

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

BNSF TRAIN DERAILMENT AND COLLISION *

CASSELTON, NORTH DAKOTA * Docket No. DCA-14-MR-004

DECEMBER 30, 2013 *

*

* * * * *

Interview of: BRIAN THOMPSON

Fargo, North Dakota

Wednesday,
January 1, 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 Brian Thompson:

By Mr. Hiller

4

I N T E R V I E W

1

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. HILLER: Good morning. Today is January 1st, 2014.

We are in the Holiday Inn hotel in Fargo, North Dakota. And today we are interviewing, hang on a second, Mr. Brian Thompson and he is the engineer of the oil train involved in DCA-14-MR-004.

My name is Mike Hiller, H-i-l-l-e-r. I am the Railroad Group Chairman for this investigation.

I'm going to go around the room, and I'm going to have everybody introduce themselves. And what I'd like to do is say your first name, spell your last name. Okay, we'll start to my right.

MR. SHILLINGSTAD: B.J. Shillingstad, S-h-i-l-l-i-n-g-s-t-a-d, representing SMART Union.

MR. LINDSEY: Raymond Lindsay, L-i-n-d-s-e-y, FRA Operating Practices.

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

MR. KENNER: Daniel Kenner, K-e-n-n-e-r, BLET.

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

MR. THOMPSON: I'm Brian Thompson, T-h-o-m-p-s-o-n, the engineer, BNSF Railway.

MR. HILLER: Very good, thank you.

INTERVIEW OF BRIAN THOMPSON

BY MR. HILLER:

Q. So, Mr. Thompson, what I'd like to do is start off with

1 your day on the day of the accident and all of those events that
2 preceded up to the time that you struck the derailed grain train.
3 So in your own words, start from the time you got called to work
4 to the time you arrived at work, and the communication and the
5 logistics or the details about, you know, getting to the point of
6 the time of the accident?

7 A. Well, on Monday morning, I was called out of -- out of
8 my hotel in Bismarck, North Dakota, for a 6-10 on duty. I took my
9 phone call in my hotel room as normal, got up, brushed my teeth
10 right away, washed my face, went downstairs right away to the
11 breakfast room, grabbed a cup of coffee, came back up, showered
12 and, typical, got ready to go to work. Went downstairs, got a
13 ride from our hotel down to the Mandan, North Dakota, crew office.

14 Q. Could you spell the Mandan?

15 A. M-a-n-d-a-n --

16 Q. Mandan, okay.

17 A. -- as the town.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. The Town of Mandan.

21 A. Yeah, is where the terminal is, we stay in Bismarck.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. There's two separate towns divided by a river.

24 Q. Good.

25 A. The -- Bernie, actually gave me a ride, is the guy's

1 name, one of the hotel owners, down.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Did the typical stopped at Dan's, it's a, like a grocery
4 store right next to the yard office in Mandan, got, picked up my
5 lunch that I get to take on the train with me so I have something
6 to eat and reported for work.

7 We got to work. We originally called for an M, Laurel-
8 Dilworth, when we got there. I got together with my conductor.
9 The yard master brought out paperwork, said you guys, you know,
10 got to -- we had to double over to go grab some more cars that
11 were pre-yard tested and whatnot.

12 And then in the meantime, he said well guys, I have a
13 U-train that came in on the main line. He goes, they're going to
14 do their -- the carmen are going to do their test in the
15 roundhouse is going to do all the inspection stuff. And if it
16 passes all inspections, no bad orders, I'm going to flip you guys
17 over to that train because I can get it out of here and open up
18 my, you know, a track to have, for another train to come in.

19 And I don't know, 10 minutes later, whatever, he came
20 out, it's, 15, 20, I, you know, their time gap in there. But he
21 came out and said hey guys, it passed the inspection, carmen, no
22 bad orders, anything. We're going to switch you over to the U-
23 train. I'm printing you out a wheel right now and the wheel came
24 out, and my conductor went over and got it.

