

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

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Investigation of:

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TRAIN COLLISION
CHATSWORTH, CALIFORNIA

* Docket No.: DCA-08-MR-009

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Interview of: DOMINIC FRAVOLA

Portland Hills, California

Wednesday,
September 17, 2008

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: JIM REMINES

APPEARANCES:

JIM REMINES, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C.
(202) 314-6439

DARRELL SMITH
Union Pacific Railroad

TED TURPIN
National Transportation Safety Board

JAY ELLIS
California Public Utilities Commission

JOHN ENGLAND
United Transportation Union

BILL DESKIN
Federal Railroad Administration

TED FRITZ, Transportation Manager
Connex

SCOTT PALMER

TOM ROBERTS
Metrolink

STEVE RANDOLPH
Union Pacific Railroad

BARRY NOVAK

DOMINIC FRAVOLA, Brakeman
Union Pacific Railroad

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Dominic Fravola	
By Mr. Remines:	5
By Mr. Fritz:	23
By Mr. Remines:	27

I N T E R V I E W1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

MR. REMINES: My name is Jim Remines. I'm with the National Transportation Safety Board. We're investigating the accident DCA-08-MR-009, September 17th, 2008. We're going to start asking questions in a minute, but before I start anything I want to go around the room, have everybody introduce themselves, spell their last name and who they represent.

And I'll begin, describe myself, Jim Remines, R-e-m-i-n-e-s. I'm with the National Transportation Safety Board. And to my left is?

MR. SMITH: Darrell Smith, Union Pacific Railroad.

MR. TURPIN: Ted Turpin, NTSB, T-u-r-p-i-n.

MR. ELLIS: Jay Ellis, E-l-l-i-s, the California Public Utilities Commission.

MR. ENGLAND: John England, with the United Transportation Union.

MR. DESKIN: Bill Deskin, D-e-s-k-i-n, Federal Railroad Administration.

MR. FRITZ: Ted Fritz, F-r-i-t-z, Connex.

MR. PALMER: Scott Palmer, P-a-l-m-e-r, (indiscernible).

MR. ROBERTS: Tom Roberts, R-o-b-e-r-t-s, Metrolink (indiscernible).

MR. RANDOLPH: Steve Randolph, R-a-n-d-o-l-p-h, Union Pacific Railroad.

MR. NOVAK: Barry Novak, N-o-v-a-k, on behalf of

1 (indiscernible).

2 MR. FRAVOLA: Dominic Fravola, F-r-a-v-o-l-a. I'm a
3 brakeman, UP Railroad.

4 INTERVIEW OF DOMINIC FRAVOLA

5 BY MR. REMINES:

6 Q. Dominic, we're, we're going to ask you to open up with a
7 discussion of your workday, beginning with what you did the night
8 before, as far as rest and numbers, if you're vague -- if you're
9 unsure, you can put that on the record and we'll verify it later.

10 A lot of times we'll ask you questions you can't answer
11 and we'll ask you to provide it. I want you to start off with
12 probably your rest before you went to work and what time you went
13 on duty and what your assignment was and that kind of information
14 up to the time of the accident.

15 If you want to, you can continue on until the emergency
16 response and what you remember after it, and now you can start.

17 A. Well, the day started out with me, at 7:30, getting a
18 tire, getting a tire, flat tire at 7:30. Nine o'clock I had a
19 dentist appointment. I generally go to the gym at 7:30, but I had
20 to do the dentist.

21 Then I, I usually show up to work about 30, 30 minutes
22 early, because I've had an extra conductor all week, I've had a
23 different guy to deal with every day, so I generally get there and
24 do as much paperwork for him as I can. And he's a little late
25 that day and when he got there, I had all the paperwork ready.

1 The train was put together, the air test made, and we got, we
2 -- I did the air test, got him on the head end and then we had our
3 job briefing finally, talked about, you know, what we had to do.
4 It was a pretty light that day, as I recall, and it was a -- just
5 a, you know, just a regular day (indiscernible).

6 The day actually -- I, I think we went up the main line.
7 What we usually do is go up the main line at Oxnard. I have to
8 pick up and sit out at the BC Railroad, go to the north end 404,
9 back in, build my train -- no problems -- and head back south,
10 back to Champco.

