



Survival Factors Attachment 7 – First Responder Interviews

Penwell, Texas

HWY15MH004

(148 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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PRISON TRANSPORT BUS CRASH

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NEAR PENWELL, TEXAS

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Docket No.: HWY-15-MH-004

JANUARY 14, 2015

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Interview of: [REDACTED]

Central Fire Station

Odessa, Texas

Saturday,

January 17, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: [REDACTED]

Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:

██████████, Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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By Mr. [REDACTED]		4

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. [REDACTED]: Today's date is January 17th, 2015. I'm
3 at the Central Fire Station in Odessa, Texas. I'm NTSB
4 Investigator [REDACTED]. I am with Odessa Battalion Chief
5 [REDACTED]. And the battalion chief is going to give us a
6 description of the crash, when he got the call and what all he and
7 his crew did.

8 MR. [REDACTED]: Ready?

INTERVIEW OF [REDACTED]

9
10 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. We were sent on a, just a rollover on I-20 when the
13 original alarm come in at 7:37 in the morning. We were sent to
14 the 17,000 block of West I-20. En route, you know, we always ask
15 dispatch what do we have, any information, number of patients.
16 They replied back to me that DPS was on scene, so we assumed it
17 was a -- you know, a single-vehicle rollover.

18 When we got in the area, which the area of 17,000 block
19 is about 866 and I-20, I notified dispatch and said I'm in the
20 area, I don't see anything; I'm going to continue west. Dispatch
21 replied back to me that DPS said there's been another accident,
22 that he had witnessed another accident, and that's really all the
23 information we had.

24 Q. And that came from dispatch that there was --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Then they sent back and said Battalion 1, we got a
3 report that there might be a vehicle on the train track, and I
4 told her get us some more information because, you know, number
5 one, we didn't even know what area for sure this accident was.

6 So I continued west, and I got the cap rock there where
7 it -- where the cap rock drops off and the bridge and the railroad
8 comes under. We're all aware of that. We have a lot of accidents
9 in that area. And the only reason I know that we were in the
10 right area is I seen a car on the north side of I-20, right there
11 at the bridge, that was rolled, and a guardrail was tore up and in
12 the interstate, which we had a lot of traffic in the right-hand
13 lane. So I got around them and parked, thinking it was this
14 accident, this rollover that was on the north side of the -- I-20.

15 The way we operate here is we have a battalion chief and
16 then I have a division captain that responds with me. He's kind
17 of like my safety guy. He's always -- anything I respond on, he
18 responds on. And he parked behind me. I got out, put my gear on,
19 and the medic had rolled up. And the cars heading eastbound right
20 there at the bridge, I seen them sliding, and I'm thinking to
21 myself they're fixing to come over and take us out. So I told the
22 medic come on past, you know, get up behind these concrete
23 barriers. I was more -- that's all I thought is, we got a
24 rollover here, we've got cars coming, they're not slowing down.

25 And I got my gear on, and right there where the two

1 bridges was -- I was in the westbound lane -- between the bridges,
2 an individual waved at me and said, hey --

3 Q. Down below?

4 A. They were -- they wasn't going down the concrete
5 embankment. They were just standing between the bridges. And he
6 was like, hey, come here.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And --

9 Q. An individual? Do you know -- it wasn't --

10 A. Yeah, a passerby. I don't know who it was. And he
11 said, no, I think it's down here.

12 And so when I walked between the bridges and got to the
13 concrete embankment that went down, I could see the tracks and I
14 could see a ton of boxes and trash. And I'll be honest, I still
15 never even thought -- I thought maybe a van went off or -- and he
16 said, no, it's down here. So I started down the concrete
17 embankment, and I looked back to the south, and that's the first
18 time I knew it was a bus. I mean, we had no radio communication.
19 We thought it was a one-vehicle rollover. I mean, that's what we
20 were responding on.

21 So I run down the embankment. There was a DPS officer
22 there, and I see him every day, and I feel bad I can't tell you
23 his name. You probably already know because he was the first --

24 Q. [REDACTED]? [REDACTED]?

25 A. Tall, big, stocky.

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. Hispanic guy. Real -- he's the bomb, by the way. He's
3 a good, good guy.

4 Q. Yes. Yeah, I met him.

5 A. Oh, yeah, he's -- so I run down there and seen him. And
6 I was on the east side of that bus, up on that embankment. Went
7 down the bus and seen the two guards laying where the -- I guess
8 the driver's seat's supposed to be. Seen them there. One was
9 really, really bad as far as tore up.

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. The other one was kind of guppy breathing. I mean, he
12 was, he was bad. And I'm still trying to think, you know, what
13 have we got? I recognized the bus as being a Texas Department of
14 Corrections bus, so I stepped up on a piece of metal there and
15 looked down in there, and that's when I seen all the prisoners.

16 So I called and told them we had a bus, it was a Texas
17 Department of Corrections bus, at least 15 people. We had a mass
18 casualty. Called for three additional engines and three
19 additional medics. And the crew on scene that was going with me
20 on the original accident was Engine 7, Rescue 7, myself and
21 Division 1. Division 1 was still up on the bridge checking that
22 car. He didn't even know. So he heard my radio traffic. Rescue
23 7 crew that I waved up on the bridge to get them out of -- worried
24 about people, they heard it. So they continue -- they gassed it
25 and went down west until they could cross the interstate, and then

1 they ended up on that service road on that west side.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. So when they pulled up, which I'm, you know, still
4 trying to assess it, I told them, you know, we were going to --
5 they were going to be triage. We were going to start trying to
6 get them out and they were going to be my triage people. And that
7 was [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

8 So at that point it was me and the DPS officer, a couple
9 of bystanders, and the Rescue 7 crew, which was [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].
10 [REDACTED], which is Division 1, heard that traffic, and he
11 started making his way down there.

12 Q. And where -- he was up --

13 A. He was still up there where I parked. You know, we were
14 still thinking this rollover on the north side of the interstate.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. None of us had a clue what had happened. Instantly,
17 we -- [REDACTED] got in and instantly we put a board up, and
18 there was one prisoner, one inmate there that was --

19 Q. And how did she get in?

20 A. Through the front.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. You know, it was light --

23 Q. Because the whole front was torn off, basically.

24 A. Through that opening.

25 Q. Okay, so -- but the cage was still --

1 A. It wasn't completely closed. We could get by it. It
2 was --

3 Q. So it had kind of come off from the wall partially?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Because the front of it was already torn off, so --

6 A. It did. And pretty quickly she was pulling the first
7 inmate out.

8 Q. And she's a medic or a firefighter?

9 A. We're both here. We're all firefighters and paramedics,
10 so --

11 Q. Okay, okay.

12 A. So the passerby that waved me down there was with us. A
13 tall, lanky guy that later I said, who are you and what are you
14 doing here? And he said I'm a truck driver from Mississippi and I
15 witnessed it. He helped us tremendously. Never did get his name.
16 He just kind of vanished. But, I mean, he --

17 Q. A truck driver from Mississippi. Yeah, I just -- I
18 don't know if that -- we haven't heard about any other witnesses.

19 A. Yeah. And he helped us 80 percent, almost till the --
20 we got the last body, and he just said --

21 Q. Really?

22 A. Yeah. And he said -- a couple of times he said I need a
23 minute and he -- you know, he would turn around and you could tell
24 -- which, hell, it bothered me and I've seen a lot of stuff in 32
25 years. I mean --

1 Q. Right.

2 A. Well, we got one inmate out fairly quick.

3 Q. So then [REDACTED] pulled one out real quick?

4 A. [REDACTED] got one that started. We had the four --

5 Q. Now, wasn't the inmate connected, chained or --

6 A. This one wasn't.

7 Q. Okay, so there was one that was --

8 A. We didn't even think -- that early and that quick we
9 didn't even realize, hey, they're cuffed.

10 Q. Right.

11 A. He was just right there, kind of where she -- and she'll
12 be able to explain it better. But she just said, Chief, I got one
13 right here. We threw a board up, which the front of that vehicle
14 and down to the tracks was eye level.

15 Q. Sure. Yeah.

16 A. And she, you know -- and when you meet her, she's just
17 a --

18 Q. The bus is on its side.

19 A. And it's on its side. She had pulled one out and we got
20 it, and I couldn't tell you who. We got him down pretty quick.
21 You know, and we're still -- I'm still calling medical center,
22 letting them know we got a mass casualty, be prepared for the
23 worst. And then somebody hollered, said, Chief, we got one back
24 here. So I went to the back of the bus and somebody was holding
25 the back up, and [REDACTED] was there with the guard, and we --

1 me and him and one of the two passerbys, not the truck driver but
2 the other one, we picked the guard up and got him out on a
3 backboard. And then, you know, time was dragging. You know, I'm
4 sitting there calling for all this help to try to get them there.

5 Q. Well, tell me what all you were calling out for.

6 A. Well, like I said, I called for three more engines,
7 which would have give us, you know, 12 people, and then I called
8 for 3 additional medics.

9 Q. Okay. And so these would have been --

10 A. So that would have put --

11 Q. -- been from Odessa?

12 A. From Odessa.

13 Q. Right.

14 A. That would put a total of 4 fire trucks, which is 16
15 people; 4 ambulances, which was an additional 8. But, you know,
16 you're out there, the roads are icy, we were -- you know how it
17 is. It just -- time just drug by.

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. I'm sitting there thinking, oh, my gosh, what are we --
20 you know?

21 Q. Right.

22 A. And so we got them two out real quick, you know, within
23 the first 3 or 4 minutes, 5 minutes, and laid them out there on
24 the track, you know, on the backboards. And a medic got there,
25 which was Rescue 1 crew. That was the first medic that got there.

1 And I know -- I got to back up a little bit, though.

2 Q. Sure.

3 A. You know, our original response was Engine 7, Rescue 7,
4 myself and Division 1.

5 Q. And that would be how many people, initially, for that?

6 A. Four on the fire truck, two on a medic, and myself and
7 the division captain, so eight.

8 Q. Eight.

9 A. At that point, I'm sitting there thinking, where is
10 Engine 7? They had got caught up in the interstate down here in
11 all that traffic. Heard my radio traffic that we got a bus down
12 here, so they're trying to get turned around to figure out how to
13 get down to that service road area.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. So they're doing that the whole time and somewhere in
16 that point I'm like, where are you all at? Well, they almost got
17 hit a couple of times from traffic. They were trying to cross --
18 and you seen how --

19 Q. Across the median?

20 A. -- deep the bar ditches in the median was.

21 Q. Yeah, sure.

22 A. They ended up getting turned around, but they had to go
23 all the way back towards town, to Moss, to get by the train to get
24 on the south side of the tracks to come around by the plant there.

25 Q. On that service road?

1 A. That's right. So it took them -- it seemed like hours
2 for me, but --

3 Q. Probably like 10 minutes?

4 A. Ten minutes.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. Yeah. So I'm, where you all at? I need your help, you
7 know. We had -- I didn't know how many we had in there. We
8 couldn't tell.

9 So we got the first two out. One of the first medics
10 that got there from the group of units that I called, the first
11 one was Rescue 1.

12 Q. The extra units you called?

13 A. The extra units. They showed up. So instantly, we
14 picked them two up. The two that we already got extricated, they
15 were the first two out. They were the first two, quickest two.
16 And then as units started getting there, Engine 7 got there, and
17 we started trying to figure out getting them out of the front or
18 what we couldn't, because the cages were affecting us. Cages were
19 on top of people. We figured out they were cuffed together. I'm
20 still standing, kind of standing off on that west embankment,
21 trying to manage it, get out of the hands-on like I was early.
22 And it was determined we can't get them out, so we were -- Captain
23 ██████ --

24 Q. And you couldn't get them out --

25 A. Through the front of the vehicle. It was --

1 Q. There just wasn't enough room?

2 A. Wasn't enough room. Too much stuff.

3 And as the units started arriving, they -- actually, I
4 moved -- we had a ladder leaned up on the bus. I stood up on -- I
5 got up on top of the bus, and that's really kind of where I
6 managed the scene from then on because I could look down in the
7 bus through the tears in the bus to see them getting them.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. And we cut that front out, folded it out of the way, and
10 start -- that's where we started extricating, you know, one at a
11 time.

12 Q. And so how did you end up -- you said you got some
13 straps and you were able to pull the rest of that cage out, but
14 the one side of the cage --

15 A. Yeah, the cages that are in the way, we were able to tie
16 them up, kind of pick them up, tie them up. We could use the
17 straps to put around them to help us pick them up, especially to
18 get the dead out, to get to the living. We could hear them. You
19 know, we could hear them and see them and -- the conscious
20 living.