25 And we went through the wheel, did our stuff, tonnage,

1 all that stuff, length, horsepower, compliance, all that stuff,
2 and the -- got in the van and went up to the train.

3 Boarded our train. I walked through the engines. I
4 took off the handbrakes in the engines, turned them all online,
5 even did a pass-by inspection even though they'd already been
6 inspected by the roundhouse. Checked the fuel on them and all
7 that and got up.

8 My conductor went and walked up and lined the one switch
9 that was against us in the Mandan yard. At that time, I had rung
10 up the dispatcher to change our GTB to the correct LEADER of our
11 locomotive. And after the dispatcher came on, my conductor
12 changed the GTB, it's the General Track Bulletins, to the correct
13 engine number. And Mandan yard gave us the okay to take the
14 signals and depart.

15 We took a warrant. Our first warrant was to, you have
16 to excuse me, I don't work the Mandan line much, it was the
17 Burleigh, is that the second siding, was to east Burleigh.

18 So we departed and got a, rolled my inspection at
19 Pierce, the first siding. There was a train in the siding there
20 waiting for us to go by. The conductor did get out and rolled us
21 by.

22 We continued on to Burleigh. We actually stopped at the
23 approach signal to Burleigh as the other train was not to Burleigh
24 yet, and you don't want to pass the approach signals, you'll knock
25 signals on that. So I stopped behind and sat there. And we sat

1 for, I mean, X amount of time, I can't remember, it wasn't a large
2 amount of time that we sat but, you know, 15 to 30 minutes. I --
3 you know, the tapes are out, so it'll tell you guys how long we
4 sat there, but --

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. -- there was X amount of time we sat, you know, and
7 before we departed, I did proper procedures and train check and
8 all that stuff. And they called us up, and when they told us they
9 had pushed it, you know, pushed the button, guys were heading in
10 the siding. And then we started to depart.

11 My conductor had taken another warrant to get us past
12 them, and we were coming up to what would be the approach signal
13 now to east Burleigh which would be west Burleigh, the signal
14 cleared up for us and we continued on our trip.

15 We got to our next warrant. I can't remember if our
16 net -- our next warrant was to -- I don't know if we had a warrant
17 in between there and east Windsor, or if we got one straight to
18 east Windsor from there. There might have been a warrant in
19 between there, but I can't recall.

20 I do recall, I know we had a warrant to east Windsor.
21 At one point, there might have been a warrant in between there to
22 somewhere else before we got one to east Windsor.

23 But, an uneventful normal trip. There was no cause for
24 concern on the trip. No -- everything was, you know, what would
25 be considered a normal day in the operation of a train.

1 When we did get our -- we came up to Windsor and I
2 remember there was a train in Windsor, and we came to a slow crawl
3 at Windsor because we didn't have a warrant yet past east Windsor.
4 And there was maintenance of way up working on the tracks or
5 signal or something, I saw a Herzog machine and all those guys out
6 there, but came to a slow roll.

7 We didn't come to a complete stop at Windsor. Okay. We
8 were down to 2, 3, 4 miles an hour. But my conductor then got
9 another warrant past Windsor to DT Eldridge and then to DT
10 Eldridge to DT Bloom.

11 So we continued into Jamestown and cleared Eldridge and
12 went downtown Jamestown, but hadn't heard from the other train
13 yet, so we stopped in -- at downtown Jamestown, North Dakota. We
14 sat there for not a long time, again, 15 to 30, 40 minutes, you
15 know, not a long time until the other train called us and said
16 we're going through, what, station is called Spiritwood. And it's
17 a heck of a climb out of Jamestown going east.

18 So once they tell us we're going through Spiritwood, we
19 continue up on -- we start pulling and continue through Jamestown
20 up the hill. And when we're pulling up the hill, it's a slow pull
21 up the hill, and they passed us and they cleared their -- cleared,
22 rolled up Bloom. And then the dispatcher gave us another warrant
23 from Bloom to east Sanborn.