11 And we were a little later than we normally are. We
12 like to follow -- we like Amtrak 769 to come in. He flew out of
13 Oxnard about 2:06. When he goes by, we try to leave right after
14 he gets by, but we were a little later. Try to stay ahead of 784,
15 Amtrak 784, if we can. He's out of Oxnard at 3:57. And we were
16 -- (indiscernible) do that that day. I mean, I can't remember if
17 we did that that day.

18 So our next move, because we wanted to try to get to
19 Stravin (ph.) before 775 was out of Simi Valley at 59, 4:59, and
20 the best we could do is Stravin. And then I know the next train
21 we're going to meet is the 111 that's due out of Chatsworth at --
22 due out at Van Nuys at 4:02. Then he's due out of Chatsworth at
23 4:16.

24 So if you meet 775 at Stravin, it's pretty hard to get
25 to Chatsworth unless he's a little late. So our move was to get

1 over to CP Davis and meet him. And for some reason we got the
2 main line. I was in the second unit at that time. I got off the
3 train at Stravin to roll 775. And then I got back on the second
4 unit to get my green apple. I felt like having my apple. I went
5 up -- that's how I wound up on the second unit. And, as soon as I
6 got on the unit, we got a green signal, and we took off. So,
7 okay, I'll get off at CP Davis and roll 111 there. That would be
8 the play on that, you know --

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. -- in that time zone we were in. So we didn't go on the
11 siding for some reason. And then while we were going to, I heard
12 Steve call out a green and I, I actually heard 111 call
13 (indiscernible) Chatsworth, and I looked at my watch and at that
14 time it was about -- it was 17. It was due out at 16. So I knew
15 he was going to be late, but he's not that late. So the dispatch
16 decided to take us down to Chatsworth.

17 And then we proceeded. Steve traveled out and we were
18 going right along and, and, you know, went through the big tunnel
19 (indiscernible) 7,000 feet that tunnel, the next tunnel. And then
20 I think there's three tunnels. I'm not sure. I'm not sure.

21 And I heard the train go into emergency. It went, you
22 know, pssh. And that was my signal. And if it wasn't that I was
23 going to (indiscernible) 8400, two 8400s. They're just incredible
24 units, that seat -- I happened to be in that seat. I knew we were
25 going in emergency. We were around the tunnel, but sometimes

1 there's boulders. There's kids that hang out at the big tunnel,
2 not at the small tunnel. And I go, what the hell? Did they put
3 something on the rail? Why are we in emergency?

4 But, by the time he put it into emergency, I was, I was
5 on alert and I was sitting in the seat, and for some reason -- you
6 know, you go into emergency on trains all the time. But I don't
7 know what it was about this one, I braced myself. Sure enough,
8 that's when we hit. And, luckily, I was in that seat. And I
9 don't think I lost consciousness because I wouldn't be alive if I
10 lost consciousness because I know that I knew my train was going
11 to start coming at me. While the grinding was going this way, my
12 sensation was everything was going to start coming at me and I'm
13 facing it.

14 Somehow I rolled out of the seat and crawled to the
15 engineer's console and I just bunched up in a ball and all the
16 debris is coming off, and finally it stopped. It was a long --
17 the worst earthquake you can imagine. I was still upright. The
18 lid of my -- the roof of my engine was peeled back. And I stood
19 up, (indiscernible), you know. Oh, shit.

20 And I went out -- because I know the curve goes that way
21 there where I, where I realized I was, I knew it. I went out
22 there (indiscernible) and I see -- you can imagine, the scene,
23 Metro 111.

24 I know the guy. I know Rob. And I tell you, every day,
25 he's the nicest guy. He'd say hello, have a safe trip, every

1 single day. And I've chatted with him too. And there's this
2 Metrolink and it was like -- you know, it's hard to compute how
3 could this be on the main line. I've never seen -- I've been 44
4 years on the railroad. I've had some rail accidents, but not
5 head-on collision.

6 So I grabbed the radio really fast and yelled out,
7 "Emergency, emergency, emergency." I got no response from that.
8 Somehow I found my radio. I knew everything moved that way. So I
9 went in the corner and found my handset and I started yelling,
10 "Emergency, emergency." No one responded to my handset, so I
11 decided I better get out of here because all of a sudden there's
12 smoke.