21 Q. So the first two you pulled out, we know that the
22 officer that was in the back --

23 A. He was the officer.

24 Q. -- did survive. And so even the first guy you guys
25 pulled out --

1 A. That's correct. Every one we hauled has survived so
2 far, as far as I know.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. But we had a couple of people inside, and we cut that
5 hole, and we cut it with a K-12 saw, which was probably pretty
6 terrifying for the people inside because it's --

7 Q. Sure.

8 A. -- loud and sparks and -- but the firefighters were
9 holding pieces of stuff up on the inside to block the sparks
10 and --

11 Q. Sparks, yeah. So that's that square hole you cut right
12 there behind the cage --

13 A. That's right.

14 Q. -- pretty much? Okay.

15 A. So then, you know, we started one at a time, whoever is
16 on top, we were trying to cut their handcuffs. One at a time, we
17 would -- we would move one. We probably pulled one or two out
18 that were dead. You know, it was like the number three and four
19 person that we pulled out, they were deceased, to get to a live --
20 one that was alive. You know, so we were just systematically
21 pulling one out. He was deceased, so we laid him -- I'm sure
22 you've seen the pictures -- in the front. We laid him out there.
23 Pulled another one, check another one, deceased. Just working our
24 way down the, basically, the stack of people.

25 Q. And where were they all stacked up? Was that pretty

1 much right behind that one cage?

2 A. It was.

3 Q. The front cage?

4 A. In that one area. But they were kind of between them
5 cages. I mean, they were all just like right there, really, in
6 that open area. Because later we started pulling them chairs out,
7 out of our way.

8 Q. Well, that was the question I was going to ask you. Did
9 you guys have to -- I know you pulled some of the -- did you pull
10 any of the chairs out or were they just piled up in that -- in
11 your way?

12 A. And you'll have to ask some of them that were in. Like
13 Captain [REDACTED] here was inside. He went inside there. But once
14 we got the front cage out, which this was several victims into it
15 before we were -- we pulled that front cage, kind of finally got
16 it out of our way and we started throwing chairs out.

17 But like I said, probably three and -- number three and
18 four were deceased. We pulled a live one out, another -- and I
19 can't tell you exactly -- another deceased or two, and then we got
20 two alive ones out, and then the rest after that were deceased.

21 Q. So once you got inside, cut the hole through the roof,
22 and then after that you were able to pull away more of that cage
23 so you can easily get them out instead of trying to get them
24 through the roof?

25 A. That's right.

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. Yeah, we were -- we put that strap around them so the
3 people -- even me up top and the people outside were able to kind
4 of pick up on them, especially the deceased, to try to pick them
5 up. And we had a board laying out of that hole. We put a board
6 there, slide them up on the board. Firefighters would carry them
7 down if they were deceased or carry them to the medic. If they
8 were deceased, we would lay them out there and come back and have
9 another board there, we were pulling the next one out.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And just systematically trying to get dead, alive --
12 dead to get to alive. And that probably -- I mean, honestly, it
13 probably took an hour and a half total.

14 Q. To get everybody out?

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Just because you had the chairs and you had all that
17 stuff?

18 A. And they were cuffed together.

19 Q. And they were cuffed together and you had to cut the
20 cuffs.

21 A. Trying to cut the cuffs and, you know, after about three
22 cuffs, you know, your bolt cutters just -- you know, I guess that
23 hardened steel just made it where it was difficult. And we
24 finally -- you know, and people were arriving. I would see an SO
25 officer, a DPS officer, I seen the sheriff showed up. You know,

1 I'm the whole time trying to keep account of what we had and who
2 we've told. And I'd asked the sheriff get us a count. I wanted
3 to know, number one, did somebody get, you know, drug down the
4 road. As resources got there, I'd ask a chief officer that showed
5 up would you walk down there and, you know, start looking for --
6 towards the train, is what I'm talking about.

7 Q. You asked the sheriff to go do that and --

8 A. I'd asked the sheriff to get us --

9 Q. A count.

10 A. -- a count.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. You know, trying to get an idea of --

13 Q. Sure.

14 A. -- what we had and how many we had and who was accounted
15 for, who wasn't.

16 Q. And who did you ask to go down the tracks and look, make
17 sure there wasn't anybody else?

18 A. Chief [REDACTED]. He showed up. He's our training chief.
19 He showed up -- I can't tell you -- 20 minutes after I got there
20 or 30 minutes. But I'd asked him to kind of walk down the tracks
21 there and -- because it was -- you know, I think the thing that
22 hit me the very -- as soon as I walked down there, you know, and
23 realized what I had is, where is the running gear? I didn't see a
24 frame, I didn't see a tire, I didn't see an engine, I didn't see a
25 seat, I didn't -- so all that's, you know, always going through

1 your mind the whole time, thinking, what in the world?

2 Q. Right.

3 A. Because, you know, you always have to deal with the
4 tires and the drive shafts and the brakes, and none of it was
5 there. And the front of that was gone, like you took a hatchet
6 and chopped it off and --

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. And I never did walk down and see it. I could see it in
9 the distance to the south. I could see that down there, but --

10 Q. Now was it raining at the time or was it --

11 A. No.

12 Q. It was just overcast?

13 A. Overcast, cold, real cold. And that's -- personally,
14 that's what bothered me for the guys is --

15 Q. Having to keep them -- your guys or the --

16 A. Trying to -- no, the patients.

17 Q. The patients, yeah.

18 A. You know, the first guy we got out, he was just -- and
19 he was -- that inmate just shivering and -- you know, their
20 clothes are not real thick and no jackets, no shoes, you know, and
21 that was kind of one of them first visions of, wow, these poor
22 guys, you know. And I don't know how long they had laid there. I
23 don't know -- I don't even know when that accident happened. We
24 wasn't going on that -- that's what kept blowing me away is I was
25 not responding to that. If I had been aware of that, naturally we

1 would have had all kinds of resources coming early and it was --
2 you get -- you have a chance to get your mind for different
3 scenarios, you know, as you're responding.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. Well, I have this, so I'm -- you're thinking of what --
6 okay, here's what we need, here's what we're going to do. So that
7 kind of blew me away a little bit when I walked down that
8 embankment and seen that bus. It's like, oh, my gosh.

9 Q. Now do you have an estimate or do you know what time you
10 arrived -- you guys arrived on scene --

11 A. Oh, I could tell you.

12 Q. -- for that initial rollover?

13 A. Yeah, I could tell you that.

14 Q. So you never really got a call for the bus until you got
15 there. You were working on the rollover and then you seen some
16 guy waving to you?

17 A. Yeah, some guy just said, hey, over here, and I think
18 every unit responding was thinking that that --

19 Yeah, we got dispatched at, like I said, 7:39, and I
20 arrived on scene at 7:51.

21 Q. 7:51?

22 A. Yeah, 12 minutes. And like I told you, you know, on the
23 way out there, asking dispatch for more information, I even told
24 my units to let them know --

25 (Interruption at the door)

1 MR. [REDACTED]: I even told our units responding, I said
2 I'm doing 55, just to let them know the road conditions.

3 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

4 Q. It was slick?

5 A. Yeah, you know, because they know I'm in a Tahoe. I've
6 got a quicker response than a medic does or a fire truck. And I
7 don't have to say, hey, the roads are slick. I said, you know,
8 units, I'm driving 55, and that tells them, hey, you know --

9 Q. It's slick.

10 A. -- the chief's just driving 55, it's -- the road
11 conditions were changing and --

12 Q. Right. So had you guys been called out earlier that
13 day? Was there some other wrecks --

14 A. We come on duty at 7:00.

15 Q. Oh, okay.

16 A. Yeah. So I know the night before the crews that we
17 relieved said, oh, yeah, we had an accident out here on the same
18 bridge. They were out there 2 or 3 hours the night before on a
19 rollover on that bridge. So that wasn't the first one of that,
20 you know.