24 We went to east Sanborn or to Sanborn and stopped behind
25 the crossing in Sanborn as there's an overlap in there. You don't

1 want to go past it --

2 Q. Right.

3 A. -- because it'll toss the signals --

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. -- on a train again coming at you.

6 So we stopped there at Sanborn for again at, you know,
7 for the amount of time, I can't tell you that, I'm heading in 30,
8 maybe 40 minutes. This one's a little longer stop.

9 There was a train working at Berea doing, picking up a
10 grain train in Berea, so they were doing, their conductor and
11 engineer were doing their work. They were having a lot of trouble
12 with switches being froze up and all that.

13 And you know, at one point, the engineer from that
14 train, I think it was Mr. Copp if I remember right, and Mr.
15 Congress was the conductor. I know the engineer had said well, he
16 had called the dispatcher and said we got a switch that's frozen
17 up, we can't get it, but maintenance of way was in the area. And
18 he called for maintenance of way and said hey guys, are you in the
19 area? And they said yeah. They said, hey, can you come take a
20 look at this switch and if it's, you know, really bad, we'll clear
21 up and let this train by that's sitting at, you know, sitting at
22 Sanborn.

23 And the maintenance of way foreman got up there and I
24 guess, checked it out. I heard him over the radio say yeah, guys,
25 it's -- we're going to go -- need to go get some other equipment

1 to get this cleaned out. And Mr. Copp goes okay, we'll clear up
2 then for that train and let those guys get on with their trip.

3 And so they cleared up with their power and the grain
4 elevator siding there and came on. And we got a warrant from
5 there the rest of the way in to double track Magnolia to KO
6 Junction Switch, and we continued on our trip.

7 We, you know, uneventful in and passed KO Junction
8 Switch on an approach medium, flashing yellow. My conductor did
9 call out the signal. We passed then, the CP-30, and at this time,
10 I -- we had heard the grain train crew talking to Ron Davis
11 about -- Ron had said something about Paul, I'm at the crossing
12 here at Tharladson to pick you up.

13 The grain train had a student engineer on it and the
14 road foreman engines was on it riding with him and was going to
15 get dropped off at the Tharladson crossing to, you know, get off
16 and let them continue their trip west, and you know, as I assume
17 go back, you know, all go back to Dilworth.

18 And we passed which is called CP-30 on our main at the
19 approach to the Casselton block --

20 Q. Um-hum.

21 A. -- at 43 miles an hour on an approach medium.

22 They had called out their signal also which would have
23 been the Casselton block because they were going westbound. They
24 also had an approach medium, and I believe they were even down in
25 the low 30s on theirs.

1 So I knew that, and I knew they were, you know, I said I
2 knew they were coming to a stop. I had heard them say, you know,
3 picking up Paul, you know, dah, dah, dah.

4 So we passed CP-30 coming up to the Town of Casselton.
5 Casselton has a 40 mile an hour head-end restriction slow order
6 through it. I've said I had my train at 43 miles an hour, which
7 is well within the prescribed limits of an approach medium and
8 what, you know, the rules are of BNSF.

9 And I had, you know, wasn't -- didn't have to, you know,
10 go hard in the dynos or anything as I was only -- you know, I had
11 plenty of time. I was 3 miles an hour over. I had plenty of time
12 just most likely, you know, and this is where things get fuzzy for
13 me. Did this, you know --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- easily, probably --

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. -- notched down, you know, and just probably let it
18 coast in at 40 miles an hour, you know. I did --

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. -- got 3 miles an hour, I don't have to take crazy here.
21 I don't have to do anything to, you know, that can train and, you
22 know, in my essence, it's kind of controlling itself at that point
23 because you don't have to do a lot --

24 Q. Right.

25 A. -- there. And I do remember, you know, as we passed,

1 obviously, we had fresh snow that day, the night before, you know,
2 the snow was rolling and kicking up --

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. -- and it does heavily reduce visibility.

