

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

-----:
   
IN RE: :
   
:
   
THE ACCIDENT INVOLVING : NTSB Accident No.
   
AMTRAK TRAIN #89 AND MOW : DCA16FR007
   
EQUIPMENT AND EMPLOYEES :
   
NEAR CHESTER, PENNSYLVANIA :
   
ON APRIL 3, 2016 :
   
:
   
-----:

INTERVIEW OF: RAY VERRELLE

Wednesday,
   
August 24, 2016

30th Street Station
   
2955 Market Street
   
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

BEFORE

RICHARD HIPSKIND, NTSB
   
DONALD HILL, BLET
   
THERESA IMPASTATO, AMTRAK
   
STEVE STEARN, BMW
   
BOB BEATON, NTSB
   
FRAN WALKER, FRA
   
RYAN FRIGO, NTSB
   
CHRISTOPHER SCHULTE, FRA

APPEARANCES:

On Behalf of the Interviewee:

MARK LANDMAN

This transcript was produced from audio provided by the
   
National Transportation Safety Board.

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

(Time not given)

INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Richard Hipskind and I am the Track and Engineering Group Chairman for NTSB for this accident. We are here today on August 24, 2016, at Amtrak's 30th Street Station in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to conduct an interview with Mr. Ray Verrelle.

MR. VERRELLE: Verrelle.

INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: Verrelle, who works for the National Railroad Passenger Corporation or Amtrak. This interview is in conjunction with NTSB's investigation of a collision of Amtrak Train 89 with maintenance-of-way equipment and employees on April 3, 2016, at Mile Post 15.7 on Amtrak's PW line near Chester, Pennsylvania in Delaware County. The NTSB Accident Reference Number is DCA16FR007.

Before we begin our interview and questions let's go around the table and introduce ourselves. Please spell your last name and please identify who you are representing and your title.

I would remind everybody to speak loudly and clearly enough so we can get an accurate recording. I'll lead off and then pass off to my right. Again, my

1 name is Richard Hipskind. The spelling of my last name  
2 is H-I-P-S-K-I-N-D. I am the Track and Engineering  
3 Group chairman for NTSB for this accident.

4 MR. HILL: Good afternoon. My name is  
5 Donald Hill, H-I-L-L, Safety Task Force for the BLET.

6 MS. IMPASTATO: Theresa Impastato, I-M-P-A-  
7 S-T-A-T-O, Amtrak Deputy Chief Safety Officer.

8 MR. WALKER: Fran Walker, W-A-L-K-E-R. I'm  
9 an FRA Track Safety Inspector.

10 MR. SCHULTE: Christopher Schulte, S-C-H-U-  
11 L-T-E, Federal Railroad Administration, supervisory  
12 safety specialist.

13 MR. STEARN: Steve, excuse me, Steve Stearn,  
14 S-T-E-A-R-N, party spokesman for the Brotherhood of  
15 Maintenance of Way Employees.

16 INVESTIGATOR BEATON: Bob Beaton, B-E-A-T-O-  
17 N, NTSB.

18 INVESTIGATOR FRIGO: Ryan Frigo, F-R-I-G-O.  
19 Investigator in Charge, NTSB.

20 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: And, Ray, would you  
21 please enter yourself on the record?

22 MR. VERRELLE: Ray Verrelle, Deputy Chief  
23 Engineer of Construction, Amtrak, V-E-R-R-E-L-L-E.

24 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: All right, Ray. Do  
25 you mind if we proceed on a first name basis?

1 MR. VERRELLE: That is fine.

2 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: Okay. First couple  
3 of questions, do we have your permission to record our  
4 discussion, our interview with you today?

5 MR. VERRELLE: Yes.

6 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: And do you wish to  
7 have a representative with you at this interview?

8 MR. VERRELLE: Yes, I do and I have --

9 MR. LANDMAN: And I'm here on behalf of Mr.  
10 Verrelle and my name is Mark Landman, L-A-N-D-M-A-N.

11 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: Thank you, Mark.  
12 Ray, let's proceed and the first thing kind of give us  
13 a synopsis of your work experience and take us up to  
14 your present job and let us know how long you've been  
15 in that position.

16 MR. VERRELLE: Graduated in engineering at  
17 Temple University in civil structural engineering in  
18 1993. I worked at Gannett Fleming Transit and Rail  
19 Systems or at that time it was called Railway Systems  
20 Design from approximately 1993 to 1995 as a catenary  
21 engineer.

22 I designed electrification systems for  
23 various electrified railroads including Amtrak. In  
24 October of 1995 I was, got a job at Amtrak as a  
25 catenary engineer. I performed the same function as

1 well as various construction activities and other  
2 engineering type activities in the electric traction  
3 department.

4           From there I moved to construction engineer,  
5 New York Division where I ran several construction  
6 projects in the New York Division all electric traction  
7 construction projects. Around October or September of  
8 2000, I resigned from Amtrak, went back into the  
9 consulting world again back with Gannett Fleming  
10 Transit and Rail Systems where I assumed the role of  
11 chief engineer of catenary.

