

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

BNSF TRAIN DERAILMENT AND COLLISION *
CASSELTON, NORTH DAKOTA *
DECEMBER 30, 2013 *

Docket No. DCA-14-MR-004

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Interview of: GEOFF ANDERSEN

Fargo, North Dakota

Thursday,
January 2, 2014

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MICHAEL HILLER
Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

MICHAEL HILLER, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

RAYMOND LINDSEY
MICHAEL BUCHHOLTZ
Operating Practices
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

KEVIN WILDE, General Director
System Safety
BNSF Railway

B.J. SHILLINGSTAD
UTU Transportation Safety Team
SMART/UTU

DANIEL KENNER
Safety Task Force
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and
Trainmen (BLET)

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Geoff Andersen:

By Mr. Hiller

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I N T E R V I E W

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MR. HILLER: All right. Good afternoon. I'm Mike Hiller, H-i-l-l-e-r, with the National Transportation Safety Board, railroad accident investigator, and we are here today with --

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MR. ANDERSEN: Geoff Andersen.

MR. HILLER: Geoff Andersen.

MR. ANDERSEON: Geoff is G-e-o-f-f, and Andersen is

s-e-n.

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MR. HILLER: Okay, A-n-d-e-r-s-e-n?

MR. ANDERSEN: That's correct.

MR. HILLER: Okay. Geoff Andersen was the student

engineer on the grain train in the accident involving the grain train derailment and the oil train collision that occurred on December 30th, 2013, NTSB accident number DCA-14-MR-004.

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In the room today, starting to my left, we have?

MR. SHILLINGSTAD: B.J. Shillingstad, S-h-i-l-l-i-n-g-s-

t-a-d, of the SMART/UTU.

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MR. BUCHHOLTZ: Michael Buchholtz, B-u-c-h-h-o-l-t-z,

FRA, Operating Practices.

MR. KENNER: Dan Kenner, K-e-n-n-e-r, Safety Task Force,

BLET.

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MR. LINDSEY: Raymond Lindsey, L-i-n-d-s-e-y, FRA,

Operating Practices.

MR. WILDE: Kevin Wilde, W-i-l-d-e, BNSF Railway,

1 Safety.

2 MR. HILLER: Very good.

3 INTERVIEW OF GEOFF ANDERSEN

4 BY MR. HILLER:

5 Q. So, what we'd like to do, Geoff, is have you
6 characterize or explain in as much detail the events of the day of
7 December 30th, starting when you received the call for duty, all
8 the way up to the point where you had the derailment, when you
9 subsequently left the train and you went to a point at which you
10 boarded the other locomotive of the oil train and then began
11 efforts to support movement of the oil train cars away from the
12 hot zone. So I'm going to turn it over to you, and you just kind
13 of start at the beginning.

14 A. Okay. Basically, I got up at about 8:00 Monday morning,
15 the 30th, and I was looking for a trip to go on. I initially
16 marked up on the northbound pool. Nothing was ordered on the
17 northbound pool, so I jumped ship and went to the Minot pool and
18 marked up with Engineer Cooks out of Minot. I was called
19 approximately -- we were on duty at 12:15, so I was called right
20 at 11:00, a 1-hour-and-15-minute call.

21 At this point I had already showered. I went out,
22 started my pickup, went to work, was there anywhere from 15, 20
23 minutes early, I guess. I don't remember exactly. Got paperwork
24 ready, got my GTBs, started looking stuff over, looking at the
25 wheel, looking at what we had for the day, how fast we could be

1 traveling, what kind of power we had. And at that point the crew
2 showed up right at 11:10, 11:15-ish, I suppose. Or 12:15. Sorry.

3 Showed up and our ride was waiting for us. They got
4 their paperwork in order, ready to go, looked at everything. We
5 got a ride out. I signed the DP card on the grain train at 1300,
6 got on the head end, had our briefing with the inbound engineer
7 and inbound conductor. Paul Douglas rode with us from 27th Street
8 in West Fargo to where everything happened.

9 Everything was -- we got on, I did a train check.
10 Everything with the train was performing properly, the horn, bell,
11 whistle, everything, headlights were good. We had 3200 gallons of
12 fuel in all three motors. We stopped at CP-20 for anywhere from 5
13 to 15 minutes. I don't remember exactly. At CP-20, we crossed
14 from main 2 to main 1, westward.