13 The lead unit, the lead unit was completely engulfed in
14 smoke and I could see the flames, and it was starting to grow and
15 the wind was coming this way, blowing that way. The curve was
16 like that.

17 So I, I was going to go out the window, but I'd have to
18 jump on the (indiscernible). The front door was gone and it was
19 blocked. So then I tried the back door and the back door opened,
20 miraculously, and I just climbed right down there, gave a really
21 broad circle around the head end. And the head end was so
22 engulfed at that time, I don't know how those guys -- I thought
23 they were dead. I'm sure later, they thought I was dead. But I'm
24 not -- my leg was killing me because something fell on it. So I
25 was limping and I circled back around and people were already

1 stopping and helping and people were, you know, just
2 (indiscernible). And then I, you know, waited, helped a few
3 people, waited for the paramedics, fire department, helicopters.

4 I stayed there for three -- I mean, I wasn't removed
5 from there for about three, three hours, five minutes. And then
6 they took me to this Third World hospital in Sun Valley and told
7 me that I had to wait with everybody else because I was limping.
8 I wasn't brought in a gurney (indiscernible).

9 And I, I didn't beg the paramedics to take me back to
10 the crash site, but I said I don't want to stay here. I didn't
11 have a cell phone. They offered to get me a taxi cab. And there
12 was no officers, you know, from the UP to help me. So I wanted to
13 (indiscernible). I called my wife. I didn't want even my wife to
14 come and get me, but -- it's such a nasty area, but I had no
15 choice. So she came and picked me up.

16 Q. Did you have occasion after the collision to talk or see
17 the other crew members or help them?

18 A. I did not help them, but I did, I saw Ken walking
19 towards me. He was being helped. And he had -- he told me -- we
20 both embraced and he was a bloody mess, and he said, "Steve is
21 out. I got him out." I think he was on the other side of the
22 pallet and I was like on the ramp side, (indiscernible) side.
23 And, and then I laid him down because he was really bleeding
24 (indiscernible). And then here comes Steve on a gurney.

25 At the triage was the first time he was (indiscernible)

1 on the (indiscernible) at that point alongside the Metro. And
2 then they set up the triage and then I saw Steve laying there, so
3 -- I was shocked. I couldn't, you know, (indiscernible).

4 Q. Would you normally ride on the second unit or it just --

5 A. No.

6 Q. -- happened that day?

7 A. It just happened that day, because I had -- I wanted --
8 I hadn't eaten. I only bring fruit with me. So I had an apple.
9 And I knew I couldn't go -- if you look at the time line, I feel
10 like we should have been at, at CP Davis for the 111, even he was
11 a little late. But, you know, it's the dispatch's discretion to
12 do as, as he pleases. So I would have gotten off there, and I
13 always roll off. I, you know --

14 Q. Uh-huh.

15 A. -- I usually do everyday. And then I would have been on
16 the head end, because I had a young conductor and we would have
17 our job briefing when we get to Champco on how we're going to put
18 the train away, where it's going to go.

19 Q. Uh-huh.

20 A. And since we had low power, not on normal power, I
21 decided where we were going to get the power because I'm there. I
22 know the system, so I would have had to be up on the head end.

23 Q. How is it -- is there, like, three seating up there?

24 Two --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- on one side and there's one on the other?

2 A. Three seats.

3 Q. Where were you when the -- what seat were you in on the
4 second one?

5 A. I was in the conductor's.

6 Q. And facing forward?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. So you couldn't see the (indiscernible)?

9 A. No.

10 Q. You couldn't see it forward? You heard the emergency
11 brakes yourself, but you couldn't see --

12 A. No.

13 Q. -- the curve right there. Were you on the outside of
14 the curve or inside?

15 A. I was inside.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And I would, I would have my mirror out, but that really
18 irritates my engineer.

19 Q. Um-hum.

20 A. So I didn't have it out. So -- and I knew when we went
21 into emergency, I -- for some reason intuitively, I don't know
22 what it was, I, I didn't even want -- and I knew I was on the
23 curve. I didn't even want to go (indiscernible). For some
24 reason, I just kind of -- I thought something was going to happen
25 (indiscernible).

