

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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IN RE: :

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THE AMTRAK ACCIDENT : NTSB Accident No.

IN WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA: DCA16FR009

ON JULY 6, 2016 :

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INTERVIEW OF: RUSSULL GRIFFIN

Wednesday,

July 8, 2016

Jacksonville, Florida

BEFORE

DAVID BUCHER, NTSB

RICHARD RUSNAK, FRA

ALLEN GADDIS, AMTRAK

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

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

1
2 SPECIAL AGENT BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher,
3 Rail Action Investigator for National Transportation
4 Safety Board. And this is the interview of Mr. Russull
5 T. Griffin, Jr., locomotive engineer for Amtrak.

6 The interview is relative to the action that
7 occurred on July 6, 2016 in West Palm Beach, Florida.
8 NTSB Accident number DCA16FR009. And the interview is
9 taking place at Amtrak's Jacksonville Passenger Station
10 in the crew room.

11 We'll go around the room and introduce
12 ourselves. To my right I have --

13 MR. RUSNAK: Richard Rusnak, R-U-S-N-A-K,
14 chief inspector, Federal Railroad Administration.

15 MR. BUCHER: I'm just kidding.

16 MR. GADDIS: Allen Gaddis, claims manager,
17 Jacksonville Amtrak.

18 MR. BUCHER: Okay.

19 MR. GUTIERREZ: Jose Gutierrez, as
20 representative for Mr. Griffin.

21 MR. BUCHER: Okay.

22 MR. GRIFFIN: Russull Griffin, engineer,
23 Amtrack.

24 MR. BUCHER: Thank you. And we're going to
25 pause one second. Okay, here.

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1 (Pause)

2 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher, Mr. Gaddis
3 has been excused because he was a claims agent for
4 Amtrak. So we're going to proceed with the interview
5 in the absence of Mr. Gaddis. Mr. Griffin, if you
6 would please, could you go back to July 6 and recount
7 your day starting from going on duty in Miami, as much
8 as you can remember about getting ready for the train,
9 train departure and the operation through to the time
10 of the accident.

11 MR. GRIFFIN: We went on duty at 7:10 in
12 Hialeah Yard, the Amtrak Station. We got our orders
13 together. Did our crew briefing. Went over all sets
14 of orders. Got on the locomotive. Checked everything
15 out. Departed at 8:10, 0810 time. They were running
16 brake tests, of course. Went on signal indications.
17 Mr. Knox was the second engineer on the train was
18 actually operating out of Miami.

19 MR. BUCHER: Okay.

20 MR. GRIFFIN: He ran all the way to West
21 Palm, and we swapped out after a station at West Palm.
22 Mr. Knox called Mr. DW Campbell. We had a work
23 authority ahead of us to get cleared. We departed West
24 Palm. Went by Coral, which is the control point on a
25 clear signal.

1 And the next crossing was 25th Street. As
2 we approached it, we realized cars were still going
3 across. I saw an SUV stop. You know, and I started
4 grabbing there because, and Anne started blowing the
5 horn. We were in the quiet zone at the time.

6 Then I saw, observed a white vehicle coming
7 across. I put the train in works. And the gates were
8 not on. They were turned off. And then we, you know,
9 emergency, emergency, emergency on the radio. Then
10 went to dispatcher channel and told him. And he told
11 us to go to 91.

12 Then I asked the dispatcher to back to
13 channel 10 to inform them that the gates were turned
14 off. I didn't want that broadcasted on the road
15 channel. And that's, that's the gist of it.

16 MR. BUCHER: Dave Bucher. Were you involved
17 in any of the emergency response? Did you have
18 anything to do with --

19 MR. GRIFFIN: I was, I put the train in
20 emergency.

21 MR. BUCHER: Well, I meant for the, for the
22 person that was in the car?

23 MR. GRIFFIN: No, sir. The motor took care
24 of that.

25 MR. BUCHER: Okay, the crew members back in

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1 the train took care of that?

2 MR. GRIFFIN: Yes, sir.

3 MR. BUCHER: Okay, thank you. I just have a
4 couple follow up questions, just to be totally clear.
5 You did your, all your proper brake tests leaving
6 Miami?

7 MR. GRIFFIN: Yes, sir. Class 2, they're
8 done and then we had a running brake test, as well, for
9 that.

10 MR. BUCHER: Okay, and the train handled, I
11 realize you didn't actually handle it until West Palm
12 Beach, but there were no problems with the brakes of
13 the train --

14 MR. GRIFFIN: Yes, no issue with the brakes
15 or anything.

16 MR. BUCHER: -- or the operation of the
17 train. Great. Thank you. Were they, there's no, were
18 there any issues with the locomotive in any way?