12           Oversaw a group of 12 to 20 engineers.  
13 Worked on various electrification projects throughout  
14 the United States. From there 2006, came back to  
15 Amtrak as a director electric traction design where I  
16 covered all the design of catenary substations,  
17 frequency converters and all the power supply systems  
18 for the electric traction department on Amtrak's  
19 northeast corridor.

20           In April of 2013, I was promoted to deputy  
21 chief engineer electric traction where I served in that  
22 role overseeing all of the electric traction aspects,  
23 maintenance, construction, capital planning, safety, et  
24 cetera until about two weeks ago where I assumed the  
25 role of deputy chief engineer of construction.

1           INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: Are you comfortable  
2 in your present role?

3           MR. VERRELLE: As I, yes, getting familiar  
4 with it. But, yes, I am.

5           INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: Okay. Ray, tell me  
6 a little bit about your duties and responsibilities in  
7 your current position and then I've got a couple of  
8 other broad questions.

9           MR. VERRELLE: Overall responsibility for  
10 program delivery and execution of assorted capital  
11 construction projects from very large projects like the  
12 New Jersey high speed rail project which is actually a  
13 grant in lieu of capital. I'm responsible for the  
14 execution of the MTAs East Side Access Project, a large  
15 project in New York where they're tunneling under New  
16 York, under Sunnyside Yard and Harold Interlocking.

17           That is a reimbursable project. But I'm  
18 responsible for direct execution of that work. Have  
19 the ADA program where we upgrade stations across the  
20 country to comply with the national ADA requirements  
21 and assorted smaller capital maintenance type projects  
22 here which I'm starting to develop the list now.

23           INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: Okay. And  
24 everything that I've heard you answer thus far I think  
25 one of the dominant words I've heard is construction.

1 MR. VERRELLE: Yes, sir.

2 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: So and talk to me a  
3 little about how the construction side of what you do  
4 at Amtrak is different than kind of the line  
5 maintenance side of things.

6 MR. VERRELLE: Well in the line, we did both  
7 line maintenance and line construction. In this job  
8 we're doing also line construction and various other  
9 construction.

10 Essentially it's, the only difference is the  
11 maintenance is fixing or repairing or small scale  
12 replacements of infrastructure that is either damaged,  
13 inoperable or in need of some kind of an upgrade  
14 whereas a construction, at least the way we categorize  
15 it is the larger scale replacement of the same types of  
16 infrastructure.

17 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: Maybe more out of  
18 face where you go in and set down big gangs, surface,  
19 relay rail, tie and surface from A to B?

20 MR. VERRELLE: So the main production track  
21 work still falls under Andy Keefe. So all the TLM and  
22 all that surfacing, undercutting still falls under his  
23 organization.

24 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: Okay.

25 MR. VERRELLE: So I will, would shop him out

1 for, as a matter of fact we have a little track work  
2 going on tonight up there. They put in a siding for  
3 one of our or put in a switch for one of sidings  
4 equipment. And his surfacing gang is going up there  
5 and taking care of that. They're not my direct people.

6 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: Okay. So is it fair  
7 to say that a lot of what you and I are going to talk  
8 about has to do more with the overhead and the  
9 catenary?

10 MR. VERRELLE: Currently right now I have no  
11 direct labor forces that report up through me. I'm  
12 kind of a manager of Andy Keefe's labor forces.

13 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: Go off the record.

14 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went  
15 off the record briefly.)

16 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: Ray, thank you for  
17 your candor with the work you've done and everything.  
18 The focus I think of everything that we want to talk  
19 about really revolves around elements of a five year  
20 program having to do with track maintenance,  
21 construction, really large gangs and the risk  
22 management associated with that on the northeast  
23 corridor.

24 And are you the guy that we should be  
25 talking to about that or might there be another guy who



1 is more closely associated with the supervision and  
2 management of that kind of activity?

3 MR. VERRELLE: I do not believe I am the guy  
4 who is an expert in the track division.

5 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: Okay. And might  
6 that person be Andy Keefe?

7 MR. VERRELLE: Yes, that's correct.

8 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: All right. If you  
9 don't mind I think we're going to terminate our little  
10 dialogue with you and thank you very much for your  
11 having been here and waiting so patiently for us today.

12 MR. VERRELLE: No problem. If you have any  
13 follow up questions --

14 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: And I appreciate  
15 that offer and should we need to track back about  
16 things about the catenary and things of that nature we  
17 will be happy to get in touch with you, okay.

18 MR. VERRELLE: Great.

19 INVESTIGATOR HIPSKIND: Thank you very much.

20 MR. VERRELLE: Thank you.

21 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went  
22 off the record.)  
23  
24  
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Accident Involving Amtrak Train  
# 89 and MOW Equipment, April 3, 2016  
Accident No. DCA16FR007  
Interview of Ray Verrelle

DATE: 08-24-16

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 10 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701