

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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

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.

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

2 MR. HIPSKIND: Good afternoon, everybody.

3 My name is Richard Hipskind, and I am the Track and  
4 Engineering Group Chairman for NTSB for this accident.

5 We are here today on August 24th, 2016 at Amtrak's 30th  
6 Street's station in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to  
7 conduct an interview with Mrs. Debbie Pirrami. Did I  
8 come close on that?

9 MS. PIRRAMI: You were perfect.

10 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay, thank you. Who works  
11 for the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, or  
12 Amtrak. This interview is in conjunction with NTSB's  
13 investigation of a collision of Amtrak Train 89 with  
14 maintenance-of-way equipment and employees on April  
15 3rd, 2016 at milepost 15.7 on Amtrak's PW line near  
16 Chester, Pennsylvania in Delaware County. The NTSB  
17 accident reference number is DCA16FR007.

18 Before we begin our interview and questions,  
19 let's go around the table and introduce ourselves.  
20 Please spell your last name and please identify who you  
21 are representing and your title. I would remind  
22 everybody to speak clearly and loudly enough so we can  
23 get an accurate recording. I'll lead off and then pass  
24 off to my right.

25 Again, my name is Richard Hipskind. The

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

4 MR. HILL: Yes, good morning. My name is  
5 Donald Hill, H-I-L-L. I'm the safety task force for  
6 the BLET.

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

9 MR. WALKER: Fran Walker, W-A-L-K-E-R. I'm  
10 an FRA track safety inspector.

11 MR. SCHULTE: Christopher Schulte. Last  
12 name is S-C-H-U-L-T-E. Federal Railroad  
13 Administration, Supervisory Safety Specialist.

14 MR. STEARN: Steve Stearn, S-T-E-A-R-N,  
15 (inaudible) specialist for the Brotherhood of  
16 Maintenance and Way employees.

17 MR. BEATON: Bob Beaton, NTSB. Last name is  
18 spelled B-E-A-T-O-N.

19 MR. FRIGO: Ryan Frigo, F-R-I-G-O. I'm the  
20 IIC for this accident with NTSB.

21 MR. HIPSKIND: And, Ms. Pirrami, would you  
22 please put yourself on the record? Did I mess it up  
23 that time? I did? Okay.

24 MS. PIRRAMI: Debbie Pirrami --

25 MR. HIPSKIND: Pirrami.

1 MS. PIRRAMI: -- P-I-R-R-A-M-I, Amtrak,  
2 Senior Manager, Training and Development.

3 MR. HIPSKIND: My apologies for butchering  
4 your name there.

5 MS. PIRRAMI: That's okay.

6 MR. HIPSKIND: Do you mind if we proceed on  
7 a first-name basis?

8 MS. PIRRAMI: I do not.

9 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. Debbie, the first  
10 couple of questions. Do we have your permission to  
11 record our discussion, our interview with you today?

12 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

13 MR. HIPSKIND: And do you wish to have a  
14 representative with you at this interview?

15 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

16 MR. LAMEN: My name is Mark Lamen  
17 (phonetic), and I'm representing Ms. Pirrami.

18 MR. HIPSKIND: All right. Let's proceed.  
19 Debbie, can you kind of give us a synopsis of your work  
20 experience and take us up to your present job and let  
21 us know how long you have been in that position.

22 MS. PIRRAMI: I started in 1993 in  
23 reservations. After I was part time for a year, I was  
24 able to go full time. I worked union jobs until about  
25 1999, and then I started in management. I joined the

1 safety team, or it was safety and training back then,  
2 in 1999 - 2000 as an admin assistant. Then I became  
3 qualified to instruct CPR/first aid, forklift, and then  
4 AMT-2 ANC (phonetic) as I became an instructor, and  
5 then I became a manager of the department, and then I  
6 became senior manager.

7 MR. HIPSKIND: Manager of the department.  
8 So, Debbie, I mean, I got to pin you down on this. Are  
9 you running the show?

10 MS. PIRRAMI: Which show?

11 MR. HIPSKIND: With regards to, with regards  
12 to training. I mean, where do you fit in to the  
13 overall training at Amtrak?

14 MS. PIRRAMI: My responsibility is the  
15 engineering training, the regulatory training for AMT-2  
16 and RWP for all approximately 4500 engineering  
17 employees. I have about 17 instructors who report to  
18 me, and they do the actual training.

19 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. And we should be  
20 mindful that you likely have counterparts in other  
21 disciplines, like transportation or mechanical or  
22 something like that?

23 MS. PIRRAMI: Sure.

24 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay, all right. So our  
25 discussion here today is going to be about training and

1 the engineering department; is that correct?

2 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct.

3 MR. HIPSKIND: All right. Well, let me just  
4 give you kind of a broad question, and you can take  
5 some time and talk about things. So, Debbie, kind of  
6 step up to the easel and paint, if you will, the  
7 picture that I should understand about the structure of  
8 training and how those goals are accomplished. How do  
9 we take a person off the street and prepare them to do  
10 the work in the engineering department? And if you'd  
11 also include, tell me about or characterize for me  
12 reoccurring training and how all that's developed and  
13 how you make sure that, again, people are ready to go  
14 out and do the things they need to do.

15 MS. PIRRAMI: Okay. Again, my  
16 responsibility is the classroom training --

17 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay.

18 MS. PIRRAMI: -- in-house classroom. A new  
19 hire to engineering will come in, and we give them two  
20 weeks of new-hire training. It includes all the  
21 regulatory training, Amtrak policies, everything that  
22 they're required to have prior to going out into the  
23 field.

24 On their last day of training, we generally  
25 have the foreman or supervisors of the department come

1 in and talk to them about their assignments, where  
2 they're going to go, what to expect, and then we put  
3 them on their way.

4 MR. HIPSKIND: And in each and every case,  
5 the regular drill is two weeks for a --

6 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

7 MR. HIPSKIND: -- new hire?

8 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

9 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. And in that course,  
10 what are the main goals? They came in with nothing,  
11 and, when they go out of the training and they go to  
12 work, you have instilled in them what?

13 MS. PIRRAMI: The biggest thing we instill  
14 is safety on the railroad and how easy it is to get  
15 hurt because there's a lot of equipment running out  
16 there. So we do focus on safety, RWP being the number  
17 one focus, in our training program for new hires. We  
18 try to touch on some RWP everyday to bring them up to  
19 the point where, when we finally give them the actual  
20 presentation and the test, they're really prepared and  
21 they understand it, instead of just giving them the  
22 presentation, the test, and say, okay, you passed.

23 So we try to instill RWP everyday. AMT-2,  
24 we try to do that also, but not to the extent that we  
25 do the RWP. And that's our main goal, and then there's

1 other courses that are required that we give them.

2 MR. HIPSKIND: Is AMT-2, is that an  
3 abbreviation, an acronym for something?

4 MS. PIRRAMI: It's the electrification.

5 MR. HIPSKIND: So the catenary?

6 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

7 MR. HIPSKIND: All right.

8 MS. PIRRAMI: Safety, safety rules regarding  
9 the catenary system.

10 MR. HIPSKIND: Don't touch wires with a lot  
11 of energy, right? Okay. And when we talk about  
12 concepts of roadway worker, is what we're really  
13 talking about there the hazards, the risks of working  
14 on and about the track?

15 MS. PIRRAMI: They cover all aspects. They  
16 cover the rules, and they cover the hazards, and they  
17 cover the processes to prevent the hazards.

18 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. So two weeks, a lot of  
19 classroom training. During that two weeks, is there  
20 any kind of a blend of field work or field exposure to  
21 the things that you're talking about in the classroom?

22 MS. PIRRAMI: Not physically, no.

23 MR. HIPSKIND: It's I'm in a classroom like  
24 80 hours, 40 hours the first week, 40 hours the next  
25 week, right?



1 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

2 MR. HIPSKIND: Any testing? Do I have to  
3 complete some kind of a skills test or a knowledge  
4 test? And tell us a little bit about that.

5 MS. PIRRAMI: RWP there's a test. After the  
6 final presentation, they're tested. AMT-2 there's a  
7 test. And CPR/first aid, those are tested. But the  
8 RWP and AMT-2 are our main focus that we want drilled  
9 into their minds.

10 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. What if I go through  
11 your training and I just don't get it and I don't pass  
12 the test? What happens?

13 MS. PIRRAMI: Then we usually will take that  
14 person aside, we'll spend some one-on-one time with  
15 them. The instructors will go through the entire  
16 presentation again and try to find out where the  
17 problems are and misunderstandings are, the issues.  
18 Once they've gone through that, then they retest them  
19 again.

20 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. Tell me just a little  
21 bit about what influences the content of the training  
22 or what are the requirements that dictate what you're  
23 going to train somebody on those first couple of weeks?  
24 Does it have a regulatory base? Does it come from  
25 within? Amtrak says, I think we ought to tell them

1 this? How should I understand that?

2 MS. PIRRAMI: Well, basically, on day one,  
3 we instruct on the basic principles of Amtrak's  
4 standards of excellence, diversity, everything that an  
5 employee should know prior to really getting started in  
6 the company, so they have an understanding of what  
7 Amtrak expects of them.

8 Day two, we go over all the PPE and we hand  
9 it out and we go over piece by piece how to properly  
10 wear it and what it's used for. There's multiple other  
11 courses. We do a small segment on blue flag so they're  
12 aware of what mechanical works with. There's CPR/first  
13 aid, defensive driving, lockout tag-out (phonetic)  
14 awareness, fall protection awareness, confined space  
15 awareness. We do a lot of awarenesses so they're  
16 basically aware of when they shouldn't do something  
17 that they're not qualified to do. So we'll tell them  
18 with confined space this is the criteria that, this is  
19 what is a confined space, and, until you're qualified,  
20 you don't go in that area. It's basically letting them  
21 know all the hazards, and, if they're not qualified,  
22 that's when they should step away and not get involved  
23 in it.

24 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. Debbie, is it fair to  
25 say you and the instructors who work for you going

1 through this curriculum, this first two weeks, you're  
2 in the business of training them and preparing them for  
3 the outside world, the real world, the work world,  
4 right? Fair to say?

5 MS. PIRRAMI: Right.

6 MR. HIPSKIND: And you want to make some  
7 assessments about where they're at with their training,  
8 and here's where I'm going with this: that's where your  
9 work stops. You're not -- or I'll ask you are you in  
10 the business of making assessments of how well these  
11 employees apply the training in the field?

12 MS. PIRRAMI: No.

13 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. Are you comfortable  
14 with that? I mean --

15 MS. PIRRAMI: It's the truth.

16 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay, all right. So --

17 MS. PIRRAMI: If I -- you -- if I can back  
18 up for one second.

19 MR. HIPSKIND: Sure, sure.

20 MS. PIRRAMI: You're asking me that, once  
21 they leave the classroom, do we have any interaction  
22 with them --

23 MR. HIPSKIND: Exactly.

24 MS. PIRRAMI: -- from that point?

25 MR. HIPSKIND: Exactly.

1 MS. PIRRAMI: We don't until they come back  
2 the following year for their annual re-qualifications.

3 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. Tell me a little bit  
4 about the difference between that initial training and  
5 reoccurring training then.

6 MS. PIRRAMI: It's a regulatory FRA that  
7 every year engineering employees who will be working  
8 near the right-of-way, on the right-of-way required to  
9 go through RWP annually, and it's a refresh to make  
10 sure that they still are in compliance and understand  
11 what the rules are.

12 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. The training  
13 curriculum that we've been talking about, characterize  
14 for me, over the number of years that you've been doing  
15 this, changes, a lot of changes, few changes? How  
16 should I understand that?

17 MS. PIRRAMI: Are you referring to the new  
18 hire or the annual training?

19 MR. HIPSKIND: Please comment on both.

20 MS. PIRRAMI: Okay. As far as the annual  
21 training, or the new hire training goes, some changes  
22 that we've had were according to regulations, like we  
23 had to add some environmental segments to it because it  
24 was a regulatory requirement. So there were segments  
25 added. We tried to stick to the basics because it's

1 all pertinent information that they need, that they  
2 need to know. There's also, it's in the BMW agreement  
3 what certain aspects we have to hit on.

4 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. So quite a bit of it  
5 is regulatory-driven?

6 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

7 MR. HIPSKIND: And you're going to have to  
8 do the checkbox and make sure the employees got  
9 exposure to that level of training for all those  
10 different topics; is that correct?

11 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct.

12 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay, all right. So is  
13 there, and I don't know so I'm going to ask you, is  
14 there a feedback loop from, like, field supervisors or  
15 foremen or managers in the engineering department where  
16 the new hires or just employees in general, do they  
17 give you any feedback about, hey, they're coming out  
18 here and they don't know about this and they don't know  
19 about that? Do you have any kind of communication like  
20 that?

21 MS. PIRRAMI: None. I mean, they'll ask  
22 questions. They'll ask if we gave them a certain  
23 qualification, like did we qualify them in fall  
24 protection or did we just give them the awareness or  
25 did we qualify them in this or did we just give them

1 the awareness, and then I'll just clarify what we've  
2 done. But as far as feedback from the employees who  
3 left the two-week training, no.

4 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. And all this kinds of  
5 training, the two weeks, the reoccurring, that's all  
6 documented, that's all check-boxed, that's all entered  
7 in a database?

8 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes, SAP.

9 MR. HIPSKIND: SAP stands for?

10 MS. PIRRAMI: I don't know. It's the --

11 MR. HIPSKIND: But it's the name of the  
12 database that collects all that information?

13 MS. PIRRAMI: It's corporate, all the  
14 corporate information.

15 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay, okay. So in terms of  
16 the effectiveness of the training as it's applied in  
17 the field, that's somebody else's interaction after you  
18 deliver the employee or the employee who's gone through  
19 reoccurring, after you get them out in the real world,  
20 somebody else takes that over?

21 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct.

22 MR. HIPSKIND: All right, okay. And in  
23 terms of changes in the scope of the training, I've  
24 already forgotten, did you say that the curriculum has  
25 remained pretty much the same or it has changed per

1 regulatory requirements?

2 MS. PIRRAMI: It's basically the same. Over  
3 the past couple of years it has changed very little  
4 because we pretty much are down, are aware of what  
5 requirements we need to have in there. Environmental  
6 has their piece, and different departments, if they  
7 need to have the information out there, we'll put it in  
8 the program.

9 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay, all right. With your  
10 permission, can I bring some of these other  
11 investigators to have the same dialogue with you?

12 MS. PIRRAMI: Sure.

13 MR. HIPSKIND: All right. Don't

14 MR. HILL: I have no questions right now for  
15 you.

16 MS. PIRRAMI: Okay.

17 MR. HIPSKIND: Theresa?

18 MS. IMPASTATO: No questions.

19 MR. HIPSKIND: It doesn't get any better  
20 than that, Debbie, I'm telling you. Fran, anything?

21 MR. WALKER: Yes, I have a question.

22 MR. HIPSKIND: Sure.

23 MR. WALKER: All right. Within your  
24 department, you have experts qualified on worker  
25 safety, 213 track standards, and, say, RWP?

1 MS. PIRRAMI: There's different, depending  
2 on what courses are instructed. Like, we have two  
3 instructors who are 213 --

4 MR. WALKER: Okay.

5 MS. PIRRAMI: -- track safety standards,  
6 highly qualified, to instruct that.

7 MR. WALKER: And certain instructors  
8 (inaudible) part of your team?

9 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct.

10 MR. WALKER: Okay. So are you qualified in  
11 the art of deregulations?

12 MS. PIRRAMI: Not to instruct, but I do have  
13 a RWP qualification.

14 MR. WALKER: All right. So does your  
15 department develop all the tests, whether it's RWP or  
16 213 or bridge worker safety?

17 MS. PIRRAMI: I don't know. I can't respond  
18 to the bridge worker safety because we don't --

19 MR. WALKER: Regarding RWP, does your  
20 department develop the test that people take, the  
21 refresher test?

22 MS. PIRRAMI: Well, right now as we speak,  
23 the tests are being re-validated by AON Hewitt. Prior  
24 to that, I believe it was Ramsay. So they're validated  
25 tests with input from Amtrak and the unions as whatever



1 subject matter experts.

2 MR. WALKER: Okay. Does your department  
3 develop all the training as far as, like,  
4 presentations, slides, and all that stuff?

5 MS. PIRRAMI: We do.

6 MR. WALKER: Does your department develop or  
7 issue the RWP manual that's instructed (inaudible)?

8 MS. PIRRAMI: We do.

9 MR. WALKER: You do?

10 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

11 MR. WALKER: All right.

12 MS. PIRRAMI: Every new hire who walks in  
13 the class is handed the binder with all the inserts.

14 MR. WALKER: But I'm saying is your  
15 department the one responsible for publishing or  
16 ensuring what's in the manual?

17 MS. PIRRAMI: No, I'm sorry. I  
18 misunderstood the question.

19 MR. WALKER: Okay. Was your department ever  
20 responsible for that?

21 MS. PIRRAMI: At one time, yes.

22 MR. WALKER: Can you say when that procedure  
23 changed? In the last five years, ten years?

24 MS. PIRRAMI: Possibly. It moved from our  
25 department to engineering to safety. I believe

1 engineering had it for a while, and then it moved to  
2 safety.

3 MR. WALKER: So your department is actually  
4 like under human resources or something?

5 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct, human capital.

6 MR. WALKER: All right. So it was human  
7 resources, then it went to, like, system engineering,  
8 and now that responsibility I guess is with system  
9 safety?