1 But even the time it takes, I never got (indiscernible).

2 Q. Did you -- was the radio in the locomotive also working?
3 I mean, could you hear the radio?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Could you hear any of the transmissions on 111 over the
6 (indiscernible), transmissions (indiscernible), like calling
7 signals?

8 A. I -- you know, I did. I heard him -- then I was over
9 there. I, I heard him south of CP Davis --

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. -- call Bernsen, CP Bernsen, which is south of
12 Chatsworth.

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. That was the last. I never heard him call that
15 intermediate signal --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. -- in the middle of -- on the main line. And I never
18 heard him call the red signal northbound.

19 Q. Would it be the occasion you'd normally hear him call it
20 though? How was --

21 A. Well, we're required to call it and, generally, we
22 signal travel speed because I'm going through tunnels.

23 Q. Yeah. Yes, I know.

24 A. No, I wouldn't hear all the transmissions.

25 Q. Right. Right. You say you have 44 years experience,

1 railroad experience?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Can you give a little recap, how you came to be UP? Did
4 you come from one of the former lines, like (indiscernible) or --

5 A. (indiscernible).

6 MR. REMINES: Well, I'm going to start the questioning
7 around the room for anybody that might have a -- something they
8 want on the record. Then I might have something and I'll close it
9 and when we get back to me.

10 SPEAKER: Okay, Dominic, you -- coming out of Oxnard you
11 had to perform an air test on the cars?

12 MR. FRAVOLA: Yes.

13 SPEAKER: Were you part of that inspection?

14 MR. FRAVOLA: Let's see, where was I? We had 16 cars,
15 so that's -- I estimate power probably like 1200 (indiscernible).
16 No, I think when we put our cars away, I took the shove -- we had
17 a few Oxnard cars, so that the move is generally -- did I have --
18 I had a two-car pick up in the (indiscernible), I think. I think
19 I had a two-car pick up. I took the shove.

20 So what I do, our cars are on the south end of Oxnard, I
21 think, Track 2. So I take the shove and I put those two cars to a
22 joint. I also have my rear end cars there. And then the Oxnard
23 cars, I just stay on the south end so I can take the shove and --
24 I don't know whether it was Track 2 or 4. So when you shove
25 those, those two cars in, I'm right back there. And then I work

1 that train.

2 SPEAKER: Okay.

3 MR. FRAVOLA: And then I get -- align myself -- I align
4 myself into that track. I align them. And I put the
5 (indiscernible). We didn't have to use the siding because I was
6 going to -- I told (indiscernible) to me on Track 1. I put the
7 power on, raced it up. I get ready to check the brakes and
8 everything. And when he comes up with the power, he gets on that
9 rear end, (indiscernible) south to the crossover, then we shove
10 out. We get onto the siding. Then we do the air test. We
11 (indiscernible) doing the air test and making (indiscernible).

12 SPEAKER: Okay. So do you do the air test when you're
13 (indiscernible). Have any problems with the air test?

14 MR. FRAVOLA: As far as I know (indiscernible). And
15 those cars are just put there too.

16 SPEAKER: By (indiscernible)?

17 MR. FRAVOLA: By -- no, by (indiscernible).

18 SPEAKER: Okay.

19 MR. FRAVOLA: (indiscernible).

20 SPEAKER: And you mentioned calling the signals. Steve
21 (indiscernible), was he or Mr. Squires calling the signals?

22 MR. FRAVOLA: Mr. Squires.

23 SPEAKER: Calling the signals?

24 MR. FRAVOLA: Yeah, (indiscernible) call the signals.

25 SPEAKER: And then coming down, did you happen to see

1 any of signal indications through the mirror or anything? You saw
2 it coming towards CP (indiscernible)?

3 MR. FRAVOLA: You know, I didn't -- I always have
4 (indiscernible), because we only had two units. It's so close to
5 Steve. Sometimes he gets reflections and it irritates him. But I
6 listened to Steve calling. Because I have a speedometer here in
7 my console and I have a radio, I didn't see the signals.

8 SPEAKER: Didn't see them, but --

9 MR. FRAVOLA: No.

10 SPEAKER: -- you could hear him calling --

11 MR. FRAVOLA: Yes. And I could tell by the throttle
12 speed and the speed to what was going on. But I was with him all
13 the way up until Chatsworth. I was calling the signals. It was
14 only between Stravin and the collision that (indiscernible).

15 SPEAKER: I don't need (indiscernible).

16 SPEAKER: One side questions that I have -- it's kind of
17 disturbing that you said you spent three hours and five minutes
18 before you were transported after the accident?

19 MR. FRAVOLA: Um-hum.

20 SPEAKER: How did you get to the Sun Valley Hospital?

21 MR. FRAVOLA: A Lancaster ambulance.

22 SPEAKER: I was a -- called an ambulance service,
23 Lancaster?

24 MR. FRAVOLA: (indiscernible).

25 SPEAKER: And then you had had to have your wife pick

1 you up later at the hospital. Did they treat you there? Did they
2 see you?

3 MR. FRAVOLA: Well, they finally did. I had to wait for
4 my wife to come. And it was so poorly done, I mean, one guy he
5 had -- he had a rubber glove on one hand, a bare hand, and he was
6 taking glass out of my arm. And he squeezed me with the -- you
7 know, and there was all these people there with gunshot wounds and
8 stab wounds and (indiscernible).

9 SPEAKER: (indiscernible).

10 MR. FRAVOLA: And I had to be -- I had to get in line
11 because I walked in. When I was in the ambulance the guy told me
12 not to, but -- it was so -- you know, the girl next to me was so
13 injured; she was so traumatized, a young kid. She's only
14 (indiscernible). She told me she walked over two bodies to get
15 out. And I was talking and I was trying to, you know, console her
16 and, and then there were only two paramedics. I said I can walk,
17 I got to walk, you know.

18 SPEAKER: Let's go back to the railroad.

19 MR. FRAVOLA: All right.

20 SPEAKER: You said you heard the (indiscernible) call
21 Bernsen. What did he actually call?

22 MR. FRAVOLA: You know, I can't recall whether -- it
23 should have been a flashing yellow, I know, but I can't -- I heard
24 him call CP Bernsen and I don't remember the (indiscernible) or I
25 didn't hear it clearly.

1 SPEAKER: All right. I think, I think Jim asked you
2 this, but you heard him calling the signal earlier?

3 MR. FRAVOLA: That was the first and only time. I
4 should have heard him call that intermediate signal
5 (indiscernible), but, but I didn't (indiscernible).

6 SPEAKER: How about the detector at Topanga, did you
7 hear anything (indiscernible)?

8 MR. FRAVOLA: The detector at Topanga -- I got a flash
9 back of the detector at Topanga on Sunday. No, I -- you know,
10 it's like in between conversations until I think about it. But I
11 can't get it out of your mind. And I hit my head really hard. I
12 had a concussion. And I, I think that I remember hearing it. And
13 I think that was my signal somehow when I heard -- because it was
14 so immediate.

15 Everything happened so quick in time. I, I can't say
16 for sure, but the thought came into my mind, it was Sunday, did I
17 hear 444? I heard 444, but, you know --

18 SPEAKER: And that's the (indiscernible)?

19 MR. FRAVOLA: (indiscernible).

20 SPEAKER: Detector (indiscernible)?

21 MR. FRAVOLA: Right. You know we're going through those
22 tunnels there and we're getting just little bits and pieces. But
23 it wasn't -- it was like I heard it, you know, I see and then --
24 and, luckily, I heard pssh and that really blotted out everything
25 else.

1 SPEAKER: Where do you normally meet 111?

2 MR. FRAVOLA: Well, in a situation like that, I think we
3 should have met him up at CP Davis because we don't delay
4 Metrolink. I mean, it's just not -- you know, all the
5 dispatchers, they know us. We're in different times -- we're not
6 on a schedule. They are on a schedule and you can set your watch
7 by them.

8 SPEAKER: Right.

9 MR. FRAVOLA: And, you know, we make it a point, if we
10 have a relief dispatcher, we'll remind him that, hey, we can't
11 make it, better keep us back. We have --

12 SPEAKER: You --

13 MR. FRAVOLA: -- (indiscernible).

14 SPEAKER: This is just a five-day-a-week job?

15 MR. FRAVOLA: Yes.

16 SPEAKER: And you worked -- what was it this week? What
17 did you work this week?

18 MR. FRAVOLA: Five (indiscernible).

19 SPEAKER: You started on Monday?

20 MR. FRAVOLA: Yes.

21 SPEAKER: Do you recall Monday through Thursday where
22 you met the number 111?

23 MR. FRAVOLA: Oh, I think we had a pretty good week,
24 because (indiscernible). We had a lot of good connections. It
25 was good. Friday, Friday -- I'm sorry, I'm kind of -- but I'm

1 also kind of a superstitious guy. On Fridays I am like at even
2 higher alert. I don't know if anybody ever did a physical
3 analysis of when accidents occur, but it seems to me there's an
4 inordinate amount of accidents on Fridays. So every Friday I say
5 to myself, you know, it's Friday, you have to pay attention.
6 That's (indiscernible), you know, (indiscernible).