21 Q. And that's DPS that handles -- apparently that handles
22 all the accidents right there, yeah?

23 A. They handle all accidents in the county.

24 Q. Okay. So we can probably go to them to get a count
25 and --

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Okay. So you'll set me up with the --

3 A. Yeah, I'll email the secretary and tell her we need that
4 complete report printed, and I'll have her PDF it to me, and I'll
5 send it to you.

6 Q. Okay. I just want to see if there's any other
7 questions. You got the response time, you told me all the guys
8 that went out there, all the people, all the units.

9 A. Yeah, I have a list of units here that responded. I
10 can -- like I said, Battalion 1, Division 1, Engine 7, Rescue 7
11 were the initial call. Later, I mean, when I called for
12 additional units and told dispatch three more engines and three
13 more medics.

14 Q. Well, when you told dispatch there was MCI, what does
15 that -- does that automatically -- I know it ratchets it up, but
16 does that automatically, okay, they know -- dispatch knows to send
17 more units or does that --

18 A. Well, really, I directed what I wanted.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. We don't have a code --

21 Q. You had plenty of resources out there?

22 A. Oh, yeah. There was one time I looked and I thought, oh
23 my gosh, look at all these medics; we're not getting enough
24 survivors. You know, that's what probably personally bothered me.

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. I was thinking we were going to get -- I didn't know how
2 many we had originally, but I was thinking, you know, easy 10. We
3 were going to get 10 out and --

4 Q. Well, when you see a bus --

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. The whole time during the incident is -- you know, I'm
8 asking how many we got still in there? What do we got? And then
9 as time went on and I found out there was 15, and in my mind I
10 knew we hauled 2 quick and then we hauled another 2, you know,
11 next, and then the last victim we got out, I even told that medic
12 hang on a minute and we'll get another one. And the guys were
13 telling me I don't know if we have any more, so I went ahead and
14 sent that third medic in. We still had three or four standing
15 there ready for -- I actually, by that time, some privates -- you
16 know, I'd called the mass casualty, so some of our chief had
17 called the privates to send units out. Called --

18 Q. The privates, meaning like --

19 A. Private ambulance services.

20 Q. Ambulance, okay.

21 A. Yeah. We were having privates assist us in town to make
22 sure that we're still covering the city like we did -- like we
23 have to. And thank God, nothing else bad happened at that point,
24 so we were able to manage that scene and not have any issues here
25 in town or in the county.

1 Q. So about approximately -- a final question here about
2 approximately what time did you finally leave the scene, then?

3 A. I left -- it was like 2 hours.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Yeah. I was on scene an hour and 57 minutes.

6 Q. Okay. Now the guys who transported, is that -- will you
7 have transport records for them or how --

8 A. Yeah, they'll have medical records for them.

9 Q. Okay. Will I be able to get a copy of those or --

10 A. And I can ask. I don't know what -- I mean, I know you
11 got subpoena power, so --

12 Q. Sure.

13 A. I'll ask about the five patient reports.

14 Q. Yeah. I think we'd be interested in getting a copy of
15 those.

16 A. Oh, yeah, I would. I mean, I would think you would.
17 I'll see what we can -- what we've got to do on that.

18 Q. Okay.

19 MR. [REDACTED]: That concludes the interview with
20 Battalion Chief [REDACTED]. The time is 9:15 a.m.

21 (Whereupon, at 9:15 a.m., the interview was concluded.)
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25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: PRISON TRANSPORT BUS CRASH
NEAR PENWELL, TEXAS
JANUARY 14, 2015
Interview of [REDACTED]

DOCKET NUMBER: HWY-14-MH-014

PLACE: Odessa, Texas

DATE: January 17, 2015

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.

[REDACTED]
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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PRISON TRANSPORT BUS CRASH

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NEAR PENWELL, TEXAS

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Docket No.: HWY-15-MH-004

JANUARY 14, 2015

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Interview of: [REDACTED]

Central Station
Odessa Fire Department
Odessa, Texas

Saturday,
January 17, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: [REDACTED]

Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:

██████████, Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of [REDACTED]:

By Mr. [REDACTED]

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I N T E R V I E W

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MR. K██████████: Today's date is January 17th, 2015. I'm
██████████ with the NTSB, and I'm here at Central Station,
Odessa Central Station Fire Department with Firefighter/Paramedic
██████████ from Station 7. And he is going to give us a
description of what all he did and saw when he arrived on the
scene of the accident back on the 14th of January.

INTERVIEW OF ██████████

BY MR. ██████████:

Q. Go ahead.

A. Got the shift, shift change. We swapped out our
personnel. Normal day. Everything working good on our ambulance.
Went in to get coffee, take a drink. I heard the alarms go off.
I thought it was a fire. So I run to get my bunkers on, and I
hear it's a rollover. So I'm like, oh, okay, well, it's not a
fire, so I'm just going to go ahead and run back around, leave the
bunkers off, and let's go ahead and get at it, go out to I-20.

I started reading the notes on the computer on the way
out there, and it just said DPS was on an accident and witnessed a
rollover, and that's all the info they had there. I wasn't sure
extent of injuries or how many vehicles involved. So about --
right when we got to 866, we're searching, 866 and I-20, we were
looking for a vehicle. Notified by our battalion chief to
continue on. Getting more info from DPS, and other units were
dispatched, like the sheriff's department. Get up to the

1 overpass. I don't know what overpass that goes over. It goes
2 over the train tracks.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. It's between 866, 1601. And noticed the right -- damage
5 to the right or I guess the westbound north guardrail was damaged.
6 And look over and -- I had seen some lights flashing down there.
7 And by the time -- we got halfway up the overpass, and I could see
8 it was a tow truck, and they're already trying to get a truck that
9 had rolled over, or something. I was like, oh, there's no -- I
10 realized there wasn't any patients in there and no one was waving
11 us down or anything.

12 We looked at the inside -- we were on the inside lane,
13 and we looked to the south of that westbound lane towards the
14 median, and I could see some guardrail damage there. And I
15 started seeing some notes pop out about a bus or something hit a
16 train or unknown injuries.