5 And but like I said, I knew I was on a proceed
6 indication. I knew my next signal couldn't be --

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. -- red on me so, you know, I was on proceed to pass it
9 within the prescribed limits of what I needed to.

10 Q. Right.

11 A. And the snow, it's kicking up, and I know I even looked
12 over at that train and at this time is where things come really
13 fuzzy. And I've heard different stories, but I believe I did what
14 the protocol -- I believe I switched over to channel 39 to clear
15 our warrant. I think and that's when the perfect storm happened.

16 They must have derailed within seconds of me switching
17 over to channel 39. And I know -- don't know if my conductor, I
18 know he was reaching down in his bag which I believe he was
19 probably going to get his portable. I don't, you know, everything
20 went so fuzzy then because within seconds, I came through the snow
21 down and I saw a C-6 laying across my track.

22 And I, you know, I dumped the train. I knew though,
23 I've been out here 9 years, I knew what was behind me. I knew we
24 weren't stopping.

25 And I -- my conductor, you know, I think he's been out

1 here almost 2 years, but newer, you know, and we had talked, you
2 know, on the trip and we stopped, you know, we just talked about
3 normal daily activity and stuff. And I know his son's birthday
4 was coming up or daughter's, I can't remember, he had a -- he has
5 a son or daughter that had a birthday coming up.

6 And I know what came out of his mouth was holy -- what
7 do we do? And I told him to hit the ground. And we both jumped
8 on the cabin, the floor, and I don't know if it was, you know, an
9 hour or 3 seconds. But I knew what was coming, and I honestly
10 said a prayer. It was really quick.

11 Q. Um-hum.

12 A. Excuse me.

13 Q. Take your time. You need to stop?

14 (No audible response)

15 MR. HILLER: All right. We're going to pause for a
16 minute.

17 (Off the record.)

18 (On the record.)

19 MR. HILLER: All right. We are going to pick up where
20 we left off with the interview of Mr. Brian Thompson.

21 BY MR. HILLER:

22 Q. So Brian, let's continue.

23 A. Like I was saying, I'll back a little bit so it gets
24 everything.

25 Again, we passed CP-30 at 43 miles an hour. My

1 conductor called out the signal as required on the -- we were, you
2 know, proceeding normally and he said coming up to the 40 mile an
3 hour head-end restriction where we go 40 through the town of
4 Casselton.

5 And, you know, I'd looked over and the snow kicking up,
6 and like I said, I knew the grain train was coming to a stop to
7 drop off Mr. Douglas at the Tharladson crossing.

8 And at that time, you know, and I said this is where,
9 you know, I said it gets fuzzy and --

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. -- like I said, I know railroad's got the tapes, so I'm
12 going to state I will let the tapes speak for themselves at that
13 part --

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. -- because I, you know, when I interviewed earlier, I
16 couldn't remember, I -- you know, if I had switched, you know, I
17 know I didn't switch over to 39 if, until we had passed the signal
18 and called it out on the -- on channel 70.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And so, as procedure, we -- I went, from what I've been
21 told by other people that were on both channels, you know, where
22 one train was on 39, the other was on 70, that, you know, I saw,
23 like I said, I saw the C-6 laying in my track. And, you know, it
24 was milliseconds, half a second, you know, I dumped the train
25 immediately. But I -- like I said, I knew what I was hauling. I

1 knew how long it takes to stop a train when you're hauling that
2 much weight, especially on a day that's 20 below zero because your
3 air doesn't work the same when it's 20 below zero than when it's
4 70 degrees outside.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. And like I said, my conductor looked at me, he just as
7 big as eyed as I was, and said, what?

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. And I just told him, I said hit the ground, and we both
10 hit the ground. And, you know, like it was seconds and bam, you
11 know, this -- and I knew we weren't going to just, you know, I --
12 people would think with that much weight, you just throw that C-6,
13 you know, toss it to the side and keep on going, and I knew that
14 wasn't going to be the outcome of this. I had a fully loaded C-6
15 laying across your track, I knew we weren't blowing through that
16 C-6.

