

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

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DERAILMENT OF UNION PACIFIC TRAIN \*

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

IOWA ON MARCH 10, 2017 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: MIKE WELAND

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

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Mike Weland:	
By Mr. Bucher	5
By Mr. Shaffer	6
By Mr. Facklan	7
By Mr. Sandler	8
By Mr. Bucher	9
By Mr. Facklan	10

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. This is the  
4 interview of Mike Weland, trainman for the Union Pacific Railroad,  
5 and the interview is relative to the accident at Graettinger,  
6 Iowa, on March 10, 2017, NTSB accident number DCA17MR007. And we  
7 are located at the AmericInn in Spencer, Iowa.

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

10 MR. SHAFFER: My name is Josh Shaffer, director of road  
11 operations, out of St. Paul, Minnesota, Union Pacific Railroad.

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

14 MR. FACKLAN: Steve Facklan, F-a-c-k-l-a-n, BLET, primary  
15 investigator.

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

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

20 MR. BUCHER: Mike, if you would, your name and spell, please.

21 MR. WELAND: My name is Mike Weland, last name W-e-l-a-n-d.  
22 I'm a locomotive engineer for the Union Pacific Railroad.

23 MR. BUCHER: Thanks, Mike. Today at your interview, the  
24 purpose of the investigation is to increase safety, not assign  
25 fault, blame or liability. However, NTSB cannot fully guarantee

1 confidentiality or immunity from other -- from people looking at  
2 the docket. A transcript or summary of the interview will go into  
3 the docket.

4 You may have one representative of your choice today if you  
5 choose so, and you understand it is being recorded.

6 INTERVIEW OF MIKE WELAND

7 BY MR. BUCHER:

8 Q. As we talked about earlier, Mike, if you would, if you'd just  
9 go back to yesterday and start with, you know, how your day and  
10 trip went through the accident?

11 A. Well, I was actually -- I wasn't on the train that derailed.  
12 I was on a train that went over it 12 hours prior.

13 Q. Okay. If you could --

14 A. I'm on a local that runs that line pretty much three -- we go  
15 over that set of track probably three to four times a week. We  
16 don't always go over it every day, but we get over it, and  
17 Thursday would have been the day we went over it. We went all the  
18 way up to Superior and ran back over it, came back I think with 11  
19 cars, 11 loaded cars. And I didn't notice anything out of the  
20 ordinary, nothing -- if there was anything out of the ordinary, I  
21 would have reported it for sure. Didn't feel anything, didn't see  
22 anything. It was just pretty much a typical day for us.

23 Q. Okay. Now is Superior the end of the line?

24 A. Superior -- 78 -- milepost 78.4 is the end of the Union  
25 Pacific, their line, and then the Superior Elevator sits at the

1 end that -- no, the ethanol plant sits at the end of that track,  
2 yes.

3 Q. Okay. All right. And you've been -- how often -- I mean,  
4 how long have you been on this run?

5 A. I've been on this job since July of last year, July '16.

6 Q. Okay. Have you operated over the territory in the past?

7 A. Oh, yeah. I've been --

8 Q. Historically.

9 A. Yeah, I've been on the railroad, just started my 22nd year.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And I primarily worked out of Eagle Grove. So I've been over  
12 that track numerous times.

13 Q. Okay. Okay. And historically, the track, you haven't ever  
14 noticed --

15 A. I've never noticed anything as far as like -- at that area,  
16 you know, that would --

17 Q. Right.

18 A. -- that would cause me concern.

19 Q. Okay. Any, anything you noticed about the bridges or  
20 anything that you might be able to comment on?

21 A. No, just normal.

22 MR. BUCHER: Okay. All right. I'm just going to go around  
23 the room. First we'll go with Josh.

24 BY MR. SHAFFER:

25 Q. Has anyone made you aware specifically where the incident

1 happened?

2 A. I believe, from talking to people, it's right where there was  
3 a cattle lot right there. It's a little short trestle bridge.

4 Q. Yep. Okay. I just wanted to make sure --

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. -- you knew where we're talking about.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. So when you traversed that bridge the last trip, you didn't  
9 -- there was no rough track or do you remember feeling anything at  
10 all?