17 And a man, I don't even know who he was with or what,
18 but he ran up the median part of that and was like, there's no way
19 to get down here; there's a bus got hit by a train. And so we
20 were like all right. And I was looking to the right, and there's
21 a dirt road, and I didn't see a service road going that way. So I
22 asked [REDACTED], and we both agreed, we were going to go -- keep going
23 west until it flattened out and then cross the median and get to a
24 service road that kind of looked like it was away from that area,
25 but it looked like the best shot.

1 So we take it and luckily got there pretty quick.
2 Probably took us maybe 2 minutes to get there from being on top of
3 the overpass. Parked at the staging area and still couldn't see
4 anything. There was like a little berm or something, you know,
5 between the tracks -- or between us and the tracks. So she
6 grabbed backboards, ██████ did, and I decided to grab the red bag,
7 and we were going to just hike over that little berm that was
8 there full of mesquite and rubble or whatever is all piled up
9 there.

10 Q. Yeah, there's rocks and all that stuff, yeah.

11 A. So we get there, and Chief ██████ advised us to go ahead
12 and triage. So I hop over and look, and I guess ██████ had peeled
13 off to the north, to the north side of that bus, and I went to the
14 right and saw two guards and already tagged them black. Looked
15 north, and I could see the tail end of the train just kind of
16 coming around a bend, or I guess it stopped near the bend. I
17 could just see the last two boxes of that train. Hiked up a
18 little, maybe 100 feet. Noticed that there wasn't any bodies or
19 anything further south of that bus, and was informed to go ahead
20 and head back towards the chief. So I went back that way.

21 By that time, ██████ had noticed -- I guess she had went
22 to the north part of that bus and noticed that there was bodies in
23 there and asked if I had a strap on me. We usually carry the
24 straps in our bunker gear in case we get trapped in a fire or
25 something, or firefighter down and we can pull each other out or

1 something. And then I was like I'll run back to the medic and get
2 it. Hiked back over, grabbed our straps, and I think I grabbed
3 the C collars.

4 Then I ran back over, handed it to her. As I was
5 handing her the straps, there was a couple of bystanders -- I
6 don't know who they were with -- and they were waving me back
7 there, and I looked. From the north part of that -- or south part
8 of that bus, I was looking north, and I could see from the inside
9 that there was a door back there, so I figured they found an
10 entrance so we can get inside there and help pulling some patients
11 out or whatever. But we opened it, moved a seat up, and it was on
12 top of a guard, and the guard was in pain, pretty beaten up,
13 and --

14 Q. The seat? He was --

15 A. Yeah, there was a seat on -- a chair on him, I guess
16 whatever he was sitting on or something, but it was on him. Like,
17 we had to, like, hold it up -- or I guess it was a seat. I'm not
18 sure.

19 Q. Could it have been an air conditioner unit? There's an
20 air conditioner unit that's back there hanging.

21 A. Maybe. I'm not sure.

22 Q. Because his seat was still attached to -- it's one of
23 the few seats that was --

24 A. Oh, was it? Okay.

25 Q. -- still attached. So --

1 A. Whatever was hanging --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- we had to push it up. I thought it was a seat.

4 Q. That was the air conditioner unit, yeah.

5 A. Okay. So they pushed that up, and they're holding that,
6 and another guy had to hold up the door while I was assessing him,
7 got his name, and started talking to him, asking him where he's
8 hurt, and you can tell his left arm was pretty much just
9 -- I don't even know how to explain it. I mean, it was a
10 spaghetti noodle just loose, and you could tell it was broken. He
11 was spitting up blood and pretty bad.

12 So we're thinking of a good possibility to get him out
13 of there, and I was like, well, let's use the KED. So -- I was
14 thinking of our KED. Usually on a seated patient, you know, we
15 use that.

16 Q. KED is?

17 A. Kendrick Extrication Device maybe.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. I'm not sure of the -- but it's for a seated patient to
20 keep their spinal mobilization.

21 Q. Oh, okay.

22 A. Yeah, so --

23 Q. So it's more than your basic C collar, then? It's --

24 A. Right. It's for your back. And for a seated patient,
25 you put all these straps on, and you can get them out without

1 hurting them --

2 Q. Right.

3 A. -- more than they're already hurt. So I was like I'll
4 have to hike back to the medic, get that. And grabbed that and a
5 scoop stretcher, because I noticed that the back boards were being
6 used, so I was like -- I was like I've never used this thing. So
7 I grabbed it and went over there and laid it down. I got a C
8 collar on the guard, put the KED on him, and we were going to
9 extricate him. And one of the body -- I got in there with him,
10 got behind him and tried to lift him up, and we needed one more
11 person because we had trouble holding that -- I guess it's the AC
12 unit --

13 Q. Right.

14 A. -- and the door open with just those guys, and I needed
15 help getting him just up and over that part of the door. There's
16 a lip there. And so battalion chief, one of them said, I'll be
17 right back, and the other guy was holding up both. I don't even
18 know who they were, but they were a lot of help. And battalion
19 chief went there and we got him out, put him on the stretcher.

20 By that time, Rescue 1 had shown up and we were able to
21 get -- as soon as we laid down the guard on the scoop stretcher,
22 we were able to get him up and over and get him in the ambulance.
23 And by that time another, I guess one of the inmates, was already
24 getting to the part to go over the berm, or whatever you call it.
25 He was transported. And we got them stabilized in the medic. I

1 jumped out, and they drove off, and I went back to work. And I
2 went to the front where [REDACTED] was and I jumped in there with her
3 and we started removing the bodies. Pretty confined space in
4 there at that time.

5 Q. Right. And how did you get in? Did you go in through
6 that little opening there between the wall and the cage? There's
7 a little opening?

8 A. On the south side of that bus? It would have been the
9 front, I guess.

10 Q. It would have been the front, yeah, but there was a
11 little opening. That's how [REDACTED] and the Mississippi truck driver
12 got through, was there was a little opening there between the wall
13 and the cage that they were able to get through before they tore
14 that -- before you guys --

15 A. Oh, yes, sir. Yes, sir, that --

16 Q. -- tore that away?

17 A. Yeah. I crawled over --

18 Q. Crawled up there?

19 A. Yeah, I guess the cages kind of helped us be able to get
20 in there, and then it held all -- everyone in there, I guess, at
21 that one spot. And one was bent over, down, that we could kind of
22 hold onto it.

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. And then I guess because it was curved and kept slipping
25 with all the fluids that were --

1 Q. Fluids from the toilets and that?

2 A. Toilets, blood.

3 Q. And blood, yeah.

4 A. Yeah, et cetera.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. So then we started going to work trying to lift -- I
7 guess there had already been two patients lifted out of there by
8 the time I got back there, and then we were trying to get the
9 third guy out, and -- that's my guesstimation. I don't know.