17 And you know, it had crossed my mind, you know, do we
18 jump, do we? And I thought better of that because I knew what we
19 were hauling. I knew in my head them tanks were going to bust
20 open, those tanks were going to come piling, you know, on top of
21 everything.

22 So I knew the best, because like I said, I told him, I
23 said get down and hold on. And it was like a thunderstorm when we
24 hit that thing just crashing and noise and, you know, I -- that
25 part, you know what, I can't tell you what happened from the time

1 we hit it 'til, you know, we came to a stop, just all the bang and
2 boom and --

3 And we came to a stop and I looked at my conductor and
4 obviously, you know, thought when I opened my eyes, are we alive
5 or are we dead? And looked and looked to him, and I -- you know,
6 are you okay? And he said yeah, and we both stood up and turned
7 around.

8 And I don't know if it was him or me or whoever first
9 one yelled that there's fire, there's a lot of fire. And I
10 don't -- and he's, what do we do? And I think he was trying to
11 gather stuff. I told him you get in your bag, you grab your cell
12 phone, and you run.

13 And I know he, you know, it's instinct when -- at that
14 time, I think it was him, he even said, he said, we are on fire
15 also, our engine. And I, you know, the first action is to get
16 away from the fire. So I know he tried to go out the front door
17 and, obviously, you can't go off the front door, there was nothing
18 left of the front engine.

19 And I, you know, he told me when he -- went running by
20 me out the back door, he said the front door's jammed, front
21 door's jammed, back, back, back. And, you know, that's the last
22 place you wanted to go because ground was on fire, the engine was
23 on fire --

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. -- but it was our only exit.

1 And I just, I reached in at this time. I know I grabbed
2 my cell phone out of my bag because I know I needed to communicate
3 with the world. I know I need to dial 9-1-1. And I don't remember
4 this part, this comes from other guys and other trains, said,
5 Brian, you got up and you switched the channel back to 72 and
6 warned everybody on 70 to get out of there.

7 And I don't -- I honestly can't remember that part. But
8 I have talked to the engineer that was in the train in front of
9 me, and he said Brian, you got on 70, yelled emergency out, told
10 the dispatcher, I don't know, it's, the -- we had a crash and I
11 don't know, it was something along the lines of we are on fire and
12 we are a key train.

13 And then I -- did I say, you said something along the
14 line, you said I got to get out of here. And I went running out
15 the back locomotive, exit it because we were tilted a little bit
16 to the one side, and I went out the opposite side of the
17 locomotive and took off running eastbound.

18 Went to the -- up to the main line because that was the
19 clearest path to run on because there was no snow, you had to trek
20 to them. I was holding to turn my cell phone on and when my cell
21 phone powered up, I dialed 9-1-1 on my phone.

22 I know the dispatcher I believe called my conductor
23 right away, where are you guys, where are you guys, where, you
24 know, are you guys? And we just told them we are running, we're
25 heading east, you know, we're -- we seem to be okay, we're heading

1 east. And I don't know what other conversation he had, you know,
2 with the dispatcher because he was on his phone and I was on with
3 9-1-1.

4 And I mean, those tapes I'm sure, you know, I'll let
5 them speak for themselves. I know I told the dispatcher, I said
6 you need to call HazMat teams, you need to go -- I know she said
7 something about, do I need to call Casselton Fire? I said you
8 need to call every fire department.

9 And at that time, a truck came up a road from the
10 Casselton grain elevator there. And luckily, three guys, you
11 know, came up and, you know, "Come on, guys, come on," you know,
12 and we ran over to their truck and jumped in their truck and,
13 guys, I said, we need to get away. I said turn around, we need to
14 get away from this. And the guy's name ironically was Brian.