10 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct.

11 MR. WALKER: Okay, all right. Since the RWP  
12 manual is now with system safety, if they've made  
13 changes, is your department, your experts given a  
14 chance to review the manuals to make sure they're --

15 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

16 MR. WALKER: -- in compliance?

17 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

18 MR. WALKER: So any manual that's been  
19 reissued in the last five or ten years, your department  
20 has reviewed it and says it's compliant, I guess,  
21 before it goes to --

22 MS. PIRRAMI: Well, we don't, it's not our  
23 place to determine whether compliance -- I might be  
24 misunderstanding your question.

25 MR. WALKER: Make sure it's appropriate to

1 handle, say, all the regulations that's in the manual?

2 MS. PIRRAMI: RWP is RWP. I don't know.

3 I'm afraid I really don't understand where you're  
4 going. I'm trying.

5 MR. WALKER: Anytime, say, sys and safety  
6 now, reissues the manual, your department is given a  
7 chance to review it before it's sent to the people in  
8 the field?

9 MS. PIRRAMI: Not review it but, I mean, the  
10 way I may understand, I think I understand your  
11 question is we take the RWP manual after it's been  
12 reissued and then we compare it to the presentation  
13 prior to presenting the information. We have no say in  
14 the content, so to speak. We were involved, to some  
15 extent, in the meetings while the content was being  
16 reviewed the last time.

17 MR. WALKER: All right. So you basically  
18 reissue the manual to the people in the class, but you  
19 really haven't, I guess, given your stamp of approval  
20 that's appropriate?

21 MS. PIRRAMI: It's not our place, no.

22 MR. WALKER: Okay, all right. That's all I  
23 have.

24 MS. PIRRAMI: Okay. I think I'm  
25 understanding it, and I hope I'm answering it

1 correctly.

2 MR. HIPSKIND: You did. You did fine.

3 MS. PIRRAMI: Okay.

4 MR. HIPSKIND: Steve, Chris? Steve.

5 MR. STEARN: So, Debbie, thanks for coming  
6 in. So then it's my understanding that your department  
7 handles only AMT-2 and RWP training and qualification,  
8 or are there other --

9 MS. PIRRAMI: We do forklift, CPR --

10 MR. STEARN: So I'll speed it up. Do you do  
11 watchman training?

12 MS. PIRRAMI: We do watchman, yes.

13 MR. STEARN: Watchman qualification?

14 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

15 MR. STEARN: Your department would be  
16 responsible for that. How many foreman training --

17 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

18 MR. STEARN: -- and qualification?

19 MS. PIRRAMI: I'm sorry. I'm kind of  
20 focused on RWP here, and I'm not getting out of it so -  
21 -

22 MR. STEARN: So a guy comes on the property,  
23 he gets hired, he works a while. He, through a bid  
24 process, is selected as a candidate for foreman school  
25 --

1 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

2 MR. STEARN: -- and all that training and  
3 administration will come under your --

4 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes, along with the CNS signal  
5 school.

6 MR. STEARN: Okay.

7 MS. PIRRAMI: Just since we're putting them  
8 all out there.

9 MR. STEARN: So that's a lot of work for a  
10 department. So I guess my interest in, as it relates  
11 to the circumstances that you're here discussing, is  
12 the foreman training. Could you, like, walk me through  
13 a process of how I got hired two years ago and now I've  
14 been selected to go to foreman school? What can I  
15 expect? What do I learn? What am I given and --

16 MS. PIRRAMI: Well, I don't know much about  
17 the content of the course itself because that was  
18 already established prior to me coming into the  
19 position and there was another manager for it at the  
20 time. I just oversee it, to the point to make sure if  
21 foreman school is necessary, that we get it in the  
22 schedule, that the two instructors who instruct it are  
23 prepared, they know about it, it's in their schedule.  
24 And they're really so good at what they do, they don't  
25 need any guidance from me.

1           It's four weeks of training. They stay, we  
2 generally do it in Wilmington at the train station. We  
3 have the training room there on the platform. They  
4 stay there the entire four weeks for the training.  
5 They stay in hotels. There's math. They bring in a  
6 train dispatcher to go over, you know, the radio  
7 protocols. They have really an excellent program.  
8 I've never heard anything negative about it, but I  
9 couldn't respond to exactly what's in it. I do have  
10 all the information, but I've never taken a lot of time  
11 to -- it's all track safety standards.

12           MR. STEARN: So those trainers, those  
13 teachers as they were, they're your people?

14           MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

15           MR. STEARN: And they have, they've received  
16 some type of training to allow them to perform this --

17           MS. PIRRAMI: They were in the position  
18 prior to me starting in my position, so I don't know  
19 what their background --

20           MR. STEARN: I guess my question would be  
21 are they somehow qualified or certified to be in that  
22 position, to train others as foremen?

23           MS. PIRRAMI: I don't know. I don't know  
24 the answer. I would have to find out for certain. I'm  
25 not really sure what you're looking for. I mean, I'm

1 not. I think I understand.

2 MR. STEARN: I guess what I'm looking for is  
3 what makes a trainer, for foreman training, what makes  
4 him a trainer? What qualifies him to be a trainer?  
5 How is he so proficient or how has he been recognized  
6 as being competent to --

7 MS. PIRRAMI: Okay.

8 MR. STEARN: -- administer that information?

9 MS. PIRRAMI: I can answer with my  
10 instructors that I have in the training camps, because  
11 I was part of that process, is they're mentored. They  
12 work with other current instructors for quite some  
13 time, and I'm, again, referring to the training camp  
14 instructors. Then they'll take, for RWP, when they  
15 start to feel comfortable with it, they'll take a piece  
16 of it and instruct it a little bit at a time until  
17 they're comfortable with the entire program. Henry  
18 Marcel (phonetic) and Dave Keeley (phonetic) are the  
19 track safety standards foremen instructors, and they  
20 have an enormous amount of knowledge and background.

21 MR. STEARN: You had spoke earlier and  
22 talked about two companies who would validate tests. I  
23 was wondering if you could help me understand what does  
24 that mean. What is that? You mentioned Ramsay and --

25 MS. PIRRAMI: Well, we don't want to

1 administer a test that's not been completely, that's  
2 not appropriate. So they hire outside companies to  
3 look at the information. Then to deal with Amtrak  
4 subject matter experts, I know they involve the union,  
5 they involve management, they go over all the questions  
6 to determine all the questions are good questions, I  
7 guess, for the information being taught, and then they  
8 validate it and we start to administer it.

9 MR. STEARN: Okay.

10 MS. PIRRAMI: It's part of a legal process  
11 also to issue a validated test, I would imagine. I've  
12 been involved in the process with AON Hewitt, but  
13 that's just working with the information and working  
14 with the process. I don't know how more to answer the  
15 question.

16 MR. STEARN: I'm trying to understand what  
17 that process is, being an outsider (inaudible) this  
18 training. A test is put together and an outside  
19 consultant is used to see if the material on the test  
20 conforms with the material that's being taught?

21 MS. PIRRAMI: There's a whole list of  
22 criteria that there has to be a training program in  
23 place prior to even looking at the test to validate it.  
24 They take all the material that's involved with the  
25 training program. Then they get the names from us of



1 subject matter experts who would be considered a  
2 subject matter expert in RWP, management and union to  
3 get both sides of it. Then they go over all the  
4 questions. There's different groups. They put them  
5 together as a group. They go over the questions as a  
6 group, determine if there's anything that needs to be  
7 changed, removed, or added. Then they go back to AON  
8 Hewitt with that information. And the process takes  
9 months and months to develop a test or to -- basically,  
10 the test is there. It just does it need to be fixed or  
11 what fixes need to be made?

12 MR. STEARN: Okay. The testing that we have  
13 now for the foremen you said was four weeks.

14 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

15 MR. STEARN: Do you recall, I don't know how  
16 far back you can go, was it always four weeks? Was it  
17 longer, shorter?

18 MS. PIRRAMI: I don't know. I only know  
19 that it's four weeks since I've been in the position.

20 MR. STEARN: And you had touched on  
21 mentoring. You used that word, and that's been  
22 something that stuck in my mind. Is there some formal  
23 structure for mentoring that goes along with the  
24 foreman school or goes after the foreman school or  
25 periodic --

1 MS. PIRRAMI: I don't remember saying  
2 mentoring.

3 MR. STEARN: No?

4 MS. PIRRAMI: No.

5 MR. STEARN: I thought you said something  
6 about --

7 MS. PIRRAMI: If I did, if you could tell me  
8 what context I used the term.

9 MR. LAMEN: You know what, Steve, if you  
10 don't mind, I think it was something about trainers  
11 work with other instructors to get trained.