10 Q. Sure, that's fine.

11 A. And he was heavy, and we kept trying. There was -- I
12 think there was four of us, finally, with straps -- with a couple
13 straps and four of us trying to pull this weight off, and it just
14 seemed like he was -- he wasn't moving. So I'm thinking, well,
15 maybe his femur. And his leg was wrapped under a couple more guys
16 that were in there. You know, you can hear moaning, and see a few
17 -- movement from a few, but I couldn't see their faces yet because
18 there's still bodies piled.

19 Q. And I was told there was no seats in there? It was
20 pretty much, it was pretty much just --

21 A. Where they were, there isn't any seats.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. They were just -- the cage and then bodies --

24 Q. Just a big pile of bodies with everybody intertwined
25 because with the --

1 A. Cuffs, yeah.

2 Q. -- handcuffs and --

3 A. And we didn't -- I didn't know they were on cuffs or
4 anything, so I was trying to -- and there's four of us at one
5 point trying to pull, and I'm like they're stuck on something.
6 And I kept thinking the leg. So I suggested we go get the
7 cutters, because he's already gone, and we'll just cut that leg
8 off and then start removing. And I looked again, and I actually
9 pulled on a shoulder and another arm came up with it. And I'm
10 like they're cuffed, does anyone --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- have bolt cutters? So they handed me some bolt
13 cutters. They were there, like, in 30 seconds. Someone must have
14 grabbed them really quick because they were there quick. And we
15 went to break them, and we finally got him loose and got that guy
16 out, and then started working, and then realized that there were
17 more cuffed together. I used the bolt cutter -- I -- while I was
18 in there using -- I noticed the bolt cutters were used twice.
19 When we were told to get out, I noticed that they were using a key
20 after that, some sort of, I guess, cuff key that they had.

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. But, you know, we finally got the three alive guys out,
23 and after that we were told get out, go take a break, go rest.
24 And that's what we did.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Of course, there was a little more to that, but -- yeah,
2 the cages was just -- wow. Just everything was torn off. Seats
3 weren't even intact or anything. That's what surprised me.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. I was like, wow. And what surprised me the most is the
6 shell, the shell of the bus was like intact, wasn't --

7 Q. It's a school bus. It's made --

8 A. -- crushed or --

9 Q. It's --

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. I mean, for that impact, sure, the frontend part was
12 torn off, but you can imagine if there was, you know --

13 A. That's pretty neat, yeah.

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. I mean, not neat, but I was just thinking everything in
16 there was just tumbled.

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. Just torn off and thrown. But I guess they must have
19 all been sitting towards the front, and then just --

20 Q. Well, you know, all those seats were up -- you know, may
21 have been some people in the back. We don't know.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. And we'll never find out --

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. -- because there's going to be nobody to tell us where

1 everybody was seated.

2 A. Right.

3 Q. So --

4 A. Wow.

5 Q. Okay.

6 MR. [REDACTED]: That concludes our interview at
7 approximately 12:17.

8 (Whereupon, at 12:17 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: PRISON TRANSPORT BUS CRASH
NEAR PENWELL, TEXAS
JANUARY 14, 2015
Interview of [REDACTED]

DOCKET NUMBER: HWY-15-MH-004

PLACE: Odessa, Texas

DATE: January, 17, 2015

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.

[REDACTED]
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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PRISON TRANSPORT BUS CRASH

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NEAR PENWELL, TEXAS

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Docket No.: HWY-15-MH-004

JANUARY 14, 2015

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Interview of: [REDACTED]

Central Fire Station
Odessa, Texas

Saturday,
January 17, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: [REDACTED]

Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:

██████████, Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of [REDACTED]:		
By Mr. [REDACTED]		4

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. [REDACTED]: Today's date is January 17th, 2015. I'm
3 at the Central Fire Station with Division Captain [REDACTED] with
4 the Odessa Fire Department. And the captain is going to give us a
5 description of what he saw and what he did when he arrived on
6 scene for the MCI on the 14th.

7 INTERVIEW OF [REDACTED]

8 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

9 Q. Go ahead.

10 A. Yes. We received a car of a single-vehicle rollover,
11 approximately mile marker 103, around I would say 7:40 in the
12 morning. Didn't really have any report on number of injuries.
13 They couldn't give us anything. We headed out that way. We
14 weren't really sure about the road conditions, but I did notice
15 approximately a mile, 2 miles down the road here, we have a
16 drainage culvert, it's kind of a little bridge, and it was icy
17 there. I mean, I got sideways, and we were only doing about 50.
18 And I knew then, you know, we had some problems.

19 We got out on the interstate, and we were doing 55, 60.
20 People finally got impatient and started passing us on the right.
21 I going to say about -- between 1936 and 866, we got another
22 report of a witnessed accident, and all they said it was on the
23 train tracks. They couldn't tell us where, number of injured,
24 anything like that again. I remember Chief [REDACTED], you know,
25 you're going to have to give us some more information about the

1 vehicle on the train tracks because, I mean, it's from Monahans
2 all the way to Odessa.

3 Finally, got right there at the top of the cap rock, and
4 we could see the guardrail was ripped loose in the westbound lane
5 and it was covering both lanes. The traffic had slowed and was
6 getting around it kind of on the shoulder between the guardrail on
7 the north side.

8 This new division captain spot -- a lot of the reason we
9 did this is for just highway safety. The traffic is so crazy. So
10 I spot about 75 yards back from the accident, and then when we got
11 collapsible cones, and I set them out about another 25 yards
12 behind my vehicle, and I set up an arrow telling them, you know,
13 go to this lane. I was doing all that, and I saw which I assumed
14 was the original rollover we went on, was on the north side of the
15 overpass on the westbound lane. Like I said, Chief [REDACTED] was
16 ahead of me, and they were waving him down to the train track
17 area.

18 Q. And so were you parked -- you parked in the left lane,
19 the inside lane?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. About 75 yards back. We were just trying to get a
23 buffer zone there because the traffic is -- they're still flying
24 by, especially in the eastbound lane. It slowed down on the
25 westbound lane because of the guardrail damage.

1 I went to the rollover, like I said, on the north side
2 of the westbound lane to check for injuries and climbed down there
3 a ways and they said there's nobody injured. About that time is
4 when Chief [REDACTED] was -- I can't remember if he gave his size-up
5 first, a brief size-up, or if he asked me first, where are you at?
6 I think I heard we have a bus that's been hit by a train that's
7 gone off the overpass. And I believe it was then he was pretty
8 much, where are you at? And I was explaining to him later. He
9 didn't see the pickup on -- over here on the north side.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. So it delayed me a little bit.