15 And his two guys, it was a single cab truck, his two
16 guys that are with him jumped in the back because they had
17 Carhartts on and all their stuff. And --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- you know, as we exited the engine, the only thing I
20 grabbed was my coat and, you know, my cell phone. Everything else
21 I just said I don't care, you know.

22 And he -- we got in the front, and he drove us up to the
23 grain elevator. And at this time, my phone had died. I had
24 dropped it when we were running in the snow and fumbled with it
25 all and it got all wet, so it was powering down and powering up.

1 But I know the 9-1-1 operator, she told me, you know, I need you
2 to stay on the line and I lost her.

3 So I got it warmed up, then it turned back on, and I
4 called her back and said this is a, you know, she said oh God,
5 good because she thought, you know, something had happened to us.

6 And I said what do you need us to do? She just asked
7 us, I need you to report to the Casselton High School. She said
8 we're setting up command post there.

9 So this Brian guy took us there, and we actually were
10 there by ourselves until the first deputy sheriff showed up for
11 15 minutes or so.

12 And then he showed up and, you know, just kind of asked,
13 well which, you know, crew were you. I said I'm a -- I was on the
14 train. And I could hear his chatter on the radio, and I heard
15 people, they're saying people are up watching this. And I told
16 him, I said I don't think you understand what is going on here. I
17 said you need to get those people away from there.

18 And I don't think he grasped what was going on until I
19 told him, I said do you know the story of the train in Canada? I
20 said that's the type of train I am. And his eyes got big, you
21 know, then he said Code Red on his radio. I remember that.

22 And then I don't know how much longer until Paul Douglas
23 and Ron Davis and Bruce Anderson showed up. They were --
24 Mr. Anderson was the conductor off the grain train. Paul Douglas,
25 the road foreman engines in Dilworth, and then Ron Davis is an

1 engineer in Dilworth that does the mentoring for the LEADER
2 systems and fuel optimizer and all that stuff.

3 And I know Paul got out and the first thing he did is
4 just ran over and gave me a hug, you know, said, I didn't know if
5 you were alive.

6 And from there, you know, everything was just, you know,
7 taken over by, you know, the sheriff department and them. But we
8 actually were taken out to I believe it's the rural Casselton Fire
9 Department --

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. -- at one point, and they had set up, you know, there
12 were firemen all there. The chief fireman I know from Fargo was
13 there. Casselton assisted and a bunch of firemen, EMS, and all
14 them were there.

15 And, you know, Dana Gibbs came, one of our train
16 masters, and then her Beamer (ph.) terminal manager, Nick
17 O'Connell, one of our train masters, you know.

18 But for the most part at that point, we were just there,
19 you know. We did get our -- me and my conductor both had our
20 lungs checked out just as precautionary matter. You know, other
21 than that, it was, you know, just kind of sit around and wait and
22 then, you know, we were there, but then at one point, one of the
23 firemen came over and said guys, we're evacuating here too. We
24 got to get out of here.

25 You know, and at that point, we -- I and -- my conductor

1 and myself got in -- well, no, excuse me, back up here. A
2 sheriff, deputy sheriff grabbed me and wanted to do a really quick
3 interview with me where he got my name, phone number, that type of
4 stuff. But it was really just pretty much that's what he got,
5 that's all he really wanted he said in case I need to talk to you
6 about a -- the report, you know.

7 And then we got in with Dana Gibbs, and Dana took us in
8 for our FRA testing.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Then we went to the Stanford [sic], no it's not the
11 hospital, down in, you know, the clinic or -- on 12th Avenue North
12 in Fargo and did our blood draw and did our, you know, piss test
13 and all that stuff.

14 I got through with all that, which took quite a long
15 time because you had six, I think six of us; the conductor on my
16 train, myself, the engineer off the other train, the student
17 engineer, and the conductor, so there was five of us to do. So we
18 were there for, you know, quite some time.

19 Then we were taken back over to the Dilworth yard office
20 after all that, and Mr. Albacoates (ph.) did our interviews there.
21 And I eventually went home from Dilworth at I believe 1 in the
22 morning, you know.

23 Q. Okay, thank you, Brian. That's a good detailed account.
24 Can you just tell me what your prior assignment was, you know,
25 where were you in your work cycle, was this your second day of

1 work --

2 A. This was my seventh day of work.

3 Q. This was your seventh, okay.

4 A. It was my seventh start. I was on my 72 hours of rest,
5 so when I tied up in Dilworth.

6 Q. Okay, so this was your seventh day, and how about,
7 backup to the 3 days. Give me the prior 3 days, whether --

8 A. Give this to Mr. Buchholtz --

9 Q. If you -- if, yeah, if you can, you know.

10 A. I, you know, I was plenty rested, you know --

11 Q. Um-hum.

12 A. -- the night. Coming to work at 6:10 in the morning, I
13 was fully rested.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I actually had got actually very good sleep.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. I know I went to bed the night before by, like I said, I
18 got into Mandan, I went to the hotel and put my -- got my hotel
19 room, put my grip in my room, that, got my wallet and walked a
20 block over to Paradiso and had dinner. I don't know some type of
21 burrito things --

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. -- and ate those.

24 I was over there for maybe an hour and walked back over
25 to the hotel, went up to my room, turned the Cowboy/Eagles game

1 on.

2 Q. Um-hum.

3 A. I didn't even make it to halftime in the game, and I
4 know I just said I'm tired.

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. I turned the TV off and rolled over and went to sleep.
7 And I did not wake up until my call --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- to come to work.

10 The trip before that, I went to -- on Friday I worked to
11 Northtown or Minneapolis, got down there, tied up, had I believe
12 around a 9-hour trip, nineish. I believe it was right around a 9-
13 hour trip down to Northtown on Friday night. Got to Northtown, my
14 conductor and I, Mr. Sime (ph.), went and had dinner along with
15 our student conductor.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 Q. Well, Mr. Sime always makes it a point if he gets a
18 student conductor, he takes them out to dinner because then, you
19 know, talk railroad with him, you know, let him know, you know,
20 about the railroad and stuff. And he does -- he's been out here a
21 long time, you know, he's -- actually he was the -- a local
22 chairman that I actually took over for.

23 But me and him and her went to dinner on that Friday,
24 and I went back to my room, got plenty of sleep. I actually was
25 in Northtown for 18 hours, it was a little more. I know I got, I

1 think I got two, you know, and -- I know I went there 18 hours
2 plus on -- between Friday and Saturday.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. So then on Saturday morning, I just woke up, you know,
5 normally, you know, didn't wake up to an alarm, didn't, you know,
6 just woke up. You know, my body, I normally sleep 7 to 8 hours
7 and after that, I just up. There's no, you know, no I -- and me
8 and Mr. Sime actually had went to breakfast on Saturday morning.
9 And then actually Dusty Helling (ph.) joined us for breakfast.

10 We were having breakfast that morning. I actually took
11 my call while we were eating breakfast; in Northtown, we get a
12 2-hour call --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. -- down there. I, you know, had taken my call and went
15 to work and had a normal, you know, trip home to Dilworth.

16 And that night, I knew, you know, which in hindsight I
17 wish I wouldn't have done this, but I wanted to get my sixth and
18 seventh start in because hey, you know, as everybody knows the
19 railroad industry, if I can buy off a holiday, you know, New
20 Year's Eve, I'm going wait a second. If I get a start Sunday and
21 Monday, I get New Year's off, so I thought yep.

22 So I'm a guy that, you know, luckily, you know, I'm --
23 even though I'm -- you know, only been an engineer for roughly
24 over 2 years or whatever, I can hold Northtown and Mina pool most
25 of the time, you know, I can hold a decent pool.

1 And I thought, well, the only way I'm going to get my
2 sixth and seventh start is to go to the extra board. So I filled
3 my sheet out for the extra board and it transferred me, there was
4 blank spots in the extra board, there were open spots I should
5 say, so it moved me over to the extra board right away.

