UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	
UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD REMOTE CONTROL OPERATION YARD DERAILMENT WITH EMPLOYEE FATALITY IN ARLINGTON, TEXAS, SEPTEMBER 22, 2017	Accident No.: DCA17FR013

Interview of: MICHAEL SCOTT FORD

Hilton Hotel
Arlington, Texas

Sunday,
September 24, 2017

APPEARANCES:

GEORGETTA GREGORY, Operations Group Chair
National Transportation Safety Board

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ZACHARY ALLEN, Operations Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

(3:45 p.m.)

MS. GREGORY: Okay. Let the record indicate that it is --

DR. JENNER: 3:45.

MS. GREGORY: 3:45. We're at the Hilton Hotel in Arlington, Texas with the Union Pacific Railroad, the current -- this is -- this is a proceeding of the National Transportation Safety Board, and the purpose is to conduct interviews in connection with the derailment and employee fatality at the Arlington Yard -- at the Union Pacific Arlington Yard in Arlington Texas.

As we go around the room, please say your name and spell your last name so that the -- make it easier for the transcriptionist.

So we'll start with you, Mr. Ford. Do you mind -- do you go by Michael or Mike?

MR. FORD: Usually just Michael.

MS. GREGORY: Okay. Do you mind if I call you Michael?

MR. FORD: No -- yeah, you can call me --

MS. GREGORY: So if you could give us your name and spell your last name, and then we'll go around the table?

MR. FORD: Okay. My name is Michael Ford. Last name F-o-r-d.

MS. GREGORY: And I'm Georgetta Gregory, G-r-e-g-o-r-y, with the National Transportation Safety Board.

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

KAMRON SAUNDERS: Kamron Saunders, K-a-m-r-o-n, S-a-u-n-d-e-r-s, SMART TD investigator.

MR. SEACHORD: Kelly Seachord, S-e-a-c-h-o-r-d, Union Pacific Railroad.

MR. ALLEN: Zach Allen, FRA, Z-a-c-h, A-l-l-e-n.

INTERVIEW OF MICHAEL SCOTT FORD

BY MS. GREGORY:

Q. Okay. And just to get started off, Michael, if you would be kind enough to tell us who you're employed with?

A. The Union Pacific Railroad.

Q. And your title?

A. Track inspector.

Q. And if you could just give us a little history of your career with the Union Pacific, where you started and how you progressed?

A. Yeah. I started January 09 of 2012 out of Miller Yard as a trackman. And then I went to work as a mechanic apprentice for a little bit.

My son got sick, so I came home off the tie gangs. Went to the bridge side for a small time, not very long, and then I caught a job on a tamper, and then I ran tampers until about this time last year. And then I thought, well, I'll try to, you know, try to see how it is being as an inspector and stuff. I've often been curious about it, so I, you know, tried out, and I've had quite a bit of experience with surfacing, and stuff, so I put in for this job.

Q. And when did you start this job?
A. The end -- the first of October, so right at --
Q. Last year? Right at a year today?
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Okay. Great. Can you describe your duties as a track inspector for us?
A. Yeah. I pretty much walk track, inspect it. You know, I look for -- gauge is my number one thing, because there's always a gauge, and then I always try to look for bad ties and joint bars and, you know, anywhere the rail is worn down real well, you know, to where it's pretty bad and ballast. And I try checking out surface a lot, and stuff like that.
Q. Um-hum. And what is your territory? What --
A. It's the Great Southwest north and south and then Eagle Ford and June Pit and Garrett Yard.
Q. Where is June Pit?
A. It's -- well, it's like on the other side of Grand Prairie. I don't -- the road to get there, the sign is always stolen, so I don't know the name of it. It's off of main 1, but I just always know to turn by like the yellow gas station and get back there, back there to it.
Q. Okay. So mostly your work is in the yards, then?
A. Yes.
Q. And the Great Western Yard, I understand that's excepted track; is that correct?

A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Could you talk about that a bit, so what you would be looking at on excepted track compared to, say, Class 1 or 2 or 3 track?
A. So on excepted track is -- the main thing is gauge, because everything, you know, it's at the 10 miles per hour. But I usually try to -- I mean, that's the main thing though is that's where the -- we all know you can't just -- that can't be the only thing you look for. There ain't no -- I mean, trains just can't run on two rails, you know what I mean? Always try to look for ties, you know, make sure everything's spiked down.

