred Mattison, New Jersey Transit. Just one
18 more question. Were you asked to write a written statement or put
19 something on paper about what you experienced on Thursday?

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

23 MR. MATTISON: Fair enough. That's all I have.

24 MR. FANNON: No questions.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

1 MR. BATES: No questions.

2 MR. HAMER: Nothing.

3 MR. BUCHER: Okay. This concludes the interview of
4 Mr. Eagle, Mr. Steidle and Mr. Arguelles. Thank you.

5 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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

Interview of Jared Eagle,
Joseph Steidle and Joseph Arguelles

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA16MR011

PLACE: South Kearny, New Jersey

DATE: October 4, 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.

Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber