

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

*

DERAILMENT OF UNION PACIFIC TRAIN *

NUMBER UEGKOT 09 NEAR GRAETTINGER, * Accident No.: DCA17MR007

IOWA ON MARCH 10, 2017 *

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Interview of: BRIAN CHRISTENSEN

AmericInn
Spencer, Iowa

Saturday,
March 11, 2017

APPEARANCES:

DAVID BUCHER, Rail Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

JOSH SHAFFER, Director of Road Operations
Twin Cities Service Unit
Union Pacific Railroad, St. Paul, Minnesota

MIKE CORUM, Operating Practices Specialist
Federal Railroad Administration, Kansas City

MARK SANDLER, Operating Practices Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration

STEVE FACKLAN, Primary Investigator, Safety Taskforce
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

LAWRENCE MOZENA, National Safety Team
SMART Transportation Division

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I N T E R V I E W

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2 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher, rail accident investigator
3 for the National Transportation Safety Board, and this is the
4 interview of Brian Christensen -- conductor?

5 MR. CHRISTENSEN: Conductor.

6 MR. BUCHER: -- conductor for the Union Pacific Railroad.
7 The interview is relative to the accident at Graettinger, Iowa, on
8 March 10, 2017. The accident number is DCA17MR007.

9 Brian, the purpose of this interview is to increase safety,
10 not assign fault, blame or liability. However, NTSB cannot offer,
11 fully offer confidentiality because your name is going to go into
12 the docket. A transcript of this interview will go in the docket.
13 You'll get a chance to review it in advance.

14 You can have one person here with you if you choose so, and
15 you understand that it's being recorded?

16 MR. CHRISTENSEN: Yes.

17 MR. BUCHER: Okay. Great. Thank you.

18 We'll go around the table and introduce ourselves. To my
19 left I have?

20 MR. SHAFFER: My name is Josh Shaffer. I'm the director of
21 road operations, for the Twin Cities Service Unit out of St. Paul,
22 Minnesota, Union Pacific Railroad.

23 MR. CORUM: Mike Corum, C-o-r-u-m, operating practices
24 specialist, FRA, Kansas City.

25 MR. FACKLAN: Steve Facklan, F-a-c-k-l-a-n, Primary

1 Investigator, BLET, Safety Taskforce.

2 MR. MOZENA: Lawrence Mozena, M-o-z-e-n-a, SMART TD, National
3 Safety Team.

4 MR. SANDLER: Mark Sandler, S-a-n-d-l-e-r, operating
5 practices inspector for the FRA.

6 MR. BUCHER: Thank you. Dave Bucher again.

7 Brian, if you could, your name and spell it please?

8 MR. CHRISTENSEN: Brian Christensen, B-r-i-a-n,
9 C-h-r-i-s-t-e-n-s-e-n.

10 MR. BUCHER: Thank you.

11 INTERVIEW OF BRIAN CHRISTENSEN

12 BY MR. BUCHER:

13 Q. Brian, like I spoke to you out in the lobby before, if you
14 could, we understand that you operated the day before on the line.
15 Just go back and relate your trip through the accident area,
16 anything unusual that you might have noticed?

17 A. Yeah, I was called on the 9th for the LTZ 52. It was the
18 local that goes up to Superior and returns back to Eagle Grove.
19 On duty at 5 a.m. We waited for light power to go through town
20 and take power up to Estherville. And after that, we took our
21 trip up to Superior, did our set out, picked up 11 cars, returned
22 south as far as the accident area itself. I mean, there was
23 nothing really that stuck out as unusual for it anyway.

24 Q. Did you notice anything in a way with the bridges or --

25 A. No. No, there was no unusual -- nothing unusual about the

1 bridges. I mean, everything up there is jointed rail. So, I
2 mean, it just -- there's nothing, nothing that seemed unusual
3 about it.