15 Let's see. I know a switch crew rolled us by somewhere
16 in West Fargo. I don't remember where. And I believe we had
17 another roll-by after CP-20, if my memory serves me. At the time
18 we were going through Casselton, I was in dynamic brake. I was
19 slowing down to let Paul Douglas off at CP-30, right next to the
20 ethanol plant. We went over the switch; the switch was smooth.
21 Everything felt fine with the tracks. The rails seemed perfectly
22 acceptable.

23 Went over the switch. About halfway over the switch,
24 the signal maintainer called us and asked if there was something
25 wrong with our train, said he saw parts flying. Immediately after

1 he said it, the train went into emergency. A and B, both the DP
2 motor and the head end motor dumped into emergency. I immediately
3 moved the automatic brake valve to emergency, actuated with the
4 independent, left the dynamic brake where it was, and brought the
5 train to a stop.

6 It never seemed like anything -- it seemed like a popped
7 hose. Nothing seemed rough at all. There was no slack action.
8 It was smooth the entire way to a stop, till about 10 mile an
9 hour, and then it started hopping because of the heavy brake
10 reduction.

11 After that we -- immediately after going into emergency,
12 Paul Douglas tried warning the other train by radio immediately.
13 Anywhere from 3 to 10 seconds later, the conductor called out
14 "Emergency, emergency, emergency" on the radio, with no response.
15 I couldn't tell you what was going on.

16 By the time we were -- I don't remember how close they
17 were to meeting us at that point. They might have already been by
18 us, too. But when we came to a stop, they were still moving, and
19 that's when we heard their emergency call on the radio. And the
20 engineer and the conductor looked out the back window and saw
21 fire. We grabbed our stuff. I flipped the generator field off on
22 the head locomotive, isolated it, left the automatic brake valve
23 in emergency, fully applied the independent, removed the reverser,
24 and left. Grabbed our stuff and we were gone.

25 I asked Paul Douglas if he wanted me to isolate the

1 second motor, and he said, "Don't worry about it. This is kind of
2 a special case scenario." So we left. We started walking west
3 down main 1 towards CP-30, which I guess it's anywhere from half
4 to a mile, I suppose. I don't know how far away we were.

5 We got down there. Ron Davis was his driver for the
6 day. He picked us up, and we kind of -- we hung out down by the
7 ethanol plant for a little bit. The fire department showed up. I
8 guess time is -- I don't know times here. I didn't look at all,
9 so -- the fire department asked us if we could make a cut in the
10 train. Me and the -- me and Tom Cooks jumped on the DP motor when
11 we figured out that we were going to be able to do it. Conductor
12 Bruce Anderson went back, made a cut, somewhere 49 to 50 cars, I'm
13 told. He went back and made the initial cut.

14 We pulled it westward toward CP-30, down to the road
15 crossing as close as possible, and me and Tom Cooks hung out on
16 the DP motor for 45 minutes to an hour, probably. Bruce Anderson
17 and Paul Douglas and Ron Davis went back to find the other crew on
18 the east end of Casselton. I hadn't heard anything from them, and
19 the fire department came back up and asked us if we could cut some
20 more cars off.

21 At this point I heard Nick O'Connell was on scene, the
22 trainmaster from Dilworth, and I asked Nick O'Connell if I may go
23 back and make another cut of cars off the train. He said as long
24 as it's safe and you feel comfortable doing it, go do it.

25 I initially was going to show the firemen how to re-

1 couple into the train and cut the air back in and decided against
2 it just on the principle that it's easier for me to go back and do
3 it instead of have him attempt something he's never had to do
4 before. So I went back and I cut another -- the fireman counted.
5 He said it was 26 more oil cans, down to and including a TAEX1514
6 or 1415. I don't remember exactly, and that's gone off my hand
7 now.

8 Q. I'm sorry. Say that again?

9 A. It was down to and including a TAEX1514, I believe, or a
10 1415. I wrote it down, but I've washed my hands a few times since
11 then, so -- which was approximately, by my guesstimate, 10 to 11
12 cars away from the fire. After that -- and we were using fire
13 department radios because neither I or the engineer had a portable
14 radio with us, so we couldn't do it on our radio channel. So I
15 asked the fire department for two portable radios and I gave one
16 to the engineer and I used another one.

17 After that, we pulled it westward to clear that crossing
18 down there. And by the time I got back to the engine, we were
19 sitting there maybe 5, 10 minutes, tied the engine down. I
20 believe I tied four car brakes to secure the train, and then at
21 that point we were picked up by Paul Douglas and Ron Davis.