6 And I believe I was rested at 7:20 in the morning --

7 Q. Um-hum.

8 A. -- on the Sunday and I went to work at 9 a.m., so I
9 again, I slept until -- I knew I was going to work again right
10 away because by the time I got home, I logged onto the computer
11 because, obviously, the phone won't call me and let me know I'm
12 transferred over until I'm rested.

13 Q. Got it.

14 A. But if I log in and initiate it myself, it'll let me
15 know.

16 Q. And so it let me know right away, you've been, you know,
17 moved to board 30 and everything was okay. I knew, looked at the
18 board, well, I'm second out, you know, so I know I'm going to
19 work. You know, I figured I was going to work right at 7:20 or
20 7:30, it was one of the two. I was rested, I figured well, I'll
21 be going to work right at one of those times.

22 And you know what was kind of nice? My phone actually
23 didn't ring until 7:30 to go to work at 9:00, so I got, you know,
24 but, again, I slept until my phone rang and got up, did my normal
25 things that -- you know, a little different when you're at home.

1 I grab a shower. I have my children, which are my
2 dogs --

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. -- got up, you know, took the dogs outside for a quick
5 walk, you know, let them run around a little bit, and fed the
6 dogs, got my bag together, you know, did all that, and went to
7 work, you know, stopped at the grocery store like I always do, got
8 food and that led up to Sunday morning to go to Mandan.

9 Q. Got it, okay. One last question from me right now, you
10 mentioned cell phone. Can you provide that number for me?

11 A. Yeah, 701-200-3316.

12 Q. And what's your carrier?

13 A. Sprint.

14 Q. Sprint.

15 A. As I stated (indiscernible) my phone was 100 percent off
16 at all times when it's required to be.

17 Q. Good.

18 A. And we -- they said that. I knew to me, the one thing I
19 said, I knew we needed those cell phones --

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. -- because I needed to warn other -- I knew what I was
22 carrying.

23 And I -- you know, I -- you know, I maybe should have
24 told him grab your radio too, but that didn't cross my mind. I
25 know I had switched over and got up and told people on the

1 radio --

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. -- you know, and the dispatcher knew what was going on,
4 but I knew I needed it.

5 My first concern was with other people, then myself.
6 Then I knew I need to get people away because I knew there were
7 already people obviously pulling up to access roads that were a
8 lot closer --

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. -- than they should be.

11 Q. Uh-huh. Yeah, yeah.

12 A. I -- if you personally, I mean, I will go, you can come
13 with me, and I will provide you my records and my cell phone.

14 Q. No, we're fine. It is a question we ask --

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. -- all members of the train crew.

17 A. No --

18 Q. So --

19 A. No, at any time during that trip when we had stopped, we
20 had used our phones, but we did our briefing --

21 Q. Right.

22 A. -- how it was supposed to be, you know, okay, we're
23 stopped, I'm set and centered, the area's set, okay, if you need
24 to use your cell phone or whatever, this is the time you can use
25 it.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. You know, and --

3 Q. I'm used to --

4 A. -- before we would ever start again, I always look at my
5 conductor, cell phone off, cell phone off, in the bag, in the bag,
6 let's go.

7 MR. HILLER: It's good practice, it is. I don't have
8 anymore questions. So what I'll do is I'll look to my right.

9 MR. LINDSEY: I don't have any questions.

10 MR. SHILLINGSTAD: No, sir.

11 MR. WILDE: No. Thank you, Brian.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

13 MR. HILLER: All right. No further questions.

14 Whereupon, at 10:19 Wednesday, January 1st, 2014, interview with
15 Mr. Brian Thompson is concluded.

16 (Whereupon, at 10:19 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

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 Brian Thompson

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-14-MR-004

PLACE: Fargo, North Dakota

DATE: January 1, 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.

Christina Neilson
Transcriber