7 SPEAKER: Let me try to narrow that down. Anytime
8 earlier in the week, did you make it to Chatsworth to meet 111, do
9 you recall?

10 MR. FRAVOLA: You know, I, I think most of the days that
11 we -- we made it to Ramer (ph.) to 7- -- Amtrak 775. He's out of
12 Van Nuys at 3:28. And that's our goal. If we can get out right
13 after 769 gets to Oxnard, we can make it to Ramer before 775.

14 SPEAKER: And that's who you met at Stravin on, on
15 Friday?

16 MR. FRAVOLA: Yes. (indiscernible)

17 SPEAKER: A little bit, a little bit later?

18 MR. FRAVOLA: Yeah. No, I think almost every day that
19 we were able to do that.

20 SPEAKER: Okay. Have you ever had -- you ever see any
21 signal problems around the tunnels there (indiscernible)?

22 MR. FRAVOLA: (indiscernible) occasionally we get a
23 signal problem.

24 SPEAKER: Okay. In what respect? I mean, what kind of
25 problem?

1 MR. FRAVOLA: You know, a signal's been out, you know,
2 or -- I mean, over the years, I remember even years ago I had --
3 years ago when a signal was out before the tunnel, the brakeman
4 had to walk through the whole tunnel, you know, flag the whole
5 tunnel, (indiscernible). That was -- I mean, you could hear the
6 train coming down the tunnel (indiscernible). But, yeah, and over
7 the years, I can't give you any one specific time, but --

8 SPEAKER: Okay. The worst case, how would you
9 (indiscernible) the signal is green, but it should be red. Have
10 you ever heard of that?

11 MR. FRAVOLA: No. What -- green when it should be red?
12 I never -- you know, in my whole career, I haven't come across,
13 you know -- but I know it's happened.

14 SPEAKER: All right. I got one more. Your train
15 (indiscernible), do you have a new, new conductor or extra
16 conductor. Were you helping him put the (indiscernible) together?

17 MR. FRAVOLA: The engines?

18 SPEAKER: No, your car (indiscernible).

19 MR. FRAVOLA: Oh.

20 SPEAKER: Did you have an accurate list?

21 MR. FRAVOLA: Right.

22 SPEAKER: Did you help him put the list together?

23 MR. FRAVOLA: I did.

24 SPEAKER: Do you have a copy of it?

25 MR. FRAVOLA: Well, you know, it's like a rule of thumb,

1 if we don't -- I know how many cars I have. I know how many box
2 cars I have. I know how many tri-levels I have. I have HazMat
3 cars and -- the way I do it is I have to (indiscernible) count
4 footage, 60 feet for boxcars, 75 feet for IV (ph.) cars, 94 feet
5 for tri-levels, and a normal (indiscernible) feet.

6 So I know that. And approximation of the tonnage of the
7 cars (indiscernible); 100 pounds (indiscernible) 30 pounds. Okay.
8 Quick kind of --

9 SPEAKER: So you didn't, you didn't actually have a hard
10 copy? The conductor was basically keeping a hard copy of the --

11 MR. FRAVOLA: Yeah, I do too, but I know my, my train
12 -- you know, when I'm (indiscernible).

13 SPEAKER: Okay.

14 MR. FRAVOLA: And he does it too. And I -- we would
15 cross-reference, "What did you come up with? I came up with" --

16 SPEAKER: All right. I don't have any other questions.

17 SPEAKER: How long have you been on railroads? Go back
18 to (indiscernible).

19 MR. FRAVOLA: Well, you know, I've been on and off them
20 because I worked with northeast (indiscernible), with
21 (indiscernible). On and off for like 20 years. I was not on
22 (indiscernible). If I was there, that wouldn't have happened.