19 MR. GRIFFIN: No, sir.

20 MR. BUCHER: When you left?

21 MR. GRIFFIN: No mechanical issues.

22 MR. BUCHER: Okay. Okay, Richie, do you
23 have anything you want to ask?

24 MR. RUSNAK: Yes, I just want to, Richie
25 Rusnak, FRA. Mr. Griffin, you mentioned that you came

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1 by Coral on a clear signal.

2 MR. GRIFFIN: Yes, sir.

3 MR. RUSNAK: Next crossing was 25th street.

4 MR. GRIFFIN: Yes, sir.

5 MR. RUSNAK: You noticed cars going across.

6 MR. GRIFFIN: Yes, sir.

7 MR. RUSNAK: And then I think you stated
8 that you saw a SUV stopped.

9 MR. GRIFFIN: Stopped. Yes, sir, as we were
10 approaching the crossing.

11 MR. RUSNAK: Was that the same side where
12 the white car was?

13 MR. GRIFFIN: Yes, sir.

14 MR. RUSNAK: Okay, and when you saw the SUV
15 stopped, you stated, you started putting a little air?

16 MR. GRIFFIN: Yes, sir.

17 MR. RUSNAK: And then, when you saw the
18 white car come across, that's when you put the train in
19 emergency.

20 MR. GRIFFIN: Put the train, put the train
21 in emergency. As soon as I saw the nose of the car
22 come around from the other side of the SUV, I put the
23 train in emergency because I knew that it was going to
24 hit.

25 MR. RUSNAK: And your position that day,

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1 where you were the engineer of record.

2 MR. GRIFFIN: Yes, sir.

3 MR. RUSNAK: Is that what they call it?
4 first, is it first engineer? Just the engineer on
5 record?

6 MR. GRIFFIN: Well, I mean that's how we
7 refer to it.

8 MR. RUSNAK: Okay.

9 MR. GRIFFIN: Because I mean, because
10 there's two, there's two of us. We're both engineers.
11 There is no such thing as a fireman any more.

12 MR. RUSNAK: Okay. Well, who else was in
13 the cab with you at that time?

14 MR. GRIFFIN: Cliff (sic) Knox.

15 MR. RUSNAK: And he was located where?

16 MR. GRIFFIN: In the front of fireman's
17 seat, the second seat.

18 MR. RUSNAK: That's all I have.

19 MR. BUCHER: Okay, just one or two more
20 questions. Do you, what time did, did you look at your
21 watch or could you tell when the emergency responders
22 first arrived?

23 MR. GRIFFIN: No, sir.

24 MR. BUCHER: You don't have the time,
25 Griffin? Okay, and management showed up relatively

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1 quickly after your train stopped, I meant supervisors
2 arrived. Do you have any idea when they showed up?

3 MR. GRIFFIN: The exact time, no sir.

4 MR. BUCHER: Okay.

5 MR. GRIFFIN: And I don't want to speculate
6 on that one.

7 MR. BUCHER: Okay, I just, you know,
8 sometimes you see people. Sometimes you don't. Okay,
9 I, I mean is there anything that sticks in your mind as
10 might of been out of the norm?

11 MR. GRIFFIN: Other than realizing the gates
12 weren't working?

13 MR. BUCHER: Right.

14 MR. GRIFFIN: No. No, sir.

15 MR. BUCHER: Had, have you ever encountered
16 gates not working before?

17 MR. GRIFFIN: In the past, years ago, the
18 same kind of instance but nobody got hit.

19 MR. BUCHER: Right. And was it in the same
20 area, or --

21 MR. GRIFFIN: It was farther south.

22 MR. BUCHER: Farther south?

23 MR. GRIFFIN: Yes, sir.

24 MR. BUCHER: Okay, and was it on the same, I
25 mean, it was, is this on the same main track?

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1 MR. GRIFFIN: Same territory.

2 MR. BUCHER: Okay.

3 MR. GRIFFIN: They was, that's when CSX had
4 it.

5 MR. BUCHER: Oh, when CSX had it? Okay.
6 Okay, Rich, you have anything else?

7 MR. RUSNAK: I'm all set.

8 MR. BUCHER: Okay, I have nothing else.
9 This concludes the, the interview of Mr. Griffin. What
10 I'd like to do is just read this for this
11 transcriptionist. The purpose of this, of NTSB's
12 investigation is to increase safety, not assign fault,
13 blame or liability, however, NTSB cannot guarantee a
14 full, full confidentiality or immunity from legal
15 certificate actions.

16 A transcript or a summary of this transcript
17 will go in the public docket. And you have, you have
18 had a chance to have somebody with you. And that
19 concludes the interview. Thank you.

20 (End of recording.)

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25

C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Amtrak Accident, July 6, 2016
West Palm Beach, FL
Accident No. DCA16FR009
Interview of Russull Griffin

DATE: 07-08-16

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.



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