4 Q. Right. How long -- how many -- how long have you been making
5 this trip? Do you do it regularly or periodically?

6 A. I don't get up there very often. I think I've been up there
7 three times in like the last 3 months maybe.

8 Q. Okay.

9 MR. BUCHER: Okay. All right. I'm just going to pass it off
10 to my left.

11 BY MR. SHAFFER:

12 Q. Have you ever traveled over a broken rail before or --

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. -- seen one?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. All right. So I guess that's the only question I have. So
17 if you've done that --

18 A. I've found multiple broken rails, usually in the yard, but --

19 Q. Would you say there's a significant difference between that
20 and a joint, like unjointed rail?

21 A. At speed, usually not, as far as I can tell anyway.

22 Q. Do you remember about how fast you guys were going through
23 there when you went over that location?

24 A. Twenty-eight to 30 probably.

25 Q. Do you -- you are fully aware of where the derailment

1 happened?

2 A. Yes. I was there last night.

3 Q. Oh, that's right. You were there.

4 A. As a relief conductor.

5 Q. So you're pretty confident if you had felt broken rail, you
6 would have --

7 A. Yeah, I would have --

8 Q. -- recognized it?

9 A. -- recognized the sound. Well, maybe not recognized the
10 sound but it would have felt different than let's say a normal
11 joint --

12 Q. Sure.

13 A. -- more than likely, but --

14 Q. Do you know if there's any jointed rail like from repairs or
15 anything near that area?

16 A. It's a possibility, but I can't say for sure because like I
17 say, I just don't get up there enough to --

18 Q. Yeah, I understand.

19 A. -- notice it day to day.

20 Q. I mean, that's a pretty broad question for that -- to say
21 anywhere on that territory it could have been.

22 How many cars did you guys bring back?

23 A. Eleven.

24 Q. So did you have that needed to be bad ordered or did you
25 notice when you were putting the train away, any thumpers?

1 A. No.

2 Q. And by thumpers, I mean --

3 A. No, it was --

4 Q. -- flat spots?

5 A. We picked it up, air tested them, rolled them by. I walked
6 it again to get to the headend and I didn't see anything, hear
7 anything.

8 MR. SHAFFER: Okay. Very good. I have no further questions.

9 MR. CORUM: No questions.

10 MR. FACKLAN: Steve Facklan, F-a-c-k-l-a-n, BLET Safety
11 Taskforce.

12 BY MR. FACKLAN:

13 Q. Were you off the extra board or were you assigned --

14 A. Extra board.

15 Q. Extra board. Do you remember what the weather was like the
16 day you guys went through?

17 A. Pretty clear, cold. I think it was, I don't know, 20
18 degrees, maybe a little bit less.

19 Q. Okay. And so when was the last -- when was the time last
20 before that you had worked that local or been over that area prior
21 to --

22 A. I think I spotted an ethanol train maybe a week or two before
23 that.

24 Q. Those two times, do you remember any kind of -- any
25 maintenance work that was being done anywhere around the

1 derailment site?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Okay. How many years of service do you have?

4 A. Eleven.

5 Q. Eleven. Okay. And just some quick background questions.
6 Hazardous material training or how often do you go through that
7 with UP?

8 A. Every 2 years or 1 year depending on when rules classes or
9 recertification.

10 Q. Okay. And it's my understanding it's classroom followed
11 by --

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. -- testing on the computer?

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. Okay. In that training class, when you go over the hazmat
16 portion, what do they train you on as far as how to respond in an
17 event such as this, a derailment?

18 A. As far as having paperwork, the correct paperwork being a key
19 part of that, wind direction, otherwise just getting as far --
20 getting yourself to a safe place and being able to be ready to
21 help emergency response with any questions or similar
22 circumstances.

23 Q. Okay. That's all the questions I have. Thank you.

24 MR. MOZENA: I have nothing.

25 MR. SANDLER: This is Mark Sandler with the FRA.

1 BY MR. SANDLER:

2 Q. I really only have one question for you. How old are you?

3 A. [REDACTED]

4 MR. SANDLER: I don't have any further questions.

5 MR. BUCHER: Okay. I don't have anything else. We'll go
6 around the table one more time --

7 Okay. This concludes the interview of Mr. Christensen.

8 (Whereupon, 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: DERAILMENT OF UNION PACIFIC TRAIN
 NUMBER UEGKOT 09 NEAR GRAETTINGER,
 IOWA ON MARCH 10, 2017
 Interview of Brian Christensen

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA17MR007

PLACE: Spencer, Iowa

DATE: March 11, 2017

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.

Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber