

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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AMTRAK TRAIN 188 DERAILMENT NEAR

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PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

\* Docket No.: DCA-15-MR-010

MAY 12, 2015

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Telephone Interview of: STEVE MANTLE

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Saturday,  
May 16, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: DAVID BUCHER  
Railroad Accident Investigator

## APPEARANCES:

DAVID BUCHER, Railroad Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

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

MICHAEL BULL, Operating Practices Inspector  
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

JOHN HINES, System General Road Foreman  
Amtrak

DAVID NICHOLS, Chief Transportation Officer  
Amtrak

EDWARD MRUK, Assistant General Trainmaster  
Amtrak

WILLIAM BATES  
National Safety Team  
SMART Transportation Division

CARL FIELDS  
Safety Task Force  
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

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I N T E R V I E W

(2:10 p.m.)

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2  
3 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher, Rail Accident  
4 Investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board, and  
5 this is the interview of Steven Mantle --

6 MR. MANTLE: Correct.

7 MR. BUCHER: -- train dispatcher for the Amtrak -- or  
8 for Amtrak in Wilmington, Delaware. And the interview is in  
9 relation to the accident in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on  
10 5/12/2015, NTSB Accident Number DCA-15-MR-010. And the time is  
11 2:10 approximately. To my right I have --

12 MR. NICHOLS: Dave Nichols, Chief Transportation Officer  
13 for Amtrak.

14 MR. BATES: William Bates, B-a-t-e-s, SMART, National  
15 Transportation Safety Team.

16 MR. FIELDS: Carl Fields, F-i-e-l-d-s, Brotherhood of  
17 Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, Safety Task Force.

18 MR. HINES: John Hines, H-i-n-e-s, System General Road  
19 Foreman, Amtrak.

20 MR. MRUK: Edward Mruk, M-r-u-k, System General  
21 Trainmaster with Amtrak.

22 MR. BULL: Mike Bull, B-u-l-l. Operating Practices  
23 Inspector, FRA.

24 DR. JENNER: Stephen Jenner, J-e-n-n-e-r, Human  
25 Performance with the NTSB.

## 1 INTERVIEW OF STEVE MANTLE

2 BY MR. BUCHER:

3 Q. Okay. Dave Bucher again. And Steve, like I previously  
4 said, if you could just relate to us a little bit about your  
5 territory as a train dispatcher, what that encompasses, and pretty  
6 much what you can give us in detail briefly.

7 A. All right. I'll try. I just basically control 30th  
8 Street Station, which is -- if you're familiar, it's from South  
9 Street to Spring Garden Street; 36th Street connection, which  
10 leads out to Zoo and the Harrisburg end. You've got 10 main  
11 tracks, station tracks, and I just -- you know, it's pretty  
12 simple. Trains just come into the station, they do their station  
13 mark, and they leave. It's not a lot of territory. It's maybe 2  
14 miles tops, and it's a good job. I don't know what else I could  
15 say. It's -- my section is not very complicated. It's, you know,  
16 just all station work.

17 And the majority of my work is more involved with  
18 getting Red Caps and station services for trains, than actually  
19 dealing with, you know, problems. Maybe occasionally we get, you  
20 know, trains looked at for certain defects, stuff like that. But  
21 other than that, it's a fairly simple job. It's not that bad.

22 Q. Okay. Thank you, Steve. On the day of the accident, on  
23 the 12th, what shift were you working on this 30th Street area?

24 A. Middle trick, 3:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.

25 Q. Okay. And about how many trains do you handle on middle

1 trick through the station?

2 A. Approximately 40, 45 trains, off the top of my head.  
3 That includes, you know, the Harrisburg end -- they come in and  
4 out -- New Jersey transits, and I'd say maybe, you know, 15  
5 southbounds to Washington, 15 northbounds to New York. I'm going  
6 to say 40 to 50 ballpark.

7 Q. Okay, great. One more question and then I'll pass it  
8 off to my right. On a normal day, and before we get into detail  
9 about the train 188, what -- how would you normally handle 188  
10 northbound or eastbound?

11 A. It's fairly routine. I have a schedule sheet and a  
12 track assignment sheet. So unless there's something out of the  
13 ordinary, they basically -- all the trains go to the same tracks  
14 every day. Thus was the case with 188. He was scheduled -- I  
15 believe he was on time. He was scheduled for 4 track. He came in  
16 on 4 track; left off of 4 track. Uneventful. There was no  
17 talking to anybody on the crew of 188. He came in, did his  
18 station mark and left. There was no problems that night  
19 whatsoever.