12 When I got in between the north and southbound lanes
13 going down to the tracks, it's concreted there, and I went down
14 it. And the first thing I saw was just all the boxes. I couldn't
15 comprehend how all them boxes come out of that bus when I saw the
16 bus, and it finally dawned on me a little later that those came
17 from the train.

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. The first thing I saw was just the box of the bus laying
20 on its driver's side, I want to say approximately 75, 100 yards to
21 the south of the interstate there. Got down there. Rescue 7 had
22 gone on down to 1601 and come back. Engine 7 had gone back east
23 trying to get on the south service road. I got down there.
24 [REDACTED], paramedic, was up in there, and there was two other
25 guys. There was a truck driver -- I didn't catch any names -- and

1 another guy that Chief ██████ thought was a guy that used to be a
2 fireman. He made a statement. I haven't seen it, since I quit.
3 I didn't recognize him and I never got a name.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. They were up in there trying to get the first live
6 person that came to out. We had to --

7 Q. So there was another -- there was a Good Samaritan
8 that's a truck driver that was in helping with ██████ --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. -- initially?

11 A. Yes. Like I said, the whole cab area, the driver's
12 area, was just gone. There was -- I could tell that the two
13 guards were right there on the ground. It was just an opening on
14 the front of the bus. Couldn't really -- at the time, I couldn't
15 figure out what it was. We were having a lot of hell with the --
16 there was an expanded metal cage that, you know, I assumed was to
17 confine them, you know, in transport.

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. We had a lot of problem with it. It was laying down on
20 top of the patients. They had kind of got up in there and was
21 kind of holding that up with her head and shoulders, they were,
22 and they had a -- we have com rescue straps. And the first body
23 they were trying to pull out, I asked ██████, is he alive? She
24 said, no, he's DOA. I'm trying to get -- there's a guy on top
25 that's alive underneath this guy.

1 There was no way to get any leverage. I was standing
2 outside. I could kind of stand up. There was a black metal box,
3 and I couldn't figure out what it was, and then later on, I
4 finally figured out it was like a metal area around the driver's
5 area, if that makes sense. Because it was on the driver's side,
6 so it was like this high up, I mean, almost chest high to me
7 standing on the ground. And it was probably about a 5-foot reach,
8 and I was trying to pull this guy out up over that, and it was
9 just nearly impossible.

10 Q. Right.

11 A. I couldn't get any leverage. I climbed up on top of
12 that, and I was having to squat down and fight that expanded metal
13 cage. So it was just difficult to get him out of the way.

14 Q. Because that cage was kind of -- you said that one of
15 the cages was kind of laying on top of the injured or --

16 A. Yeah. There was one part of it was on the -- ended up
17 on the bottom side, which would have been -- I'm trying to think
18 here how this is laying. Yeah, it was on the bottom like this.
19 We're laying on the driver's side. Part of the expanded metal
20 cage was actually where the bottom of the bus would be, and then
21 it was connected like this over the top of the area where all the
22 people --

23 Q. Oh, okay.

24 A. -- had flown into.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. I can't really give you time frames. It seemed like
2 forever to get that guy out of the way, the first DOA.

3 (Phone rings).

4 MR. ██████: I should turn this off. Okay. Sorry about
5 that.

6 BY MR. ██████:

7 Q. No problem.

8 A. Got the first live inmate out, had him on a spine board.
9 Carried him over about 20 foot away from the bus on the tracks,
10 and about that time, Chief ██████ and ██████ said we got one
11 in the back. And I never did even see him or assist with that. I
12 finished strapping the first patient to the spine board. He kept
13 rolling off, off the board. I got him strapped down, and he was
14 shivering from the cold. I ran up the hill toward the medic,
15 Rescue 7, and got a couple of blankets and covered him up. And
16 then I went back to start trying to help get other people out.

17 Had a lot of problems with -- we figured they were
18 handcuffed in pairs. That was a big obstacle. The first couple
19 we cut with bolt cutters.

20 Q. Uh-huh.

21 A. Just trying to find the little chain between them,
22 because a lot them were under two or three bodies, if that makes
23 sense, where their hands were connected.

24 Q. Uh-huh.

25 A. So trying to get to that area and cut it was difficult.

1 Probably then about the time is when help started getting there,
2 Engine 7 and Engine 1. And we were like we're going to have to
3 get a different plan here. The way we were trying to get them out
4 was just almost impossible. So that's when we got the K-12.

5 Q. K-12 is?

6 A. Is a big circular metal cutting saw.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Started -- that's when we tried to make a extrication
9 hole in the roof of the bus. It wasn't as easy as we thought it
10 would be. The saw -- because there's two layers of metal, and
11 they're about, I'm going to say, 3 inches apart, and then it's
12 filled with insulation. Well, that saw did not want to cut them
13 two layers of metal that far apart. It kept bogging the blade
14 down. So we had to cut the outer shell and cut where there's like
15 support beams, I'm saying about every 3 foot.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. We had to cut through that and kind of peel that first
18 layer back and then cut the second inner layer out of the way to
19 get access to the inside. When we finally got that done, you
20 know, that way we could get some leverage.

21 Q. To get the cage out? Or to get the --

22 A. We didn't get the cage out till we got the last live
23 person out.

24 Q. Oh, okay.

25 A. There was about three, three or four dead bodies still

1 in there when we finally --

2 Q. So you were getting everybody out through that hole you
3 guys had cut?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Okay. So you got everybody out, and then you --

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. -- started working on the --

8 A. When we finally got the hole cut, Chief [REDACTED] told
9 [REDACTED], which was off of Engine 6, to try to get in
10 there to help, because -- also, we had those seats that were,
11 like, built in pairs and they were all intermingled between them,
12 too, all the bodies. [REDACTED] got up in there, and it was a
13 stainless steel toilet --

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. -- the first thing we got out, and it was heavier than
16 it looked. I helped him get that out.

17 I climbed back up on that black metal area that we
18 assumed kind of encased the driver and got that out. And then he
19 started struggling to get the seats out. You know, we were like
20 we got to get some of this stuff out of the way to get these guys
21 out. And I climbed back in there behind where that expanded metal
22 was, where [REDACTED] was. And together we moved I know at least
23 three pairs of seats, might have been four pairs of seats. Got it
24 out between the bodies, wrestled it out, and just kind of threw it
25 in the back where all the other seats were piled up.

1 Q. So you guys didn't have to cut out any seats? All the
2 seats were already --

3 A. They were already broke loose.

4 Q. Okay. So when --

5 A. They were --

6 Q. -- I looked at the bus yesterday --

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. -- anything that remained was there, and anything that
9 was already off the floor --

10 A. Yeah. All those seats had pulled loose from the floor.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And they were built, like, in pairs, that I could tell.