I try to look at surface. I try to see if I can see anything in the track deviation to where, you know, it's moving or, you know. And that's -- I think a lot of that just comes from being a tamper operator because you're always having to -- kind of like surveying, you always have to look, look at the track.

Where you're on the main line -- which I haven't got to inspect a whole lot of main line a whole lot, but you want to look for -- I guess it comes down to the, you know, measurements, measurements, like down to a 16th for -- from my point of view. So if I was to -- you know, because you're talking about speed variations and where, you know, going a lot faster. Excepted track is, you know, 10 miles per hour.
Q. What are the gauge limits on excepted track?
A. I know 58 is out of service. If I find it at 57½, I take it out of service. That's just a policy I've heard that the Southern

Region, or I guess San Antonio and down, goes by, and that's what I try to -- if I find it at that, I take it out. And that's what I look for.

Anything -- in fact, if it gets in between -- because I'm a nervous guy. That's just how I am. My whole life I'm that way. I'm always what if, what if, what if, what if? So, you know, and I know it takes the right point in time and this and that, that even if that track is at 57½, if the wrong car is going over that spot at that time, it could be a derailment, you know, in my mind.

And so I always try to hold myself to if it's 57½ I take it out of service. And I try to keep it down to -- if it gets around 57¼, it makes me nervous. I'm like that's too much. And so that's what I -- my standards.

Q. And do you also check for the cross-level?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. And what would you call condemning in a cross-level?

A. If it gets -- to me, if it gets over 2½, I usually try -- I want to take it out. I know on main line, it's definitely out. On excepted track, I try to watch for it about 2½ or even lower than that. I want it lower than that, but that's usually whenever I try to take it out or I get someone over to try to pop it up with a backhoe or something.

Q. Now I'd like to move a little closer to Friday, the day of the accident. When was the last time you inspected track 1 in the Great Western Yard?

A. It was last month on the 30th.
Q. So on September or August?
A. Of August.
Q. Oh, I guess it would be August. So August 30th. Did you note any defects in that inspection?
A. On that one, it was the joint bars that had -- there was joint bars that -- I was wanting the gang to come out and -- or tie them up at least.
Q. It was just one set, one joint bar?
A. From what I can remember, yeah. It was a -- yeah, it was one set I was wanting them -- I particularly get at in the -- I was wanting them to get at because I felt that was more important than the other ones.
Q. And I know you were out there yesterday with us. What proximity to the accident site was that joint bar?
A. It was a little bit farther down. I want to say -- and I'm trying to remember. It was, like, about 80 or something. It was a little bit farther down, more towards the eastern end, not the western end, or not as -- yeah, it was closer to the -- it was a little bit farther. In fact, it was a good -- a little bit good ways down.
Q. Do you know if that's been mediated or repaired?
A. I do not.
Q. Okay.
A. I haven't got to get over there this month. That's

usually -- I usually try to get there at the end of the month or so to -- and I haven't got to get back over there.
Q. Okay. So when you go to a yard, do you inspect all the tracks in the yard or do you just --
A. I usually, yeah, and I can't do it -- for the most part, I'll go down -- when I go down one, I'll look at the other. And if there's cars in there, then usually George and them, they'll -- the next day, they'll have them in another one or they'll move them or I'll tell them the day before, hey, you know, I need to get to look at this track. And if I can't get it that day, I usually get it another day. But yeah, I usually try to walk down one, look at the other, and you know, vice versa, switch it up.
Q. So it is a walking inspection?
A. Yes. I walk almost all of my tracks. I'm very -- because excepted track, if you high-rail -- I mean, I high-rail some, but not very much. One, our trucks, you can't -- to me, you can't see everything. And like I said, I'm a nervous guy, and I always want to try to do my best. So whenever I high-rail, I always feel like I'd miss something. So I always try to walk everything, especially yards, because that's -- I mean, I do, I get nervous in yards. I mean, that's a bad place to be, honestly.
Q. But I did notice there is quite a bit of tie work going on in there. Now, do you have a role in that project?
A. I just told them where the heaviest part of our traffic is, which is between like 1 and 5, and that's -- you know, we needed

ties. I was like, you know, we need ties. I have nothing really to do with the oversee or talking. They just asked me where I'd like the most of our ties to go. I pretty much said between milepost 0 and 5.

