

DCA13MR002
Conrail - Shared Assets
Derailment/Hazardous Material Release
Paulsboro, New Jersey
November 30, 2012

NTSB - Interview of Bridge and Building Department, Mechanic

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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CONRAIL DERAILMENT/HAZARDOUS
MATERIAL RELEASE
PAULSBORO, NEW JERSEY
NOVEMBER 30, 2012

Docket No.: DCA-13-MR-002

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Interview of: JOSEPH PEZZELLA

Incident Command Center
Paulsboro, New Jersey

Wednesday,
December 5, 2012

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: TIMOTHY DEPAEPE
Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

TIMOTHY DEPAEPE, Accident Investigator
Signal Group Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Railroad, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials
DuPage Airport
31 West 775 North Avenue
West Chicago, Illinois 60185

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CYRIL GURA, Safety Engineer
Track Group Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Railroad, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials
DuPage Airport
31 West 775 North Avenue
West Chicago, Illinois 60185

THOMAS NOON, Signal and Train Control Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration

DAVID KILLINGBECK, Chief Engineer Structures
Federal Railroad Administration

THOMAS BILSON, Assistant Chief Engineer
Maintenance of Way and Structures
Conrail

DOUG TRACY, Assistant Chief Engineer
Communications and Signals
Conrail

CHARLES HANSLER, Union Representative
Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes
Division (BMWED)
District 6

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I N T E R V I E W

(6:34 p.m.)

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3 MR. DEPAEPE: It's 6:34 p.m. My name is Tim DePaepe,
4 D-e-P-a-e-p-e. I'm a railroad accident investigator with a
5 specialty in signals for the National Transportation Safety Board.
6 We're here to interview Joseph Pezzerrella [sic] or --

7 MR. PEZZELLA: Pezzella.

8 MR. DEPAEPE: Pezzella. And we want to talk about the
9 Paulsboro moveable bridge derailment and hazardous material
10 release that occurred on November 30th, 2012. It is designated --
11 it has an NTSB designation number of DCA-13-MR-002. And at this
12 time we're going to go around the table and have everybody
13 introduce themselves.

14 MR. GURA: Cy, C-y, Gura, G-u-r-a, Safety Engineer,
15 National Transportation Safety Board.

16 MR. BILSON: Tom Bilson, B-i-l-s-o-n, Assistant Chief
17 Engineer, Maintenance of Way and Structures, Conrail.

18 MR. TRACY: Doug Tracy, T-r-a-c-y, Assistant Chief
19 Engineer, C&S, Conrail.

20 MR. NOON: Thomas Noon, N-o-o-n, FRA, Signal and Train
21 Control Inspector.

22 MR. PEZZELLA: Joe Pezzella, P-e-z-z-e-l-l-a, Bridge and
23 Building Department, mechanic.

24 MR. HANSLER: Charlie Hansler, H-a-n-s-l-e-r, Union Rep,
25 BMW Teamsters.

1 MR. KILLINGBECK: David Killingbeck,
2 K-i-l-l-i-n-g-b-e-c-k, Chief Engineer Structures, Federal Railroad
3 Administration.

4 MR. DEPAEPE: Thank you.

5 INTERVIEW OF JOSEPH PEZZELLA

6 BY MR. DEPAEPE:

7 Q. At this time, Joe, I would like to ask you what your
8 hire date is and what jobs you've held during your service with
9 Conrail?

10 A. My hiring date was July 16th, 1979. I started off in
11 the M&W department, track department. I was in there for about 3
12 years. And then, I went into the B&B briefly just to get on the
13 roster because I knew when I got closer to retirement they say
14 it's a nice retirement home a little bit there. But I went there.
15 And I'm -- mostly spent most of my time in the track department.
16 I've got 35 years.

17 And the various jobs that I have a roster of -- every
18 roster we have I'm on it, from trackman to MO1 truck driver to
19 welder, welder helper, various machines, MO1, 2 and 3, class 1, 2
20 and 3, Conrail cook. When it was Big Conrail, I was a Conrail
21 cook. And I might have missed one or two, but that's about it.

22 Q. What job do you currently hold now?

23 A. Bridge and building mechanic.

24 Q. Okay. And is the Paulsboro moveable bridge part of your
25 territory?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. At this point, I'm going to pass the questioning
3 over to Mr. Cy Gura.

4 BY MR. GURA:

5 Q. Joe, have you had an opportunity to look over that log,
6 trouble log?

7 A. Yes, I have.

8 Q. Are there any of those trouble log incidents from about
9 October 27th through the date of the derailment that you worked
10 on?

11 A. November 14th.

12 Q. Is that on the trouble log?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Okay. So, other than this November 14th date that
15 you're referring, there's nothing on the trouble log?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I just went into the B&B department recently.

19 Q. What was the date that you went back into the B&B?

20 A. It's been about 6 weeks since -- it's the first time I
21 was on that bridge.

22 Q. Six weeks?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. So, near the end of October?

25 A. Yeah, something like that.

1 Q. Okay. Well, describe to me what you did on November
2 14th. Tell me what happened and how you got there.

3 A. Well, our work order for the day was to go to the
4 Paulsboro bridge and grease it. And Willie Schaffert was teamed
5 up with me. And we went over there. I guess we got there around
6 9, 9:30, something like that. And as we approached the bridge,
7 the door was open. There was a couple vehicles there. And I
8 think the bridge was open.

9 And Ryan Hill and Hans -- I don't know his last name;
10 he's the designer of the bridge, I believe. They were there and
11 troubleshooting it. And when we stopped the vehicle, we got our
12 material out to grease, and it was under Ryan Hill's control, and
13 he told us it would be all right for us to go out there, take care
14 of the greasing. And so, that's what we did.

15 And, like I said, it was the first time I actually went
16 out and greased any bridges. So, Willie Schaffert actually gave
17 me step by step of what you do, you know, all the areas of grease
18 that needs to be greased and, you know, all the moveable parts.
19 We went underneath and greased under the gear. And as we were
20 greasing, we were looking for things. That's a standard type
21 process that we always do.

22 Q. When you were looking for stuff, did you see anything?

23 A. No. No, I was just focusing on the fittings where
24 Willie was showing me, and then -- in that area. And then, as
25 you're walking around and trying to get off you're -- you know,

1 you're looking at all moveable parts, and then you got to climb up
2 to get out, check things out as you get out.

3 Q. Okay. When you're over there and you seen the other two
4 guys, Hans and -- who's the other one?

5 A. Ryan Hill.

6 Q. Ryan Hill. When you seen Hans and Ryan Hill, did they
7 say anything to you like what they're doing or what they find or
8 anything like that?

9 A. I didn't really get into discussing it with them at all.
10 You know, I was there to grease the bridge and they were doing
11 their thing and I didn't really know anything about it, so there
12 was no sense in me even talking about it because I -- like I said,
13 I don't know too much about the aspects of all the signals and,
14 you know, mechanicals of the bridge.

15 Q. Okay. Did you have anything to do with preparation of
16 the bridge for Hurricane Sandy or looking at the bridge after
17 Hurricane Sandy came in there? I mean, did you have to go in
18 there and do an extra special grease after all the rain and stuff
19 like that?

20 A. No.

21 Q. No?

22 A. I didn't. They may have sent someone else there but I
23 haven't.

24 Q. Okay. I have no further questions.

25 MR. DEPAEPE: Mr. Bilson?

1 MR. BILSON: I don't have anything.

2 MR. DEPAEPE: Mr. Tracy?

3 MR. TRACY: No questions.

4 MR. DEPAEPE: Mr. Noon?

5 MR. NOON: No questions.

6 MR. DEPAEPE: Mr. Hansler?

7 MR. HANSLER: No questions.

8 MR. DEPAEPE: Mr. Killingbeck?

9 MR. KILLINGBECK: I have no questions.

10 MR. DEPAEPE: I do not have any follow-up questions.

11 I'm just going to look around the room and see if anyone does.

12 BY MR. DEPAEPE:

13 Q. I want to specifically ask you, Joe, if you worked on
14 that bridge within 24 hours of the accident? So, that would be on
15 November 29th, 2012?