22 Q. When you went back to the 26 cars the second time, what
23 was the status of the fire? Was it still burning hot, still
24 exploding? How would you characterize that?

25 A. It was still burning. It was burning very well. I

1 wouldn't say it was exploding, but there was flare-ups from the
2 (indiscernible) in the cars going up. But it was -- I don't
3 remember it being hot, to be honest with you.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. But I can guarantee you it was.

6 Q. What were you wearing?

7 A. I asked the fireman for his helmet, his Nomex hood, and
8 his jacket.

9 Q. Okay. So the helmet is just a regular helmet, and the
10 Nomex hood is just a regular --

11 A. A Nomex hood is the fire-resistant Nomex hood that they
12 wear. It covers your entire face, head, and the only part it
13 doesn't cover is basically from your nose up to your eyebrows.
14 The helmet was a standard-issue fire helmet, I guess you could
15 say. DOT regulations on those, I suppose. I don't remember what
16 they are, but --

17 Q. That's fine.

18 A. The coat was just your average everyday fire gear, I
19 guess you could say. I didn't look at the tags, to be honest with
20 you. I couldn't tell you.

21 Q. Okay. Did anybody go back with you?

22 A. He went back with me. He was not as close as I was. He
23 was, I don't know, anywhere from 100 yards to 150 yards from me.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. But I know, if somebody asked me to go with them, I

1 probably would have done it, but I can understand not wanting to
2 go with.

3 Q. So you were, you say, 10 or 11 cars from the hot fire,
4 the fire?

5 A. From the edge of the fire, where I -- from the edge of
6 the black. I couldn't see anything past it, so --

7 Q. Okay, 11 cars. Okay. And you were behind the throttle,
8 operating the train before the accident. And how many trips have
9 you made through Casselton?

10 A. Through Casselton? That's my sixth trip through
11 Casselton.

12 Q. Sixth trip? Okay.

13 A. Fifth or sixth. It's a hard railroad now. It's hard to
14 get anywhere on time, so -- and total for the engine program,
15 that's my 22nd trip.

16 Q. Okay, 22nd trip. Okay. And felt nothing normal -- or
17 abnormal throughout the trip?

18 A. Everything felt completely normal.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I never experienced anything out of the ordinary.

21 Q. Okay. Okay.

22 MR. HILLER: Kevin?

23 MR. WILDE: I don't have any questions.

24 MR. SHILLINGSTAD: No, sir, I have no questions.

25 MR. KENNER: No questions. Thank you.

1 MR. BUCHHOLTZ: No questions.

2 MR. LINDSEY: No questions.

3 BY MR. HILLER:

4 Q. Give me just a second.

5 Do you remember the name of the fireman that -- or did
6 you ever get his name that asked -- I mean, you know, you spent a
7 lot of time with this guy.

8 A. First name is Adrian. I do not know his last name.
9 He's an assistant chief with Casselton Fire Department.

10 Q. All right. That's probably pretty good enough.

11 And each time the fireman asked you to make a move --
12 two times, right -- did you -- you said you checked with Nick
13 O'Connell?

14 A. Yep.

15 Q. At least the second time you did, right?

16 A. Yep. The first time, I'm not sure who Paul Douglas
17 talked to, to be honest with you.

18 Q. Okay. Okay.

19 A. I know he was trying to get approval to do it the first
20 time. I'm not sure what happened, to be honest with you.

21 Q. Okay. At any time did you feel coerced into doing this?

22 A. No.

23 Q. No?

24 A. I voluntarily and willfully did it --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. -- knowing how much effort, time and money it could
2 save.

3 Q. Okay. That is all the questions I have for you, sir.
4 Do you have any for me?

5 A. I don't think so.

6 Q. Very good.

7 A. I think everybody has pretty much answered all my
8 questions I have already, so --

9 Q. All right.

10 MR. HILLER: Anything else from anybody?

11 All right. So concludes our interview at 20 minutes
12 after 2 p.m.

13 (Whereupon, at 2:20 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: BNSF TRAIN DERAILMENT AND COLLISION
 CASSELTON, NORTH DAKOTA
 DECEMBER 30, 2013
 Interview of Geoff Andersen

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-14-MR-004

PLACE: Fargo, North Dakota

DATE: January 2, 2014

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.

Lisa Fuerstenberg
Transcriber