Q. Okay. So you don't do any inspection after they put the ties in until the next cycle or --

A. We do. Me and Mr. Jarry (ph.), we walked -- we got down there on Stadium, and we walked -- because he was like, let's go look and see how it is. I was like, yeah, because I like, you know, I like it to be all nice. And we did walk down through there. I guess they weren't off; they were still working. You know, we talked to them, and we went and inspected behind them. I mean, it was, you know, it was pretty good work, too.

Q. Just as a track novice -- it's not my background, obviously -- I did notice where there was a lot of ballast displacement because of the tie work. And so there was ballast up against the side of the rail in 1 track and then even some inside the crib. Does that have any influence on the behavior of the track, that extra ballast in the crib and up against the rail?

A. Oh, I would say no. The only time I've seen it, you know, that it plays a real big role is if you're missing a lot of ballast in between the cribs of the ties. And then whenever it gets hot, they'll run together. It's just like whenever you're tamping track, you can't tamp farther than your ballast regulator because the rail will start to kink, because it'll be so -- you

know, you'll be taking out so much and then you're lifting up.

MS. GREGORY: I'm going to pass it on to Steve for a second. I might have a few more follow-ups when we come back around.

DR. JENNER: Great. Thank you.

BY DR. JENNER:

Q. Steve Jenner. How you doing?

A. I'm doing all right.

Q. Okay. You need a break or we're good to go?

A. No, I'm good.

Q. Okay. You're doing great.

Let me bounce around for some follow-up questions. How many people inspect the track -- how many other people inspect the track where the incident occurred?

A. It's just me, and then Ron will come by a couple times.

Q. And who is that?

A. My MTM, Ron Jarry.

Q. And what is his role in this?

A. He'd be the manager of track -- or manager of track maintenance. Sorry, I was freezing for a minute.

Q. Okay. So he comes by --

A. He'll do -- we do like what we call like one on ones, and where he'll come with me for a couple hours a day or something, like every couple weeks or so, and we'll walk tracks. Not necessarily there, but all over. For the most part, I'm the one that inspects the track.

Q. Okay. All right. Are you dividing up the workload when he's there or is he just --
A. No. He just -- he's more like observing, and if he sees me doing something wrong that I can improve on, he'll -- he's like, hey, you know, check this or, you know, kind of look for this or something.
Q. So you're out walking track every day, inspecting track --
A. Yes, sir.
Q. What's the length of your shift that you're --
A. Oh, I've been out here days before. I mean, it just depends. I usually try to get to -- I usually try to get to work about 6, and then I'll walk some track and then I'll go to -- we have our job briefing about 7:30. Then I talk with the guys so I can explain to them, you know, if I found something or somewhere. And then after that, I'll go and inspect again. And then usually -- I usually have to go and look at something else and then come back.

So, I mean, sometimes -- usually I work about a 8 to a 9-hour day. Every now and then it's a lot, you know, it's a lot longer.
Q. What's an average -- how many miles did you cover on average in a day?
A. It depends, I guess. It's hard to -- I'd say a set average. I usually have so much I'm going to walk that day or inspect, and some days it's four or five tracks, some days it's one long one like, you know, the main or something.
Q. Right.

A. So it kind of differs. I mean, I want to say just like on a -- giving an average, probably -- maybe about 3 miles or so, if that; maybe a little bit more, maybe a little less.
Q. Has that number increased or decreased during your tenure as a track inspector?
A. No. I mean, whenever I inspect, I just -- I usually have a goal to get so much done that day or try to inspect. So, like, if I start on a Monday, I'm like, okay, so I know Fridays are usually hectic, so I try to get everything early in the week so on Friday it's not as much.
Q. What is your most common problem that you detect with the tracks?
A. My most common, I believe, are ties. And that, you know, that's when we have to -- we have a tie gang out there now. That, and rail, you know.
Q. What about the rail?
A. Just, you know, it just wears down or we'll get, you know, we'll get a broken if it's too cold or too hot.
Q. How frequently are joint bars an issue?
A. You know, not as often as you'd think. Like me, I would think that that's a pretty big deal, but, you know, for the most part, usually they're usually -- you either got a tie on both sides of them -- I mean, they're usually pretty -- there's so many of them, I mean, it's just -- I mean, I've never really had a big issue with them. I mean, probably the stuff that I have the guys