23 SPEAKER: Tell us, what kind of man was (indiscernible)?

24 MR. FRAVOLA: I'm telling you, he was the nicest guy you
25 ever want to meet. He was. I don't know what happened to him

1 when he (indiscernible). The FRA, God.

2 SPEAKER: All right. Back on track.

3 SPEAKER: In this, in this general area where the
4 accident occurred, did you ever have a lot of radio problems as
5 far as hearing other (indiscernible)?

6 MR. FRAVOLA: Well --

7 SPEAKER: (indiscernible).

8 MR. FRAVOLA: -- it's the tunnels, you know. Once you
9 start going in, it's pretty hard. I see that from (indiscernible)
10 one of the shorter tunnels. But, yeah, you have problems
11 communicating if you're in a tunnel.

12 But if you're not in a tunnel, then your dispatch, in
13 general, is clear. And that's the only person who we would be
14 talking to. You know, it's not like we're contacting, you know,
15 another train.

16 SPEAKER: What time did you go on duty that day?

17 MR. FRAVOLA: 11:30 every day.

18 SPEAKER: Is that a.m. or p.m.?

19 MR. FRAVOLA: A.m. I'm sorry, a.m.

20 SPEAKER: How much rest had you had before you went on?

21 MR. FRAVOLA: Oh, I don't know, you know. I
22 (indiscernible) 7:30 (indiscernible).

23 MR. FRITZ: Ted Fritz.

24 BY MR. FRITZ:

25 Q. You said you -- your engineer was -- you heard your

1 engineer calling signals?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And you were on the second --

4 A. I can, yeah. I can --

5 Q. Do you remember what he called for Davis?

6 A. Davis was a green. I'm sure he said green.

7 (indiscernible). But I -- the way he throttled out, I'm sure it
8 was green.

9 Q. And you remember hearing him call the intermediate
10 before you got to (indiscernible)?

11 A. The next signal (indiscernible). It would be a
12 (indiscernible). Did I hear him, hear him say that? I was in the
13 tunnel (indiscernible). I don't remember him saying it was green,
14 but (indiscernible).

15 Q. One other question. You say you normally don't meet
16 Metro when it's there. When you have a relief dispatcher or even
17 when you have your regular dispatcher, does he ever clue you in
18 where you're having to meet, in terms of, him holding you there
19 for --

20 A. Very rarely. You know, we're, we're so familiar with it
21 and they know we know the schedule for the trains, so
22 (indiscernible) 785 (indiscernible) 735. We know the train
23 schedules pretty tightly. You know, they'll tell us if there's a
24 track gang out there and signal, you know, a time out.

25 But, generally, in that situation, even a relief guy,

1 which is pretty experienced (indiscernible) dispatch
2 (indiscernible) probably (indiscernible) and we would
3 (indiscernible), you know.

4 Q. All right. Thanks.

5 SPEAKER: (indiscernible) have you ever noticed the
6 difference (indiscernible)?

7 MR. FRAVOLA: In what direction?

8 SPEAKER: If you're facing Topanga direction?

9 MR. FRAVOLA: Oh. Yeah, I think that the trees should
10 be trimmed. And, you know, when you're going, when you're going
11 north there, I'm on the conducting -- on the conductor's side. I
12 see the signal before the engineer. I know it's a -- I mean, it
13 really isn't a very clear signal. (indiscernible).

14 SPEAKER: Right.

15 MR. FRAVOLA: You got to, you know, (indiscernible) you
16 guys (indiscernible).

17 SPEAKER: Is that the one off the siding or the one on
18 the main line?

19 MR. FRAVOLA: On the main line.

20 SPEAKER: The one on the main?

21 MR. FRAVOLA: Right, going north.

22 SPEAKER: Right. Have you ever noticed that the red
23 stop signal is harder (indiscernible)?

24 MR. FRAVOLA: You know, the red is harder to see. It
25 depends on what time of the day, you know. When we go by, we're

1 generally going by there about, oh, 12:30, or so, 12:45. It's
2 kind of hard to see.