16 A. No, I haven't.

17 Q. Okay. And I'd also like to give you the opportunity now
18 to add anything that you might know that you think is pertinent to
19 our accident investigation.

20 A. There's nothing really I could discuss about it because,
21 like I said, I just got to B&B. I didn't know what the
22 troubleshooting of problems really were.

23 MR. DEPAEPE: Okay. Well, I think that kind of
24 concludes this interview. Oh, I'm sorry, excuse me.

25 Go ahead, Mr. Killingbeck.

1 BY MR. KILLINGBECK:

2 Q. This is David Killingbeck. In running through your list
3 of various things you've done, I didn't hear -- did you ever work
4 as a track inspector?

5 A. Yes, I did. Yes.

6 Q. And how long ago and for what duration?

7 A. I was a track inspector from 2009 -- 2009 to -- no,
8 1999, excuse me. 1999 I was a track inspector to 2007, because I
9 went and put a maintenance form in with both jobs.

10 Q. So, you were a track inspector for 8 years, give or
11 take?

12 A. Yeah, off and on.

13 Q. During that period of time, did you have any moveable
14 bridges --

15 A. Yes, I --

16 Q. -- in the territory you inspected?

17 A. Yes, I did. Yes.

18 Q. Was Paulsboro, by chance, one of those?

19 A. Occasionally. The fellow who had it was a more -- had
20 more seniority than me and I'd fill in for vacation. And I think
21 I had it briefly when my job was abolished and I bumped the
22 inspector for a while.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. I had the Delair Bridge and --

25 Q. So --

1 A. -- pretty much all of the territory --

2 Q. -- your trip out to the bridge to grease it or assist
3 greasing it on November the 14th wasn't the first time you've seen
4 track --

5 A. Oh, no. No, no.

6 Q. -- and that type of appliances?

7 A. I was familiar with the operation of it, with the
8 control.

9 Q. Did you see anything that looked out of the ordinary
10 or --

11 A. When I was an inspector?

12 Q. No, no, on your trip out there, based on your previous
13 inspection -- or track inspector's experiences. Anything --

14 A. No, because they had the bridge open when I approached
15 it. So, then they closed it and they -- the way -- it seemed like
16 it was working smooth but they weren't getting a signal.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I guess it wasn't locking in or anything like that.

19 Q. The reason I ask is because sometimes a new set of eyes
20 sees something --

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. -- that just doesn't look right based on, you know,
23 their life experiences and whatever. So that was why I asked.
24 Thank you.

25 A. You're welcome.

1 BY MR. DEPAEPE:

2 Q. At this time, Joe, I'd like to give you the opportunity,
3 if there's anything you can think that may be pertinent to this
4 investigation or that you may want to add, this is your
5 opportunity to relay that information to us. Do you have anything
6 to add at this time?

7 A. Like I said before, I really don't because I wasn't
8 involved in it in a while. I ain't been in that area for a while.

9 MR. DEPAEPE: Okay. Well, at this point, I'm going to
10 conclude this investigation. It is 6:43 p.m., and thank you very
11 much, sir.

12 MR. PEZZELLA: You're welcome.

13 (Whereupon, at 6:43 p.m., the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: CONRAIL DERAILMENT/HAZARDOUS
 MATERIAL RELEASE
 PAULSBORO, NEW JERSEY
 NOVEMBER 30, 2012
 Interview of Joseph Pezzella

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-13-MR-002

PLACE: Paulsboro, New Jersey

DATE: December 5, 2012

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.

Amy Weston
Transcriber