work on, that's probably one of the least amount.
Q. Great. So in a 1-week period, let's say 5-day week, how many joint bars might you detect as defective?
A. Maybe about two.
Q. Okay. What is your process for examining joint bars or -- you would, sort of, have to get down low --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- so how do you approach that?
A. When I look at them, I usually see if they're loose. Then I check to see how many bolts I got in there, check to see if they're cracked or if they got, you know, additional cracks in them or -- you know, I mean, they're -- I mean, if they're cracked, their cracked. You usually -- you know, if that's the thing, then you start replacing then. And then it's pretty much making sure they're doing their job, you know, holding the rail tight, because you don't want them loose. You don't want that rail moving.
Q. And you just mentioned the number of bolts. What is the most number they can have and what number is not acceptable?
A. Well, to me, if they ain't got none, they're not acceptable. I mean, they got to have -- you got to have your bolts in there.
Q. How many is okay?
A. Oh --
Q. And how many is not okay?
A. Usually if you got one in each side, for excepted track.

Main track, that's a -- I mean, that's -- but usually on excepted track, as long as I got one on one side and one on the other and it's snug. If I have two missing on this side, they say you can walk trains over, but I don't -- I'm not that confident to walk trains over anything like that. I usually just leave it off -- I mean, you know, it don't take that long for someone to come put some bolts in there.

Q. What equipment do you bring with you during your track inspections?

A. I bring my level board usually. That's the number one thing. Sometimes I'll have our push gauger. You put it on the rail and you push it, and it has a spot on there between 57 and -- or actually, between 56 and 58, and it just kind of tells you how the track is.

Q. Okay. And what is the ideal gauge?

A. For me, the perfect is pretty much anything between 56½ to about 57. Anything over that starts getting kind of, you know, (indiscernible) a lot.

Q. Okay. Now are you familiar with the standards for talking about joint bar standards for excepted track versus main line track? Are there different standards?

A. Yeah, there's different standards. And when I first started, we went over a lot of the main line stuff, and I'm real rusty on that because I don't -- I'm never on it that much, so -- you know, all mine is on accepted. And usually as long as you don't got a

center crack hole bolt, and -- so, you know, you got your bolts in there, and as long as they're both good and connected, where it's not a crack after that bolt to, you know, the other side -- if I'm explaining that good enough. I mean, I'm not --

Q. Okay. Are there any type of industry standards or federal standards about how often track and excepted track need to be inspected?

A. Once every 30 days or once a month on calendar.

Q. What do you think of that? Is that a good number? Is that a reasonable number?

A. For me, no. I think they should be inspected -- well, you know, depending on traffic. If you got -- if it's real heavy traffic, you know, to me, it'd be every -- you know, to me I think it'd be better if it's every 2 weeks or maybe twice a month instead of one. If it's a lot of traffic but you only got one car, you know, going or -- it's hard to say. I mean, to me, I think it should be inspected more.

Q. Okay. Now for -- let's say for the west end, are you comfortable with 1 in 30 days or is that an area where you think it should be done?

A. On the west end is -- that's the better -- or that's like some of our best track. I mean, really that's why I was just -- and so right around there, yeah, you know, it's good for -- nothing hardly ever changes really right in that area.

Q. So nothing changes, and then that means what? I'm sorry.

A. Well, I say nothing changes -- let me rephrase that. Some things change but not as bad as like some of the other places, you know, on the tracks where I guess maybe a little bit more -- well, it's pretty heavy there, but at the rails -- the rail is a little bit bigger, little bit more heavy duty, I should say, and the ties are held up a lot better, so it doesn't get beat down as bad as some of the other track.

Q. Okay. So for my initial question, is once in 30 days, in your opinion, is that an acceptable time for the west end?

A. For the west end, yes, sir.

Q. Okay. How about -- and I'm hearing the east end is not as good track?

A. No. It's not as good as the west end, no.

Q. Do you find -- I think you're answering my question already. Do you find more track issues on the east end during your normal inspections?

A. Yeah. I have more issues on the east end than I do the west.

Q. And what type of issues are common there?

A. Usually I end up finding some gauge drainage issues. It seems like it don't drain as good over there. Ties, surface issues.

Q. Why would that be less quality, for lack of a better word, than the west end?

A. You know, I don't know, unless they just -- the rail is a little different over there. I think the drainage -- it seems

like that end doesn't drain when it rains and stuff as good as the other end. So your water sits, you know, and that just -- next thing you know, you got mud holes and, you know, that eats up your ties and --

Q. In terms of time of year that you do inspections and detect track problems, is any particular time of year more vulnerable to track issues than another time?