12 MS. PIRRAMI: Oh, yes, mentoring  
13 instructors.

14 MR. HIPSKIND: Mark, thank you for that  
15 clarification.

16 MR. STEARN: So, I mean, is that part of the  
17 curriculum? That is a requirement --

18 MS. PIRRAMI: Mentoring with the foremen?

19 MR. STEARN: Yes.

20 MS. PIRRAMI: Not part of what we do, no.  
21 Not part of our training, our four-week program. They  
22 do take them out to the field to show them, you know,  
23 to have some real-life experience as to what they're  
24 teaching in the classroom, but there's no formal  
25 mentoring that we do.

1 MR. STEARN: Okay. And that's in that four  
2 weeks?

3 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct.

4 MR. STEARN: And then would there be a  
5 follow-up? Is there, like, you know, you guys have to  
6 come back and take some type of proficiency or --

7 MS. PIRRAMI: They have the MW1000  
8 (phonetic) course refresher every year, which is the  
9 track safety standards requal. So the foremen have to  
10 take that to continue in the position as a foreman.

11 MR. STEARN: But there's no requirement for  
12 them to come back not in MW1000 but other forms of  
13 foreman duties that they need to be --

14 MS. PIRRAMI: Not -- no, no.

15 MR. STEARN: And then just RWP and AMT-2?

16 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct.

17 MR. STEARN: And the RWP is annually?

18 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct.

19 MR. STEARN: And the AMT-2 is?

20 MS. PIRRAMI: For Class C employees, it's  
21 every two years. For ET Class A employees, it's  
22 annual.

23 MR. STEARN: Okay. All right, Debbie.  
24 Thank you.

25 MR. HIPSKIND: Thank you, Steve. Dr.

1 Beaton, please.

2 MR. BEATON: Good morning, Debbie.

3 MS. PIRRAMI: Good morning.

4 MR. BEATON: I think -- well, good  
5 afternoon. We're in the afternoon. My interest is in  
6 the events of this accident on April 3rd, and I'm  
7 talking with you today to try to get some insights into  
8 the preparedness of the people that were involved in  
9 this accident, that is how well trained they were. And  
10 so I suppose that you've been asked or told to come  
11 talk to me this morning because you're the point of  
12 contact in the training department. That's your  
13 understanding of things?

14 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

15 MR. BEATON: As the point of contact in the  
16 training department, you indicated that you're the  
17 manager. Have you had anything to do with the  
18 development of the training curriculum that the  
19 engineering department employees would receive?

20 MS. PIRRAMI: To what extent?

21 MR. BEATON: In any extent. Have you had  
22 anything to do with developing the curriculum?

23 MS. PIRRAMI: For the most part, all the  
24 curriculum or the -- when you say curriculum, do you  
25 mean presentations or courses that are instructed?

1 MR. BEATON: The program of study, the  
2 learning objectives, the materials that are used to  
3 convey those objectives.

4 MS. PIRRAMI: Most of that was already in  
5 place.

6 MR. BEATON: Okay. Are you a training  
7 specialist?

8 MS. PIRRAMI: No.

9 MR. BEATON: Okay. Your role in the  
10 training department is as a manager?

11 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct.

12 MR. BEATON: So would it be fair to say that  
13 you're the administrator, you're chief of operations if  
14 you will? You're making sure that training is  
15 delivered when it's supposed to be delivered but --

16 MS. PIRRAMI: And appropriately.

17 MR. BEATON: Now, tell me about  
18 appropriately. What does that mean? What's your role  
19 in determining the appropriateness of training  
20 delivery?

21 MS. PIRRAMI: Well, basically, the  
22 presentation is given to each instructor, and they are  
23 told, my mantra this year was stick to the script.  
24 Here are the slides, this is the information, this is  
25 what we instruct. We don't want personal stories, we

1 don't want to go off the path. We want to stay with  
2 what's important.

3 MR. BEATON: So if I was one of your  
4 instructors and I happened to have some experiences  
5 with roadway foremen and I say, hey, I've got some  
6 great lessons learned when I spent my 20 years on the  
7 road, can I share that with my students, you would tell  
8 me no because I'm off script?

9 MS. PIRRAMI: And it's your personal  
10 experience, and we don't want to put that into the  
11 minds of the other employees because --

12 MR. BEATON: Is that a decision that you --

13 MR. LAMEN: I think she had something she  
14 was going to finish.

15 MR. HIPSKIND: Mark.

16 MR. LAMEN: Sorry.

17 MR. BEATON: Is that a decision that you've  
18 made to stay on script, or is that a directive that  
19 you've received from higher management and you're  
20 executing a directive?

21 MS. PIRRAMI: That was my decision.

22 MR. BEATON: Okay. What is it, staying on  
23 script, where's the value there of having a lockstep  
24 training curriculum?

25 MS. PIRRAMI: Well, with RWP, the rules are

1 what the rules are, and we want to focus on the  
2 information that we're trying to get to the employees  
3 and not throw a lot of personal stories in there to  
4 muddy the information that we're trying to convey.

5 MR. BEATON: All right. It may muddy it.  
6 Did you have anything to do with developing the  
7 information that's being delivered, or are you just  
8 administrating, administering the delivery of that  
9 information?

10 MS. PIRRAMI: What we do every January,  
11 because our training year runs from January to  
12 December, okay? So every January --

13 MR. BEATON: (Inaudible).

14 MS. PIRRAMI: January through December.  
15 It's calendar year.

16 MR. BEATON: Two months from January --

17 MS. PIRRAMI: Through December.

18 MR. BEATON: Oh, through December, okay.

19 MS. PIRRAMI: Right. It's calendar year.

20 MR. BEATON: Okay.

21 MS. PIRRAMI: So if we can, if we have the  
22 availability prior to January, if not, no later than  
23 January, my entire group gets together for a week. We  
24 focus on RWP and AMT-2. We go slide by slide by slide,  
25 and we discuss what the issues may have been last year,

1 the previous year, that we might need to focus a little  
2 more attention on, if there was anything that,  
3 everything was consistent, consistently brought up in  
4 the training camps.

5 MR. BEATON: So you're doing this with the  
6 instructors?

7 MS. PIRRAMI: With the instructors.

8 MR. BEATON: Okay. So the instructors are  
9 providing you some feedback --

10 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes, yes.

11 MR. BEATON: -- from last year's experience,  
12 and there's a group process. It goes through an  
13 evaluation, and they're telling you where the stumbling  
14 blocks were in the delivery of material; is that  
15 correct?

16 MS. PIRRAMI: No, it's basically -- they  
17 weren't stumbling blocks. They were maybe issues that  
18 were more pertinent throughout the year, like something  
19 may have come up that was always in question or not  
20 always in question but that had been questioned in a  
21 number of the classes and we wanted to clarify it. So  
22 we would focus more attention on that pertinent slide.

23 MR. BEATON: So if we had a concept that was  
24 vague and students kept asking questions about it or  
25 whatnot, who would come up with the solution to make it



1 clearer to the students for next time around? Is that  
2 you, or is that the instructor, or is that somebody  
3 else?

4 MS. PIRRAMI: It was always a team effort  
5 because we would always make sure everyone was in  
6 agreement with the way we were going to instruct that  
7 information.

8 MR. BEATON: I'm asking you these questions  
9 just to get a sense, I just want to know how involved  
10 you were, how influential you are in the material  
11 that's being trained. And it sounds to me like there  
12 is an annual assessment of the training, but that's  
13 somewhat informal in the sense that -- I thought I also  
14 heard you, in response to a previous question, say, I  
15 think it was Mr. Hipskind that asked you it's somebody  
16 else that does the assessment of the training, the  
17 effectiveness of the training?

18 MS. PIRRAMI: We don't have a formal process  
19 like --

20 MR. BEATON: Nobody does anything formal or  
21 --

22 MS. PIRRAMI: I don't know. I couldn't  
23 answer that. I know I don't. My process is being with  
24 the group and getting feedback from them.

25 MR. BEATON: Okay. You're the manager of

1 the training department, and you don't know if somebody  
2 else is doing an effectiveness assessment of your  
3 training?

4 MS. PIRRAMI: Oh, see, I'm sorry, you're  
5 confusing me. I'm thinking -- are you talking out in  
6 the field? You're not being specific enough.

7 MR. BEATON: Does Amtrak evaluate the  
8 effectiveness of its training?

9 MS. PIRRAMI: The classes are audited from  
10 time to time, and I can't speak for other departments  
11 and what they do in the field.

12 MR. BEATON: Okay. And that's because you  
13 don't have visibility to the people in the field?

14 MS. PIRRAMI: Probably. I'm really not sure  
15 what you're looking for.

16 MR. BEATON: When you train somebody in  
17 anticipation there may be an audit throughout the year  
18 and, at the very least, there's going to be an annual  
19 get-together with your trainers where you've got to  
20 look for, you know, continuous quality improvement in  
21 your training I guess is one way to label it, it sounds  
22 to me like that's your only source of feedback as to  
23 how well the training is working.

24 MS. PIRRAMI: If there's any issues  
25 throughout the year, then I would be contacted by

1 either safety or engineering to say, you know, like,  
2 maybe we need to refocus on something or, you know,  
3 switch something up or change how we're training it.

4 MR. BEATON: Have you been contacted by  
5 safety or somebody else about the preparedness or the  
6 training level of the workers involved in the Chester  
7 accident?

8 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

9 MR. BEATON: What were the issues that were  
10 discussed?

11 MS. PIRRAMI: The supplemental shunting  
12 devices because that was the training aspect of it.

13 MR. BEATON: What was the, what was the  
14 nature of that conversation about the supplemental  
15 shunting devices?

16 MS. PIRRAMI: Basically, that there was a  
17 bullet in one of the slides that I had inadvertently  
18 left in that I should have taken out.

19 MR. BEATON: Because it offered an incorrect  
20 perspective on --

21 MS. PIRRAMI: Well, the rule had changed,  
22 and we didn't catch it.

23 MR. BEATON: Okay. So there was some old  
24 information that just needed to be updated?

25 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct.

1 MR. BEATON: But no change in the training  
2 about shunting devices as a result of Chester, other  
3 than updating old information or removing old  
4 information?

5 MS. PIRRAMI: Well, we always talked about  
6 the actual process of how to apply and when to apply  
7 them.

8 MR. BEATON: Was that already being trained  
9 or discussed prior to Chester?

10 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

11 MR. BEATON: So as a result of Chester, the  
12 question really stems from did safety or somebody else  
13 come to you as training and ask for or initiate a  
14 change in the training curriculum as a result of  
15 Chester?

16 MS. PIRRAMI: It was more about just making  
17 sure that we weren't instructing the wrong material,  
18 and there wasn't much more said about it.

19 MR. BEATON: Okay. So it sounds like the  
20 only instruction of wrong material, and I'll use your  
21 words for it, was just this old outdated bullet because  
22 the regulation had changed, that it really wasn't a  
23 lesson learned from Chester?

24 MS. PIRRAMI: I don't know you, how to answer  
25 that.

1 MR. BEATON: Okay. Well, were there any,  
2 was there any assessment of the Chester accident that  
3 had an implication on the training that you're  
4 providing, that you're responsible for? Is anybody  
5 assessing the training level of those employees and  
6 then making recommendations to you, as a training  
7 manager, to update your training?

8 MS. PIRRAMI: The best I can answer that, I  
9 know that system safety is in the process of auditing  
10 the training to, I believe they're in the process of  
11 auditing the trainings. I don't know if it's completed  
12 or if they're still in the process.

13 MR. BEATON: So is system safety the people  
14 that would initiate or re-architect the training  
15 program, as opposed to you, as the training manager?

16 MS. PIRRAMI: Effective 2017, yes. Next  
17 January, they will have more input into the design of  
18 the program or the information in the program. Up to  
19 this point, it's been me.

20 MR. BEATON: Okay. And you're familiar with  
21 the events of the accident, right? The circumstances  
22 of the --

23 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

24 MR. BEATON: -- accident? And do you see  
25 anything, from a training point of view, that needs to

1 be improved?

2 MS. PIRRAMI: No.

3 MR. BEATON: Okay. Was there any behaviors,  
4 as best we can understand, from the events of the  
5 accident that would suggest that employees were not  
6 properly trained?

7 MS. PIRRAMI: No.

8 MR. BEATON: Okay. What was it about  
9 shunting devices that caused somebody to come back to  
10 training and at least take a look at the training  
11 materials that you were providing?

12 MS. PIRRAMI: I can only assume the answer  
13 to that, so I don't know all the circumstances to  
14 really answer that honestly. I can only make an  
15 assumption.

16 MR. BEATON: Do you think those employees  
17 were properly trained on the use of shunting devices  
18 prior to the Chester accident?

19 MS. PIRRAMI: I can't answer that. I don't  
20 know. That would be an assumption.

21 MR. BEATON: But you told me a moment ago  
22 that you didn't see anything, based on the events of  
23 the Chester accident, that there wasn't any shortcoming

24 --

25 MS. PIRRAMI: That I was aware of with

1 training, no. I'm referring to my training. I can't  
2 speak to anything that happens in the field.

3 MR. BEATON: No, that's fair. Sure, yes. I  
4 mean, the training that you provide to the engineering  
5 department.

6 MS. PIRRAMI: Right.

7 MR. BEATON: Did you know any of the  
8 employees that were involved in this accident?

9 MS. PIRRAMI: I was familiar with one of  
10 them.

11 MR. BEATON: Were they in your training?

12 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

13 MR. BEATON: What training is that?

14 MS. PIRRAMI: I'm sorry?

15 MR. BEATON: What course did they take --

16 MS. PIRRAMI: They would have been in the  
17 annual camps.

18 MR. BEATON: Annual camps?

19 MS. PIRRAMI: Training camps.

20 MR. BEATON: So they would take probably a  
21 number of different courses?

22 MS. PIRRAMI: RWP, AMT-2, and then whatever  
23 else was being instructed that year.

24 MR. BEATON: Was that employee a foreman?

25 MS. PIRRAMI: I don't know. I don't know.

1 I can't say for sure.

2 MR. BEATON: You don't know if that employee  
3 took the foreman course?

4 MS. PIRRAMI: I don't know. I only knew him  
5 from talking to him on the phone a few times, but we  
6 didn't talk titles. I mean, I don't mean to sound --

7 MR. BEATON: No, that's fine.

8 MS. PIRRAMI: -- but I just didn't know what  
9 his title was.

10 MR. BEATON: In your engineering training  
11 curriculum, especially for foremen, do you train about  
12 the shift change activities?

13 MS. PIRRAMI: I couldn't answer that.

14 MR. BEATON: Why couldn't you answer that?

15 MS. PIRRAMI: Because I don't know the  
16 entire program.

17 MR. BEATON: Is it one of the courses that  
18 you're responsible for?

19 MS. PIRRAMI: It's -- do I have oversight of  
20 the instructors that train it? Yes. I have never --

21 MR. BEATON: You don't know anything about  
22 the content of the course?

23 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct. I don't deal with  
24 the content of the --

25 MR. BEATON: How do you know if it's being



1 delivered appropriately?

2 MS. PIRRAMI: Because we do have  
3 supervisors, and management employees sit in the class  
4 to observe.

5 MR. BEATON: Is there somebody else that I  
6 should be talking to about the content of the foreman  
7 course?

8 MS. PIRRAMI: That would be Dave Keeley  
9 (phonetic) or Henry Marcel (phonetic).

10 MR. BEATON: Do they report to you or --

11 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes, they do.

12 MR. BEATON: Okay. And are they experienced  
13 with the foreman course because of prior work  
14 experience, or are there any special circumstances  
15 where they would be responsible or they would  
16 understand the course and you would not?

17 MS. PIRRAMI: They instruct it.

18 MR. BEATON: And I appreciate, as managers,  
19 we don't necessarily know all the details of all the  
20 activities. Can you tell me does the foreman course  
21 teach procedures and policies with track and time?

22 MS. PIRRAMI: Whatever in 213, track safety  
23 standards, they instruct.

24 MR. BEATON: Is track and time a topic  
25 that's covered --

1 MS. PIRRAMI: I can't say.

2 MR. BEATON: Is foul time covered?

3 MS. PIRRAMI: Foul time is standard in RWP.  
4 I'm sure it's covered in 213 also.

5 MR. BEATON: Okay. Do you know that?

6 MS. PIRRAMI: No, you're right. No, I can't  
7 answer that.

8 MR. BEATON: Okay. RWP stands for what?

9 MS. PIRRAMI: Roadway Worker Protection.

10 MR. BEATON: That means -- what does RWP,  
11 the scope of RWP mean to you?

12 MS. PIRRAMI: Safety.

13 MR. BEATON: Safety?

14 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes, safety on the right-of-  
15 way.

16 MR. BEATON: That's it for the moment.

17 MR. HIPSKIND: Thank you, Dr. Bob. Ryan,  
18 please.

19 MR. FRIGO: Debbie, thank you for being with  
20 us here, now that we're in the afternoon. I just want  
21 to ask some specifics about changes to the training  
22 that occurred. If you can recall any changes in recent  
23 memory as it relates to on-track protection, any  
24 changes in the curriculum or the development of  
25 curriculum?

1 MS. PIRRAMI: I don't know where you're  
2 going. I'm sorry.

3 MR. FRIGO: Okay.

4 MS. PIRRAMI: I'm not understanding.

5 MR. FRIGO: Any changes that have been made  
6 as it relates to the use of shunts within the training  
7 program?

8 MS. PIRRAMI: Just that one bullet point  
9 about interlockings, I believe, or signal pockets.  
10 That was the only issue that I was aware of with the  
11 SSDs. Excuse me.

12 MR. FRIGO: Okay. Are there any, with the  
13 training that you're in charge of, is there any modules  
14 or parts of the presentation that cover communication  
15 between employees?

16 MS. PIRRAMI: Job safety briefings, on-track  
17 safety briefings. That covers communication.

18 MR. FRIGO: Is there any specifics as it  
19 relates to using personal cell phones?

20 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes, that's on the job  
21 briefing form, the on-track safety briefing form, and  
22 covered during the briefing.

23 MR. FRIGO: And is the use of Amtrak-issued  
24 cell phones, is that also part of that training, as  
25 well, when is it appropriate to use a cell phone?

1 MS. PIRRAMI: There's a -- I can't recall if  
2 we're doing it this year, but there was a bulletin put  
3 out about cell phone use on the railroad, and we would  
4 discuss that. I don't know if the bulletin is still in  
5 this year. I'd have to look.

6 MR. FRIGO: And that would be as it relates  
7 to when it's okay to use a phone?

8 MS. PIRRAMI: Well, it's (inaudible) from  
9 engineering of what they said, the cell phone policy or  
10 cell phone device policy. I don't recall. I can't say  
11 for sure if there's a time when you can use a cell  
12 phone in the policy. I can't recall.

13 MR. FRIGO: What about areas in the training  
14 where it's discussed when a cell phone can be used  
15 rather than a radio?

16 MS. PIRRAMI: I don't think that's discussed  
17 that you can use a cell phone instead of a radio. I  
18 would have to double-check in the program, but I don't  
19 think -- I can't answer that for certain.

20 MR. FRIGO: Okay. And then is there any,  
21 again, course modules or, you know, slides in the  
22 presentation that discuss team dynamics between  
23 employees?

24 MS. PIRRAMI: Not specifically. There might  
25 be something in there that refers to what you're

1 talking about, but nothing using that terminology.

2 MR. FRIGO: Okay. That's all I have at this  
3 time.

4 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. Debbie, usually what  
5 we do at this juncture is ask you how you're doing.  
6 Are you doing okay?

7 MS. PIRRAMI: Fine.

8 MR. HIPSKIND: All right. We'll probably go  
9 around for a second round. It usually goes a little  
10 bit quicker. Just trying to tie up some loose ends,  
11 okay? So in the different course -- I want to talk  
12 about a new hire. When a new hire comes on and you're  
13 preparing that person to go out and essentially be a  
14 track worker, you're not trying to instill upon them to  
15 be a foreman, you're instilling on the rules of the  
16 road to be a track worker, right?

17 MS. PIRRAMI: To work safely.

18 MR. HIPSKIND: To work safely, okay. In  
19 that capacity, though?

20 MS. PIRRAMI: Well, there's multiple  
21 capacity. There's multiple crafts, so you're saying  
22 track worker. We also have electric --

23 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. Point taken. All  
24 right. But in that initial two weeks, tell me the  
25 depth of the operating rules or the NORAC rules that

1 these employees, these new hires would be exposed to.

2 And the answer is?

3 MS. PIRRAMI: None.

4 MR. HIPSKIND: None. Okay.

5 MS. PIRRAMI: It should be --

6 MR. HIPSKIND: No, I kind of knew I was  
7 going to get a not any or none. Now, let's take that  
8 same employee, as Steve had provided an example, and  
9 now you find him back at your doorstep in the classroom  
10 and they want to be a foreman. Let's talk about, and I  
11 understand about all the stuff about Part 213 and all  
12 that stuff. I want to be sure I'm understanding  
13 clearly. When does that foreman or anybody that is  
14 receiving RWP training, when do we do the deep dive on  
15 everything that has to do with operating rules and  
16 NORAC rules? When do I get that?

17 MS. PIRRAMI: Prior to attending the foreman  
18 training, they need to be NORAC qualified.

19 MR. HIPSKIND: Is that in your department?

20 MS. PIRRAMI: No.

21 MR. HIPSKIND: Tell me more.

22 MS. PIRRAMI: That's the rules department,  
23 operating rules, operations rules department instructs  
24 the NORAC. We do not.

25 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. Give me a little bit

1 more visibility. Is there coordination between, say,  
2 the manager that's teaching them operation rules and  
3 NORAC, you know, ways of doing things? How do you know  
4 that you've got the right guy and they've passed  
5 everything over here if it's in a different department?  
6 Just help me out with that communication.

7 MS. PIRRAMI: The positions are advertised  
8 within bulletins and assignments, and the list of what  
9 is needed to go to foreman school is on the  
10 advertisement. So, basically, if you don't have the  
11 qualifications, you don't apply.

12 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. So the operations  
13 training department --

14 MS. PIRRAMI: Rules.

15 MR. HIPSKIND: Rules. They create a  
16 database --

17 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

18 MR. HIPSKIND: -- and if I successfully went  
19 through their training and their testing and I get  
20 entered in that database, do you end up checking that  
21 before you proceed with somebody or --

22 MS. PIRRAMI: That would be bulletins and  
23 assignments. We schedule the class, we schedule the  
24 location, the instructors. The bulletins and  
25 assignments puts the people in the class. We don't

1 dictate who goes.

2 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. But there is some even  
3 small degree of interaction with other departments and  
4 their training?

5 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes, yes.

6 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. Prerequisites, if you  
7 will, right?

8 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

9 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay, all right. The whole  
10 thing about the evolution of rules, I should think of  
11 that as the safety department, yes? I mean, let me put  
12 it very -- I saw the scrunchy face. I get that.  
13 That's communicating. If people want to change a  
14 process or a procedure that has to do with roadway  
15 worker or operating rules or engineering practices or  
16 procedures, that's not what you do, that's what other  
17 people do, right?

18 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct.

19 MR. HIPSKIND: And if they want you to know  
20 about it, they tell you about it, and you change the  
21 course curriculum accordingly, correct?

22 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct. I don't like your  
23 say or terminology if they want us to know about it.  
24 They let us know about it, so we can update it.

25 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. Well, let's agree that



1 they should let you know about it in a timely manner,  
2 right? They should?

3 MS. PIRRAMI: Sure.

4 MR. HIPSKIND: All right. And then the  
5 thing that you do is, in dialogue with them, you make  
6 updates so that the training and the slides and the  
7 take-aways of the employee from the training exercise  
8 match up with changes in the field or rules changes?

9 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct.

10 MR. HIPSKIND: But one of the things that I  
11 want to be sure, if you make that change, if something  
12 happens in April that causes a rules change, do you  
13 change that slide for the people who come in for  
14 training if they come through in May, or do you wait  
15 until the audit and you do an annual review?

16 MS. PIRRAMI: If there's something that we  
17 know that needs to change in the presentation, for  
18 whatever reason --

19 MR. HIPSKIND: Sure.

20 MS. PIRRAMI: -- we'll do it as soon as  
21 possible.

22 MR. HIPSKIND: So there's a more timely  
23 addressing of the changes?

24 MS. PIRRAMI: Well, yes. We want to get the  
25 information out as soon as possible.

1 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay, all right.

2 MS. PIRRAMI: The correct information.

3 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. That's all I've got.

4 So let me -- you think there should have been more?

5 MS. PIRRAMI: No.

6 MR. HIPSKIND: All right. Don, anything?

7 MR. HILL: No, no.

8 MR. HIPSKIND: Theresa?

9 MS. IMPASTATO: Just a quick question. You  
10 said that there were changes coming to the  
11 developmental process and the review process in 2017.  
12 Can you describe those changes?

13 MS. PIRRAMI: Well, it's my understanding  
14 that system safety would take responsibility or, for  
15 lack of a better word, would be responsible come next  
16 year for the presentations, the instructional design,  
17 so to speak, the content for accuracy and what have  
18 you. That was my understanding earlier this year. I  
19 don't know if things have changed or not. That's  
20 possible, but that was my understanding.

21 MS. IMPASTATO: Thank you.

22 MR. HIPSKIND: Fran Walker?

23 MR. WALKER: I had a question. In January  
24 of 2015, the RWP manual dropped the SSD, the on-track  
25 safety rule, from the manual. Were any of your

1 instructors when they're teaching these courses or it  
2 was brought to their attention by any field people that  
3 this SSD rule was no longer in the manual?

4 MS. PIRRAMI: We were all aware of it.  
5 Again, it was when we got together as a group, we  
6 discussed it. And on our presentations, we have a page  
7 number that relates to each slide where it can be  
8 referred to in the RWP manual. When we got to the  
9 SSDs, even though it wasn't in the book, the  
10 instructors felt that it was something that we should  
11 still leave in the presentation to keep the employees  
12 aware that the SSDs were out there. So even though it  
13 wasn't in RWP, I would say I ultimately made the  
14 decision that we would leave it in based on the  
15 feedback.