20 Q. Okay. All right. Are there any -- and I guess I'll  
21 move right into now specifically the operation. And you already  
22 started a little bit, that he came in and he made a station stop  
23 and appeared to be no -- nothing unusual. Do you normally talk to  
24 the train crew on a scheduled train like that or is it just pretty  
25 much automatic?

1           A.    It's pretty much automatic.  I don't talk to the train  
2 crew unless there is a problem or I need to get a message to one  
3 of the crew members or something like that.  But normally, no.  If  
4 there's not a problem, I will not talk to the train crew.

5           Q.    Okay, and I guess, one more before I pass it off.  Was  
6 there anything unusual that stuck out about the operation of 188  
7 on the 12th?

8           A.    Nothing whatsoever.  It was a pretty quiet night.

9           MR. BUCHER:  Okay, well, thank you.  And I'm going to  
10 pass you off to Mr. Nichols on my right here.

11          MR. NICHOLS:  Hi, Steve.  Dave Nichols, and I have no  
12 questions.

13          MR. MANTLE:  Hi, Dave.  How you doing?

14          MR. NICHOLS:  Good, thanks.

15          MR. BATES:  William Bates.  No questions.

16          BY MR. FIELDS:

17          Q.    Carl Fields, BLET.

18          A.    Yes.

19          Q.    Hi, Steve.  Did you have a student or a trainee at the  
20 time on this date, May 12th?

21          A.    No, I did not.

22          Q.    Was this your normal working day?

23          A.    Yes.  I -- 3:30 to 11:30; Sunday and Monday off.

24          MR. FIELDS:  Okay, that's all I have for right now.

25 Thank you.

1           MR. HINES: Steve, John Hines. No questions for you at  
2 this time.

3           MR. MRUK: Edward Mruk. No questions.

4           MR. BULL: Mike Bull. No questions, Steve.

5           BY DR. JENNER:

6           Q. This is Steve Jenner with the NTSB. Just a couple. I  
7 think I heard you say that the train was on time that evening, the  
8 accident train?

9           A. I'm not sure. I think it was on or close to the time.  
10 I don't remember it being late or anything like that. I would --  
11 you know, off the top of my head. But I know when it was on my  
12 section, there were no problems. He came in, did the station  
13 mark, and then departed. You know, normal stuff.

14          Q. If it were not on time, would you have called and talked  
15 to the crew for -- to discuss that?

16          A. Not really. The only -- if he wasn't on time and there  
17 was a confliction with other trains, the only thing I might do is  
18 I might have to switch the track if there's a scheduling problem.  
19 And the only reason I might talk to the crew to ask the conductor  
20 to let me know when they get two to go, or the head end when they  
21 get two to go if, you know, he was late. But I don't recall that.  
22 It was -- in laymen's term, I was pulled up all the way. He came  
23 in on 4 and he had railroad all the way off of 4 up the River  
24 Line.

25          Q. Okay. And what is the, oh, definition of on time? At



1 what window is someone on time in terms of minutes and, if they're  
2 beyond a certain time, when are they delayed?

3 A. I believe a train like that would have a 10-minute  
4 tolerance, as they call it. I'm not sure. Different trains have  
5 a different tolerance. I believe a regional is usually 10, 10  
6 minutes.

7 DR. JENNER: Good. Okay. Thank you very much. That's  
8 all I have.

9 MR. MANTLE: Anything else?

10 BY MR. BUCHER:

11 Q. Dave Bucher. I do have a couple here.

12 Steve, how long have you been a train dispatcher for  
13 Amtrak?

14 A. I have a total of 35 years with Amtrak. I was a block  
15 operator for 13 years and I'm in my 22nd year as a train  
16 dispatcher.

17 Q. Okay, great. What -- okay. When was your promotion --  
18 do you remember your promotion date as a train dispatcher? I'm  
19 just interested because I'm a former train dispatcher myself.

20 A. It was October of '93. I can't give you a specific day,  
21 but I know it was October of '93. And Mr. Nichols in your  
22 presence right there was the man that promoted me to a train  
23 dispatcher.

24 MR. NICHOLS: I'm so glad I did, Steve.

25 MR. MANTLE: I'm glad you did too.

1 MR. BUCHER: Okay, thanks, Steve. That's all I have.  
2 To my right, anybody?

3 MR. NICHOLS: No, I have no questions.

4 BY MR. BATES:

5 Q. This is William Bates, Steve. I have one question for  
6 you. You referred to two to go. How is that determined?

7 A. Come again with that? I didn't understand.

8 Q. You referred to the crew had two to go. How is that  
9 determined?

10 A. Well, normally, if I'm -- if I hear the radio, I hear  
11 the conductor give them two to go. You know, your -- he gives a  
12 -- you know, under signal indication you have two to go Trenton,  
13 or two to go to Wilmington, dependent on which direction they're  
14 going.