A. Well, I would call it like the rainy season. I guess, so about, you know, springtime around March.

Q. Right.

A. And then fall, here, whenever I guess it gets closer to the end of fall and we get a lot of rain. That seems to -- for the tracks around here --

Q. Right.

A. -- when it rains, it's just -- yeah, I got -- I'll usually have to be pulling stuff out of service quite a bit.

Q. Right. I'm not from around here.

A. Oh, okay. I'm sorry.

Q. No, that's fine. Has it been rainy in the last month around here?

A. No.

Q. Okay.

A. Not in a little while.

Q. Right. So in the last couple months, have you noticed a change in the number of defects you're detecting?

A. Not out of the ordinary.
Q. Okay. Terrific.
DR. JENNER: Those are the questions I have. Thank you.
MR. SAUNDERS: Kamron Saunders with SMART TD. I don't have any questions at this time.
BY MR. SEACHORD:
Q. Kelly Seachord, Union Pacific Railroad. So when your MTM is with you, is he evaluating you and coaching you?
A. Yes.
Q. So he's kind of inspecting, but he's really evaluating --
A. Yeah, he's really -- that's what I was saying, he usually just gives me like pointers: Hey, you know, check -- you know, do it more like this. Yeah, he's usually --
Q. Okay. And then I don't -- I'm looking for the word to use on this. So excepted track, FRA excepted track, the requirements for a lot of the specifications we have are not as stringent as they are for the Class 1, 2, 3, or 4; is that correct?
A. Right.
Q. And which is the least stringent? I mean, what is the highest level track maintenance we have and what's the lowest?
A. So you mean like the highest track that we inspect?
Q. So like a main line, what class would that be?
A. Depends on where it's at. So the high-speed, that's 5 and 6.
Q. Okay. And so that would be more of a high-speed railroad?
A. Right.

Q. That type of thing? And then so the excepted track, why do we -- why is it less stringent there?
A. Less cars, less -- I guess that's less cars, less speed, you know, there's no passengers; you know, Amtrak don't run on our tracks. There aren't -- I mean, you know, no chemical cars or something -- something over the chemical cars, and then we don't have no passenger tracks, speeds ain't greater than 10 mph, and we don't have -- you know, it's not as heavy-traveled, I guess, as what you'd consider the main line.

MR. SEACHORD: I think that that's all I have.

BY MR. ALLEN:

Q. Zach Allen with the FRA. Michael, when you find defects, do you turn it over to somebody to repair or do you make the repairs yourself?
A. If I can do something by myself, I will, but for the most part, I usually end up calling our guys to come out and do it. So, you know, I'll put it in the system. If it is -- a lot of stuff is what we consider, you know, like the TMP or something. And so I'll call --
Q. What is that?
A. Track maintenance planning, I guess. So, like something that's not quite a FRA defect, but you want to keep your eye on or, you know, something you want to put attention to.
Q. You mentioned that last month you found a joint bar missing two bolts. What was the response time to have that repaired?

A. Thirty days.
Q. So once you find it, they have 30 days on excepted track to fix it?
A. Well, yeah, that's the way I look at it, because I'll put it in there, I'll put it in the system. You've got 30 days. But it wasn't both -- you know, it wasn't missing -- they weren't missing bolts from both sides. It was just -- it was one.
Q. Oh, okay.
A. And you could tell it was -- it just needed to be -- if it was both missing, I just took it out of service.
Q. How is the response time when you do take a track out of service or find a defect? Does your MTM and service department, you know, address your items of concern?
A. Yes, sir. Usually that day. The only time that it's been longer if I have it out of service is, you know, the guys have been worked all -- they worked all day or all night, and I find it at 5:00 or something and they usually -- you know, I'll leave it out of service, and they come in in the morning, fix it, and put it back in service. But it stays out of service until it gets fixed.
Q. Okay. Something Stephen mentioned, or asked you, so your territory is just the yards or do you have a milepost like on the ballast from milepost 220 to milepost 225, or you just take care of Browder Yard and the industry tracks?
A. Well, I don't take care of Browder Yard. I take care of

Garrett.