11 A. No. I didn't feel anything out of the ordinary.

12 Q. Okay.

13 MR. BUCHER: Okay. Mike, anything?

14 MR. CORUM: No questions.

15 MR. FACKLAN: Steve Facklan, BLET Safety Taskforce.

16 BY MR. FACKLAN:

17 Q. On the local, are you the conductor or engineer?

18 A. I'm the engineer.

19 Q. Engineer. Okay. You've been working this since -- the local  
20 since July?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. What was your hire out date?

23 A. I hired out in March of '96.

24 Q. '96.

25 A. Gee, that seems like a long time ago.

1 Q. What kind of training do they give employees over the area,  
2 that territory where --

3 A. The territory that I run?

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. Oh, well, I mean, I was trained there as a brakeman and a  
6 conductor over that territory, and then I was trained on the job  
7 riding with engineers over that territory for -- I think when I  
8 did it, it was -- I worked out of Eagle Grove running that -- not  
9 specifically that territory, but out of Eagle Grove, I mean, 2 or  
10 3 months I think we rode over it.

11 MR. FACKLAN: Okay. As far as -- I'll save those questions  
12 for later. That's all I have right now.

13 MR. WELAND: Okay.

14 MR. MOZENA: I have none.

15 BY MR. SANDLER:

16 Q. How old are you?

17 A. [REDACTED]

18 Q. And how long have you been an engineer? Or when did you  
19 become an engineer?

20 A. I became an engineer in July of '99.

21 Q. And on that day, you know, obviously you went up. Did you  
22 bring the train back or --

23 A. Yeah, we went up with -- I can't really remember -- a handful  
24 of empty cars, set them out at this ethanol plant and then picked  
25 up 11 loads and came back.



1 Q. Okay. And nothing either way?

2 A. Nothing either way.

3 Q. Smooth as glass or --

4 A. Well, smooth as normal. I mean, we got -- we run old jeeps,  
5 you know, they're not the smoothest riding engines in the world,  
6 but you can feel, you'll know anything out of the ordinary. And  
7 then doing it every day, you know, you would feel something  
8 different, and I didn't feel anything different at all that day.

9 MR. SANDLER: Okay. That's all I have.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just one question here.

11 MR. BUCHER: Yeah, go ahead.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When we talk, do we need to say our  
13 name for the transcriptionist?

14 MR. BUCHER: Yeah, you should.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

16 MR. BUCHER: Yeah, this is -- all right. This is Dave Bucher  
17 again.

18 BY MR. BUCHER:

19 Q. Unless you can think of anything unusual --

20 A. No, I mean, this was a typical day for us as far as -- I mean  
21 the weather was fine. It was -- track was riding as normal and  
22 the train operated normally and --

23 MR. BUCHER: Okay. All right. I don't have anything else.  
24 Looking around the room, I don't think we -- we have one more.

25 MR. FACKLAN: Yes.

1 BY MR. FACKLAN:

2 Q. What time of day was it that you would have been over that  
3 territory?

4 A. We would have went over it probably around 10-ish going up  
5 and then it would have been around noon coming back.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. So that would have been the two times I would have went  
8 roughly around that section of track.

9 Q. Okay. What was the weather like at that point?

10 A. It was sunny, cold, but it was -- you know, it was cold  
11 weather but it was sunny out. Windy, it was windy that day I  
12 believe.

13 Q. Do you have an approximate temperature? Just your best  
14 guess.

15 A. I would say probably in the 20s maybe.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. It's hard to tell when you're an engineer. You don't get  
18 outside very much. I -- the conductor was bundled up.

19 Q. I have a couple of questions that kind of go off in a  
20 different direction here on training.

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. What kind of hazmat training do you receive for Union Pacific  
23 particularly in how to respond to a situation that this crew was  
24 in? And what kind of refreshment -- refresher training?

25 A. Well, we do -- excuse me -- we do hazmat testing every 2

1 years, I believe it is, and they go over, you know, the books you  
2 have to have, the paperwork you have to have, what procedure would  
3 be if it -- something was to happen, you know, get to higher  
4 ground, get upwind from it, you know, stuff like that, and every 2  
5 years you go over all that.

6 Q. Every 2 years. Is it computer-based training or classroom  
7 training?

8 A. It's classroom based. You do your testing on a computer but  
9 there's a person actually teaching the class.

10 Q. Okay. And so every 2 years in classroom with testing done on  
11 a computer. That's all I have.

12 A. Okay.

13 MR. BUCHER: Okay. Dave Bucher again, and this concludes the  
14 interview of Mr. Weland.

15 (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 Mike Weland

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.

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Kathryn A. Mirfin  
Transcriber