16 MR. WALKER: That's all I have.

17 MR. HIPSKIND: Chris?

18 MR. SCHULTE: No, I'm good. Thank you.

19 MR. HIPSKIND: Steve?

20 MR. STEARN: Just one quick thing. When  
21 your students come to you with a recurring concern or  
22 your instructors come to you with something they keep  
23 hearing and they think, you know, we need to talk about  
24 this, we need to make this part of the presentation or  
25 include this in, who would you kick that up to?

1 MS. PIRRAMI: Engineering.

2 MR. STEARN: Okay. I mean, is there like,  
3 the deputy chief engineer, the chief engineer, the --

4 MS. PIRRAMI: Generally, the deputy chief.  
5 Before my group gets together, every year I go to the  
6 engineering department and discuss the curriculum for  
7 the upcoming year, what do they want us to instruct,  
8 aside from the RWP or AMT-2, were there any issues in  
9 engineering that they want us to focus on, and then  
10 we'll put that into the training program for the  
11 upcoming year.

12 MR. STEARN: And so that would be then the  
13 deputy chief (inaudible)?

14 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct.

15 MR. STEARN: Okay. Nothing further. Thank  
16 you.

17 MR. HIPSKIND: Thank you, Steve. Dr. Bob,  
18 back to you.

19 MR. BEATON: Just a couple follow-ups. In  
20 preparing for our discussion here this morning, I'm  
21 sure you sort of, you knew that the context of this  
22 discussion would be around the April 3rd accident in  
23 Chester. I'm sure you looked at the training of the  
24 workers involved; is that correct?

25 MS. PIRRAMI: Looked at the training?

1 MR. BEATON: Yes, looked at their training.

2 MS. PIRRAMI: I pulled all their records,  
3 yes.

4 MR. BEATON: And everybody had training as  
5 you'd expect them to have?

6 MS. PIRRAMI: I can't verify for sure. It  
7 was a very hectic time in getting a lot, a lot of  
8 information together in a short amount of time for the  
9 NTSB, for the FRA, so I didn't take the time to look at  
10 each individual record, no.

11 MR. BEATON: Okay. So when you initially  
12 answered that you had looked at the records, I heard  
13 yes. But now I'm hearing, no, you didn't really look  
14 at the records. It sounds like you pulled the records  
15 --

16 MS. PIRRAMI: Well, I pulled the records,  
17 yes.

18 MR. BEATON: It sounds like you pulled the  
19 records --

20 MS. PIRRAMI: Then I misunderstood your  
21 question.

22 MR. BEATON: Yes. What I was asking, as the  
23 training manager, the senior manager for training and  
24 development, do you have any idea, as we sit here  
25 today, that those employees were either trained

1 properly or not?

2 MS. PIRRAMI: To go back to April and the  
3 time when we were getting all the records together, I  
4 vaguely remember looking to see if they had the RWP and  
5 the AMT-2, but, whether they did or they didn't, I just  
6 kept printing everything out and getting it together.  
7 I didn't pay a lot of attention to it.

8 MR. BEATON: What did you do to prepare for  
9 this discussion with me today?

10 MS. PIRRAMI: There was nothing to really do  
11 to prepare because the information is what it is. I  
12 can't --

13 MR. BEATON: Okay. And I'm here to try to  
14 get some insight into that information, and you're the  
15 senior manager for training and development. I guess  
16 you're going to provide NTSB or this investigation with  
17 some records so that we can determine that they were  
18 properly trained?

19 MR. HIPSKIND: I'm going to take a lead  
20 interview's discretion here. We have asked for, when  
21 we were on scene, all the personnel records and  
22 training records, and we requested and have received  
23 those. We have those.

24 MR. BEATON: Okay. But it's fair to say  
25 that you don't know, as we sit here today, whether they

1 were properly trained or not?

2 MS. PIRRAMI: Properly trained or whether  
3 they had their qualifications?

4 MR. BEATON: Whether they had their  
5 qualifications, however you want to interpret that. I  
6 mean, Amtrak has some training standards. Do you know  
7 if those employees had met those training standards at  
8 the time of the accident?

9 MS. PIRRAMI: I can't answer that 100-  
10 percent for certain right now. There was quite a few  
11 employees, not just the two, that we pulled records  
12 for.

13 MR. BEATON: Okay. If I just talked about  
14 the employee that was serving as the lookout or one of  
15 the lookouts, can you tell me anything about his  
16 training?

17 MS. PIRRAMI: I didn't know who the watchman  
18 was.

19 MR. BEATON: Okay. You are familiar with  
20 the employees that were involved in this accident?

21 MS. PIRRAMI: Not anymore, no. I mean, if  
22 you told me their names, I wouldn't even know, except  
23 for Pete Adamovich and Carter. Those are the only two  
24 names that were mentioned the most.

25 MR. BEATON: If I just talked about the

1 backhoe operator as a generic backhoe operator without  
2 naming names, would a backhoe operator working for  
3 Amtrak on a ballast vacuuming job, when it comes time  
4 to a shift change, what safety training would be most  
5 relevant to the activities of that backhoe operator  
6 during shift change?

7 MS. PIRRAMI: Communication.

8 MR. BEATON: With who?

9 MS. PIRRAMI: With everybody. The foreman.  
10 I don't know where you're going, what you're looking  
11 for.

12 MR. BEATON: Well, I'm asking, for a backhoe  
13 operator who's working a ballast vacuuming job, what  
14 training has your department provided that backhoe  
15 operator in terms of safety? What's most important  
16 that comes out of your department? You're the person  
17 that is delivering this training. What's going to  
18 stick in the mind of that backhoe operator during a  
19 shift change operation, especially if the backhoe  
20 operator is fouling the track?

21 MS. PIRRAMI: Whether or not they still have  
22 foul time.

23 MR. BEATON: Yes, okay. Do we know anything  
24 about the training of this backhoe operator with regard  
25 to reestablishing or verifying that they had foul time?



1 MS. PIRRAMI: If he was qualified RWP  
2 annually, then, yes, he would have, foul time was  
3 discussed, is discussed in RWP.

4 MR. BEATON: What specifically in the RWP  
5 program curriculum talks about foul time?

6 MS. PIRRAMI: There's one of the segments,  
7 there's a few slides on the criteria, when to get foul  
8 time, who can get foul time, foremen, what  
9 qualifications the foreman has to have or the person  
10 getting foul time has to have.

11 MR. BEATON: And is that information that  
12 you've provided to the NTSB --

13 MS. PIRRAMI: If they asked for a  
14 presentation, then, yes, they have that information.

15 MR. BEATON: Okay. Do we know if we've  
16 asked for that?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We haven't.

18 MS. PIRRAMI: You haven't?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Not for the  
20 presentation.

21 MS. PIRRAMI: I thought we did -- if you  
22 want it, we can --

23 MR. BEATON: Well, we would certainly like  
24 to get it, but I'll leave it up to the IIC to make the  
25 formal request. Let's talk about that training, that

1 section of the RWP training that talks about foul time.  
2 You said there were a few slides. Does few mean three,  
3 four, five?

4 MS. PIRRAMI: I can't recall off the top of  
5 my head.

6 MR. BEATON: Under ten?

7 MS. PIRRAMI: Less than ten.

8 MR. BEATON: Less than ten? Okay. And it  
9 would --

10 MS. PIRRAMI: There's 72 slides in the  
11 presentation. I can't verify how many are --

12 MR. BEATON: You don't know what slide one  
13 is, slide two, slide three? I'm not going to ask for  
14 that, but I'm just, I appreciate the point. So we've  
15 got less than ten slides on when to get foul time.  
16 That backhoe operator gets an annual re-certification  
17 on that slide pack?

18 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

19 MR. BEATON: And that slide pack has always  
20 had, as far as you're aware, those ten slides dealing  
21 with foul time?

22 MS. PIRRAMI: I didn't say there were ten  
23 slides but --

24 MR. BEATON: Less than ten slides.

25 MS. PIRRAMI: Whatever the information is --

1 MR. BEATON: Whatever the -- and I'm --

2 MS. PIRRAMI: -- they have it annually.

3 MR. BEATON: It's not a trick question. I'm  
4 just trying to understand what these workers were  
5 trained on. I really don't have an agenda other than  
6 understanding. I mean, that backhoe operator was  
7 trained annually --

8 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

9 MR. BEATON: -- on what happens, what's  
10 required of him or her to get foul time.

11 MS. PIRRAMI: My recollection is foul time  
12 has always been in the presentation.

13 MR. BEATON: And is there any emphasis given  
14 to, specifically to the situation when there's a shift  
15 change in getting foul time during a shift change or  
16 maintaining, verifying that you still have foul time  
17 throughout a shift change?

18 MS. PIRRAMI: I can't recall if it's  
19 actually in the presentation. I can't recall.

20 MR. BEATON: Certainly, shift change happens  
21 a lot at Amtrak and with roadway workers, and it's  
22 probably a time where your safety department might  
23 identify it as a changing of guard. It's a period of  
24 time where things are moving quickly. It's potentially  
25 more hazardous than once the work is underway, so it

1 would seem to be probably an area that deserves some  
2 attention?

3 MS. PIRRAMI: More on the job than in the  
4 classroom.

5 MR. BEATON: Oh, okay. Interesting. Is  
6 that from a mentoring perspective?

7 MS. PIRRAMI: That's just part of the daily  
8 work routine is learning what the process is in the  
9 field.

10 MR. BEATON: Let me ask the same question,  
11 just from a different point of view. Is there any  
12 special attention given by Amtrak to its roadway  
13 workers during their either initial or their recurrent  
14 training to risks associated with shift changes?

15 MS. PIRRAMI: I can't answer that. I don't  
16 know. I'd have to look at the presentations.

17 MR. BEATON: In those 72 slides, is the  
18 phrase "shift change" ever mentioned?

19 MS. PIRRAMI: Not that I recall.

20 MR. BEATON: Okay. Is the concept of  
21 changing supervisors brought up in any way?

22 MS. PIRRAMI: Not that I recall.

23 MR. BEATON: Okay.

24 MS. PIRRAMI: That would be more a 213  
25 question or NORAC.

1 MR. BEATON: And that would be handled by  
2 the rules department, not the training department; is  
3 that --

4 MS. PIRRAMI: NORAC would be the rules  
5 department.

6 MR. BEATON: Okay. From your vantage point  
7 in the management chain of Amtrak, can you tell me a  
8 little bit about the effectiveness of the overall  
9 safety programs at Amtrak in terms of roadway workers?  
10 Do you think Amtrak has a pretty good safety program?

11 MS. PIRRAMI: I do.

12 MR. BEATON: Is there some examples of  
13 things to support that position?

14 MS. PIRRAMI: Amtrak is more stringent in  
15 our 214 rules, as opposed to what's in the FRA  
16 guidelines. Amtrak tries to go a little bit above.  
17 They adhere to the fact that if a person isn't RWP  
18 qualified, they don't work. I have seen, witnessed  
19 that for myself, that if someone missed their  
20 qualification training then they were not allowed back  
21 in the field.

22 MR. BEATON: Okay.

23 MS. PIRRAMI: Our safety department has been  
24 trying to enforce, as much as they can, and audit and  
25 make sure people are doing what they're supposed to be

1 doing. I think, collectively, Amtrak is doing its best  
2 to ensure the safety of all the employees.

3 MR. BEATON: In recognizing what Amtrak is  
4 doing well, do you see anything that they could do  
5 better to improve its overall safety for roadway  
6 workers?

7 MS. PIRRAMI: I can't say specifically, but  
8 I can admit that any program can be improved on.  
9 Anything can be better. So there's always something to  
10 make it better, it's just I don't know what that is.

11 MR. BEATON: Okay. Thanks very much.  
12 That's it for me.

13 MR. HIPSKIND: Thanks, Dr. Beaton. Ryan?

14 MR. FRIGO: I don't have any questions.

15 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. We're almost to the  
16 end of this, but I just want to, I want to tie up a  
17 couple of loose ends in my head. When we use, and this  
18 is to help your discussion, Dr. Bob, about when we use  
19 the word "shift change," in my experience and my  
20 understanding of things that go on in the real world,  
21 whether we're talking about the nighttime foreman's  
22 going off duty and the daytime foreman's going on duty,  
23 that's a change in the work, the task at hand. Things  
24 have changed with that roadway worker group that was  
25 under the supervision of the EIC, employee in charge,

1 that held that job briefing for the night group, right?  
2 I mean, you're nodding your head yes. Do you agree  
3 with that or not?

4 MS. PIRRAMI: I understand what you're  
5 saying.

6 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. So the point I want to  
7 make here is that, whether the terminology is a shift  
8 change, the operative word is "change." And if the  
9 federal regulation under roadway worker talks about and  
10 addresses the need for an additional job briefing  
11 because there was a change in the work group, their  
12 environment, the EIC in charge, as in a shift change,  
13 my point is if that is encapsulated in the regulatory  
14 language, my question now to you, Debbie, is would that  
15 be reflected in the training?

16 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

17 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay.

18 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes. It's the wording you use  
19 --

20 MR. HIPSKIND: I know. And sometimes we  
21 stumble around certain words, and I just wanted to --

22 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

23 MR. HIPSKIND: -- provide some clarity. I'm  
24 getting some nodding from FRA. Okay, thank you. So  
25 the other thing I want to talk about is we have focused

1 all this time talking with you about new hires and  
2 foremen. So just in a brief comment, what does Amtrak  
3 do in terms of training or development with  
4 supervisors, managers, in the engineering department or  
5 outside the engineering department? Does training, is  
6 it just about where the rubber meets the road type  
7 employee, or are there allowances, is there training  
8 curriculums for supervisors and managers?

9 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes, there's the ALDE  
10 (phonetic) program.

11 MR. HIPSKIND: ALDE meaning?

12 MS. PIRRAMI: I cannot think of what it  
13 means.

14 MR. HIPSKIND: But that's an acronym --

15 MS. PIRRAMI: It's a management -- yes.  
16 Amtrak learning and development something or other, E,  
17 enterprise or I don't know. I can't remember. But I  
18 went through the program, and it was really, really  
19 well done. And it's about interacting with, you know,  
20 other people, with the people who report to you, with  
21 your peers. So there are management programs out there  
22 that Amtrak is trying to keep moving.

23 MR. HIPSKIND: Communication, working with  
24 others --

25 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.



1 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. Now, with regard to  
2 the training that we have been talking about all  
3 morning, all afternoon, let's talk about roadway  
4 worker, if I'm a supervisor or a manager, is the  
5 expectation that I should take this training, or do I  
6 get a pass?

7 MS. PIRRAMI: You're saying foreman or  
8 supervisor?

9 MR. HIPSKIND: No, I don't want to say  
10 foreman. I just want to say above the level of  
11 foreman.

12 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

13 MR. HIPSKIND: So supervisors, managers, on  
14 up the engineering chain of command, do I need to go to  
15 the same training and be exposed to the same kind of  
16 lessons that the people who work for me, that they are  
17 trained on?

18 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

19 MR. HIPSKIND: Yes. It's just a blanket  
20 yes?

21 MS. PIRRAMI: So in other words, you're  
22 saying that if I'm the, you're my supervisor --

23 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay.

24 MS. PIRRAMI: -- and I went to RWP and AMT-2  
25 and the two-day training camp, you should go to that

1 also?

2 MR. HIPSKIND: I'm asking, I just want to  
3 make sure that I don't walk out of here today and I  
4 don't know whether managers or supervisors, that there  
5 is an expectation by Amtrak that they go through the  
6 same curriculums as, like, foremen and the workers do.

7 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes, yes, yes.

8 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. And they do that on  
9 the same periodic basis as the workers do?

10 MS. PIRRAMI: Correct.

11 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay, all right. Now, I know  
12 I may have kicked over a can of worms there or  
13 something, so does anybody else have any other burning  
14 questions? All right. We are to where he hands me the  
15 iPad, and this is a good thing. Mark, I have not  
16 forgotten about you. Do you have any clarifications or  
17 anything you want to talk about?

18 MR. LAMEN: No, I think you cleared up the  
19 one thing --

20 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay, all right.

21 MR. LAMEN: -- so very nicely done.

22 MR. HIPSKIND: Great minds think alike,  
23 okay. If I have your permission, I will ask you some  
24 closing questions. My guess if you're going to say  
25 yes, but what say you, Debbie? Yes? Ask you?

1 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

2 MR. HIPSKIND: All right. Is there anything  
3 that you would like to add or change to our  
4 conversation here this morning --

5 MS. PIRRAMI: No.

6 MR. HIPSKIND: -- or this afternoon? And  
7 are there any questions we should have asked but did  
8 not?

9 MS. PIRRAMI: No.

10 MR. HIPSKIND: And do you have any  
11 suggestions for preventing a reoccurrence, and I will  
12 add to this, or any thoughts about improving training  
13 in general?

14 MS. PIRRAMI: No.

15 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. And is there anyone  
16 else who we should interview?

17 MS. PIRRAMI: If you want to go the 213  
18 route, then yes. If you're interested in the foreman  
19 training, then you would want to speak to the  
20 instructors.

21 MR. HIPSKIND: And you provided us those  
22 names earlier.

23 MS. PIRRAMI: Yes.

24 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay, all right. I think  
25 that's all we've got. And, again, I appreciate your

1 time and your thoughts and input. They were very  
2 helpful. And if you need to get a hold of us, you have  
3 our business cards. Thank you so much, Debbie.

4 MS. PIRRAMI: Thank you.

5 MR. HIPSKIND: Going off the record.

6 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter went off  
7 the record.)

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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 Debbie Pirrami

DATE: 08-24-16

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 69 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.



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