Q. Garrett Yard?

A. Yeah, Garrett Yard. Yeah, everything I got is excepted track -- it's all industry tracks.

Q. So you take care of all the industries --

A. Yeah, it's a -- I came from Class 4, too, and it's a --

MR. ALLEN: I think that's all the questions I have.

BY MS. GREGORY:

Q. Okay. This is Georgetta Gregory again. Mike, I just have a couple follow-up questions, in that I started my railroad career a long time ago. Is an MTM, manager of track maintenance, is that similar to the old historical title of the roadmaster?

A. I don't know. That's before my time --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

BY MS. GREGORY:

Q. Okay.

A. Sorry. Ever since I've been here, that's all we ever call them is MTMs.

Q. Appreciate that. And then when you're looking at -- back to the joint bars, when you're looking at this, I know you're looking for missing bolts. Do you check the -- to see if the bolts are tight?

A. I do.

Q. Okay. And what would cause the bolts to loosen?

A. I'd say just train movement, I mean, you know, vibration of

trains, trains pushing on the rails.
Q. Can you describe the term mix-match for me -- mismatch?
A. It's -- I'm sorry -- mix or -- mismatched rail?
Q. Um-hum.
A. So usually if it -- you know, a rail's, let's say it's going from 95 to 110, then you got your comp bars and, you know, they go on there, and it's from that size to that size, usually whenever your rail changes.
Q. I did notice one comp bar yesterday in that track 1. Do you know how many times there is mismatch in that track?
A. I couldn't tell you. I mean, it's a --
Q. And that one was the joint bar just prior to the point of derailment. That's why I asked that.
And one more term, if you could describe for me the deflection? In particular, what you would find acceptable of a gap between the bottom of the rail and the switch plate or the tie?
A. Usually I don't -- so -- let me see. So you talking about like from the --
Q. The bottom --
A. -- from the rail to the --
Q. Bottom of the rail to the tie plate --
A. To the tie plate?
Q. -- or the tie.
A. To me, I don't like anything more than probably about a

quarter where -- you talking about where it kind of pumps down? Yeah. Maybe even -- quarter, maybe even less than that. That's a -- because then that causes like surface issues, because then it's --

Q. And in your last inspection -- of course, I know that was almost a month ago now -- did you notice any area of that type of condition?

A. Not on the west end. There's the east end that could be picked up a little bit. I can't remember if the west end -- I just know I have so much of that problems on the east -- or on the -- yeah, the east end. I can't -- nothing just sticks out in my head right now.

Q. Okay. I know these conditions don't develop overnight.

A. No, they don't.

Q. Just generally speaking, how long would it take for these conditions to develop?

A. Maybe a while. I mean, I don't know. That's a hard -- I can't --

Q. Okay.

A. But yeah, I can't even put a time on -- I wouldn't know. It would have to be how much it's used.

Q. And just hypothetically, if you had a joint bar with one good bolt on one end and another bolt on the other side that's loose, what could -- how could you expect that track to behave?

A. Depending on how loose it is, yeah, because --

Q. Hand loose --
A. Yeah, there's different -- so there's different -- to me, there'd be different things. If it's -- if the -- if it's on a good tie and the spikes are against it holding it, you know, it still needs to be tightened up. But, I mean, you know, it still kind of moves.
Q. Say the spikes aren't tamped down very well.
A. Might be -- well, I mean, if it -- if you can move it, something like that, I usually try to put a PTLF on it and see if it -- how much it'll move it. And, you know, of course I'll try tying it up. I mean, there ain't -- I ain't going to leave one loose if I can help it.
Q. And let's go back -- and I know this is difficult, but my curiosity, you know, killed the cat. So we have a loose bolt here, hypothetically, one good bolt here, another bolt that's still through there, but the head is broke off. The spikes have raised up almost parallel with the bottom of the rail head. How could I expect that track to behave?
And then one more thing, what is the -- if you could also tell me the optimum space between the rail ends at a joint bar?
A. So -- oh, so, like, in between the rails?
Q. Yes.
A. So -- this is on excepted track?
Q. Yes, um-hum.
A. Well, I know that there's -- usually anything like about 2½