15 Sometimes I don't hear that. I don't -- if I'm not  
16 there, then -- if I, you know, step away for a second, then I will  
17 come back and ask the head end if he got two to go yet. And I  
18 think everybody knows what two to go means.

19 Q. Okay, who give them the second light? Who determines  
20 their second light? Who put those two lights up?

21 A. What are you talking about? The tap lights?

22 MR. BUCHER: It's not like Washington.

23 MR. BATES: Oh, no.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, this is not like  
25 Washington.

1           MR. BATES: I guess Washington don't have any anymore  
2 either.

3           BY MR. BATES:

4           Q. So that's the terminology used, just say it's two to go?

5           A. Yeah, two to go. They used to -- and I'm aging myself  
6 here, and Dave will remember. They used to, what they call tap  
7 on. They were tap lights on the station, which --

8           Q. Right.

9           A. -- they would press the button and would indicate to the  
10 train dispatcher or train director that they were ready to go.  
11 Now it's all done over the radio.

12          Q. Okay.

13          A. So like I said, most of the time I hear them. And if --  
14 you know, sometimes, you know, if I have other trains in the  
15 station and I'm at crossover moves, I have to, you know, wait till  
16 I actually hear for the train to get two to go, to give them the  
17 railroad. But that wasn't the case with 188. It was later on at  
18 night, and like I said, he had railroad all the way from South  
19 Street to Spring Garden, the territory I control.

20          MR. BATES: Okay, thanks, Steve.

21          MR. MANTLE: Okay.

22          BY MR. FIELDS:

23          Q. Carl Fields, BLET. Steve, one --

24          A. Yeah.

25          Q. -- question only, and it's on your experience. You had

1 mentioned 27 as a train dispatcher. How many years about in the  
2 territory that you were working on the 12th?

3 A. Well, I go back to Penn Tower, so I believe I qualified  
4 Penn Tower in the mid to early -- early to mid-eighties. So  
5 between being a train director at Penn Tower and a train  
6 dispatcher on CTEC 5, I got close to 30 years qualification on  
7 that territory.

8 Q. Got it. Thank you.

9 MR. HINES: John Hines. No questions.

10 BY MR. MRUK:

11 Q. This is Eddie Mruk. I have one question. I guess my  
12 question is, how did you find out there may have been an incident  
13 regarding train 188?

14 A. There was a lot of commotion going on. I wasn't really,  
15 you know, paying attention to section 6. I was sitting next to  
16 him. Again, in laymen's term, his board lit up like we call, like  
17 a Christmas tree. It went all red, which usually means that we  
18 lost signal indication, which I guess, turned out to be the case.  
19 It usually happens in a violent thunderstorm, we lose signal  
20 power, and that's what it looked like happen. It looked like at  
21 first -- when I looked up and saw his board red, I thought he lost  
22 signal power.

23 Q. Okay, thank you, Steve. I have no further questions.

24 A. Okay.

25 MR. BULL: Mike Bull. No questions.

1 DR. JENNER: I don't have any.

2 BY MR. BUCHER:

3 Q. Steve, just one more, and I'm going to lean on your  
4 experience in that territory for a long time. Have you ever heard  
5 about any other incidents at Frankford Junction due to -- for  
6 anything, train incidents at that -- in that area?

7 A. No. And I used to work Shore Tower. That was one of  
8 the first towers I qualified. Shore Tower, 1980; that was my  
9 second tower qualified. And I worked a lot of Shore Tower and,  
10 no, I've never had another -- heard of another incident, except  
11 for the -- what was in the newspaper today, which I'd known about,  
12 something in the 1940s, there was an accident at that location, I  
13 believe. But other than that, no, nothing in my experience have I  
14 ever heard of anything there at Frankford curve.

15 MR. BUCHER: Okay, I'm looking around the table and I  
16 don't think there's any more questions. Thanks, Steve. I  
17 appreciate you taking the time out to talk to us today.

18 MR. MANTLE: All right. No problem. Thank you.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you. Do you want to hold  
20 on --

21 MR. BUCHER: I'll end -- and this concludes the  
22 interview of Mr. Manzell [sic].

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mantle.

24 MR. BUCHER: Mantle. I'm sorry.

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:           AMTRAK TRAIN 188 DERAILMENT NEAR  
                                  PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA  
                                  MAY 12, 2015  
                                  Telephone Interview of Steve Mantle

DOCKET NUMBER:           DCA-15-MR-010

PLACE:                      Philadelphia, PA

DATE:                        May 16, 2015

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

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Katie Leach  
Transcriber