3 SPEAKER: Any other color, that's (indiscernible) or is
4 just the red one hard to see?

5 MR. FRAVOLA: The flashing yellow -- actually, you have
6 to pay attention to that signal. That's really important, you
7 know, and you want to keep your eyes on it because the brightness
8 -- we're daylight, so, you know, there's so much light that it's
9 -- you have to keep an eye on that.

10 SPEAKER: Okay. (indiscernible). In relation to that
11 question, are we talking about (indiscernible) approach
12 (indiscernible)?

13 MR. FRAVOLA: Well, I don't stop at the station. No,
14 it's -- well, if we get that intermediate signal, if we get a
15 green there, you're a little more relaxed. But, if you have, you
16 know, a yellow, you're going to be really at attention. But, even
17 with a green signal, you know there is tracking time out there,
18 stuff goes on out there, you know, so you have to keep an eye on
19 that signal. You really do, especially in daylight. I'm sure at
20 nighttime it's a lot better.

21 SPEAKER: But in relation to (indiscernible)?

22 MR. FRAVOLA: Just before the, the -- that street, the
23 big street (indiscernible).

24 SPEAKER: Devonshire (ph.)?

25 SPEAKER: Devonshire and then Chatsworth. Chatsworth is

1 closest to it.

2 MR. FRAVOLA: That's the smaller one. No, it's the one
3 before. Because -- no, it's not -- yes, Devonshire. That's it.

4 SPEAKER: (indiscernible). Have you with Bob
5 (indiscernible), did you have much occasion to see him operate
6 (indiscernible) or something or any kind of comment
7 (indiscernible) about his (indiscernible) or --

8 MR. FRAVOLA: Well, you know, he's always on time. I
9 mean, we have certain engineers we have nicknames for that are
10 always off, always be off. I think that he was always on time.
11 And he was always up, very alert. He always gave us the biggest
12 wave and always said, have a safe day, you know, you know, have a
13 good weekend, always had that communication with him. Just, just
14 a hell of a nice guy, I talked to him several times.

15 SPEAKER: Did you ever see him use a cell phone out
16 there?

17 MR. FRAVOLA: No. You know, it's hard to see, you know,
18 for a Metro (indiscernible). Steve stuck his hand out and waved.
19 But you can't really see in the cab. It's (indiscernible).

20 MR. REMINES: Anything else? I guess we'll close the
21 interview.

22 BY MR. REMINES:

23 Q. What's your prognosis with your injury? (indiscernible)
24 recovery or --

25 A. Well, I, I --

1 Q. (indiscernible)?

2 A. Well, my -- I have this one puncture wound in my thigh
3 here, but I -- you know, I'm a lot luckier than (indiscernible).
4 I stood up and I was able to get out on my own. (indiscernible).
5 I really think you're lucky (indiscernible). But I don't, I don't
6 feel bad. I wish I could stop thinking about it.
7 (indiscernible).

8 Q. Well, (indiscernible) --

9 A. But one, one thing, if I could say something? You know
10 that -- thinking about Bob and whatever that signal, when he came
11 into Chatsworth, he had -- must have had a flashing yellow and
12 then he had a yellow and he stops at the station and then he takes
13 off and he goes -- it goes right by the next signal -- everybody's
14 telling me he went by the signal -- it seems like right there,
15 he's between the approach and the red, that somebody at the
16 station, when they make -- when they let people off and let the
17 people on, either the conductor or the engineer should say we're
18 here on a yellow signal.

19 Somebody should say something because you can see, I
20 don't know, that little thing when you get by the yellow signal
21 that -- somebody should say something, you know, (indiscernible)
22 just so we're still focused and we don't forget about that signal.
23 That might make (indiscernible). I can't believe he went sailing
24 by it.

25 MR. REMINES: Anything else?

1 SPEAKER: That was a good point. We need to
2 (indiscernible). We usually wrap up by, if you have any, any
3 suggestions or statement and that was an excellent
4 (indiscernible).

5 MR. FRAVOLA: You can see how you could get in trouble
6 right there at the track, right there at the station.

7 MR. REMINES: This concludes the interview. Thank you
8 very much.

9 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled matter
10 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: RAIL COLLISION
 CHATSWORTH, CALIFORNIA
 Interview of Dominic Fravola

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-08-MR-009

PLACE: Portland Hills, California

DATE: September 17, 2008

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to
the recording accomplished at the hearing.

Kay Maurer
Transcriber