inches maybe at the -- I mean, that's still that --
Q. At the outside?
A. Yeah. And that's still -- to me, that's still too much, but --
Q. Okay. So if you had -- say there's 2 to 2½ inches here and this condition I've described with the spikes up almost parallel with the bottom of the rail head, how could we reasonably expect that track to behave under load?
A. It might push out -- to me, it might push out a little depending on how much -- how good the ties are on, you know, on either side and how much it would move, you know, if a train is pushing on it.
MS. GREGORY: Okay. That's it for me.
Steve, you have more?
DR. JENNER: I have no other questions.
MR. SAUNDERS: Kamron Saunders, no more questions.
BY MR. SEACHORD:
Q. Kelly Seachord, UP. How often do you take the PTLF with you when you walk?
A. Usually quite a bit. I usually take it as much as I can.
Q. And what's the purpose of that?
A. To test the rails under load, under 4,000 pounds. You stick it on there and pump it out.
Q. So if it looks good without that on there, or maybe a little bit out, then you test it to see if it will open more? Is that

what the purpose of that is?
A. Yeah. I'll usually stick it on there and then it just -- you know, it pushes the rail. It'll test every -- so you'll stick it on there, and you'll push it. It'll do like a train does, or a train car. It pushes the rail out.
Q. Okay.
A. Like under load, you know, if you had a car on it.
MR. SEACHORD: That's all the questions I have.
MR. ALLEN: Zach Allen, FRA, no questions.
MS. GREGORY: Okay. I'm done.
Steve?
DR. JENNER: Done, yes.
BY MS. GREGORY:
Q. Okay. Michael, on behalf of the NTSB, I want to thank you for coming in and sharing this information with us. I want to give you an opportunity to add anything that you'd like to add. Anything else you'd like to tell us that you think might be helpful?
A. No, I got --
Q. Anything we didn't ask you?
A. Well, I got something, you know, that probably -- that has -- it has nothing to do with this, but this is just my opinion, and this is just me. I figure I got all you all here, and you all are all the high -- you know, you all are all the guys.
But safety wise, with the technology we got, I don't know if

he was on the back of the train; I don't know if he was on the ground. I don't know. But to me, I don't see why now we don't have the technology with the -- and I don't know the train rules or nothing, but I don't see why we can't have a Bluetooth camera on the back to the front to wherever he would be at.

I don't know. That's just me. I mean, that might be something to pass around to some people, maybe try to come up with something different. Because I've always thought that whenever I see people on the back of cars, I'm like, man, that's just -- that's a bad spot to be. I mean, if you're on a car or something and something distracts you, I mean, that's a --

Q. It's a novel idea.

BY DR. JENNER:

Q. If I can ask a question along the lines -- is there any type of equipment for track inspections that you can think of that you don't have that would help you do your job better?

A. Well --

MS. GREGORY: And that was Steve Jenner.

MR. FORD: Yeah. I think for the most part, we get -- we have what we do. I know we use, we do use what we call a gauge truck quite a bit to run -- you know, and it test -- it can -- it picks up a lot better. You know, for industry tracks like that, that's the best thing there is. I mean, I -- you know, level boards and PTLF, I mean, I pretty much have -- there's at least everything I've been trained on, I mean, for us to use.

DR. JENNER: Okay. Thank you.

MS. GREGORY: Any further questions?

(No response.)

MS. GREGORY: Anything else you want to add, Michael? Anything we should have asked that we didn't?

MR. FORD: Not that I can think of.

MS. GREGORY: Okay. Well, again, on behalf of the NTSB, thank you very much for coming in and talking with us today. And like I said, we'll be getting the transcript out in the next 3 or 4 weeks to you, so thank you very much.

MR. FORD: Okay. Thank you.

MS. GREGORY: And this concludes the interview of Michael Ford, a track inspector with the Union Pacific Railroad at 4:20 p.m., Central Daylight Time.

(Whereupon, at 4:20 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

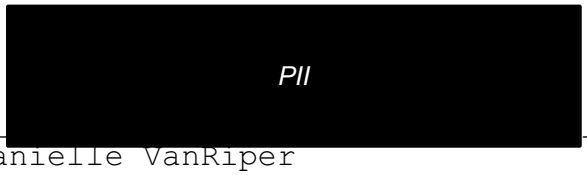
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD REMOTE CONTROL OPERATION YARD DERAILMENT WITH EMPLOYEE FATALITY IN ARLINGTON, TEXAS, SEPTEMBER 22, 2017 Interview of Michael Scott Ford
ACCIDENT NUMBER:	DCA17FR013
PLACE:	Arlington, Texas
DATE:	September 24, 2017

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.



Danielle VanRiper
Transcriber