13 Q. Yeah, yeah.

14 A. They were all -- I'm assuming all the vacant seats were
15 slammed up, you know, to where all the guys were piled up. And
16 then, like I said, it was three, maybe four pairs of seats mixed
17 in the guys.

18 About that time, we got a handcuff key, which helped
19 tremendously. It still wasn't easy to find, you know, which guy
20 was attached to, you know, another guy.

21 Q. Because they were all --

22 A. They were just head to toe --

23 Q. -- mingled.

24 A. One guy's head was trapped like this and his feet were
25 up this way. They were just all intertwined --

1 Q. Right.

2 A. -- tangled up. I helped -- I stayed in there till we
3 got the last guy out, which was the smaller black kid. He kept
4 fist-bumping me, please get me out. I said we're going to get you
5 out, it's just going to take a while. Once we got him out, I got
6 out of there. I was just kind of physically spent at that point.

7 Q. Sure. Needed a break.

8 A. Yeah. And they -- that's when we got the cutters in
9 there, and there was one area where that expanded metal cage was
10 connected, and we cut it. This was before I got out. We cut it
11 and we were able -- the part that was laying on top of the guys,
12 we were able to take it out the front. And then the other piece
13 that was actually kind of standing up where the floor would have
14 been, we kind of wrestled it out of -- you know, away from the
15 bodies and got it out of the way, and that's when I got out of the
16 bus.

17 Q. So the cage part that you guys cut off, it wasn't on
18 them? It was just overhead?

19 A. It was over them --

20 Q. But it was kind of in your way?

21 A. -- and it -- but it was low enough that we were having
22 to shove it up. We finally, at some point -- there's a big gash
23 that would have been in the -- it was the topside, but it would
24 have been the passenger side of the bus. It was a big gash up
25 there.

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. We got one of our rescue straps that has a carabiner on
3 it, a hook, and run it through that expanded metal, and they tied
4 it off to -- pulled it out through that gash and tied that up, and
5 kind of got it out of our way a little higher where we could stand
6 up. That was the biggest problem. We couldn't really get any
7 leverage to lift. I forgot about that.

8 Q. So it was just kind of -- it's just hard to get any kind
9 of leverage because of the --

10 A. Well, we're --

11 Q. -- way the bus is situated? You got the chairs all
12 over, you got the bodies --

13 A. There was that blue crap, I'm assuming from that toilet.

14 Q. Oh.

15 A. And it was slick and --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. The blood, I mean, it was a lot of blood and --
18 initially, I mean, I hated to do it, but you had to stand on them
19 guys to get some of that stuff out of the way, those seats, and --
20 I know it was hurting them, but you just had to do what you had to
21 do. There was nowhere to stand.

22 Q. Right.

23 A. Like I said, honestly, it's kind of a blur. I mean, it
24 just -- you wouldn't think an hour and a half would be a blur, but
25 I mean, we did all we could do as fast as we could do it.

1 Q. Okay. So then once you got out, did you just -- you
2 kind of took a little mental break there for a little bit?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. And you just kind of helped them carry them out, then,
5 as others went in, and you just kind of helped --

6 A. I kind of decon'ed myself, had a little blood on me.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Did that. And by the time I did that, they had got the
9 last -- I think it was three guys left in there. They had gotten
10 them out.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. They don't like us doing it, but Chief [REDACTED] had them
13 cover them just out of respect.

14 Q. Sure.

15 A. Just kind of --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. The main chief had left. They had -- the ME he did ask
18 for one engine to stay back to assist to get the bodies out of
19 there because it was kind of down in that low area.

20 Q. So the ME got there, what, maybe about an hour into it
21 or would you say it was maybe a little less? Any ideas?

22 A. What was that? I didn't catch it --

23 Q. The ME, he finally got -- when he got there, it was
24 probably about an hour into it or a couple hours?

25 A. I didn't see him until I got out of the bus. I don't

1 know when they showed up.

2 Q. Okay. Yeah, you lose all track of time.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. I really did. One of them wanted to shake my hand, but
6 my glove was ripped and I had blood all over me. He was like,
7 okay. I was like I just -- I got to clean up here.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. I really don't know when they got there.

10 Q. Okay. That's fine.

11 A. I really don't. I was inside the bus.

12 Q. Right. Okay. That should do it.

13 MR. [REDACTED]: That concludes the interview with
14 Division Captain [REDACTED], and the time is approximately 10:45.

15 (Whereupon, at 10:45 a.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: PRISON TRANSPORT BUS CRASH
NEAR PENWELL, TEXAS
JANUARY 14, 2015
Interview of [REDACTED]

DOCKET NUMBER: HWY-15-MH-004

PLACE: Odessa, Texas

DATE: January 17, 2015

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.

[REDACTED]
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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BUS ACCIDENT ON I-20
NEAR ODESSA, TEXAS
JANUARY 14, 2015

Docket No.: HWY-15-MH-004

* * * * *

Interview of: [REDACTED]

Central Station
Odessa Fire Department
Odessa, Texas

Saturday,
January 17, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: [REDACTED]
Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:

██████████, Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of [REDACTED]:		
By Mr. [REDACTED]		4

1 I N T E R V I E W

2 MR. [REDACTED]: Okay. Today's date is January 17th. I'm
3 at the Odessa Central Station House with Firefighter/Paramedic
4 [REDACTED] from Station 7. And I'm [REDACTED] with the
5 NTSB.

6 INTERVIEW OF [REDACTED]

7 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

8 Q. And Firefighter/Paramedic [REDACTED] is going to give us a
9 description of what you saw and what you did when she was on
10 scene. She was one of the very first people inside the bus.

11 A. Start from dispatch, I guess?

12 Q. Sure.

13 A. Get dispatched to a call, rollover accident close to
14 Penwell on I-20. En route, we were not given much information,
15 just that it was a witnessed rollover by a DPS officer.

16 We get on scene. We're on top of the bridge, and I
17 notice there's a white pickup on the right side that had already
18 rolled over off of the bridge, but that a tow truck was pulling it
19 away. So we bypass that, considering it was an old accident. We
20 saw -- I saw another pickup close to the drop-off on top of the
21 bridge. He had his flashers on. There was debris everywhere.
22 And I rolled down my window to see if he was involved in the
23 accident, because we couldn't see a vehicle. We couldn't see,
24 like, another vehicle that had rolled over. He said, I'm fine,
25 but they're not down there. And he pointed down underneath the

1 bridge.

2 And at that time, our chief, I believe, had made his way
3 down there, because he was on scene before we were. And he had
4 stated it's down here on the tracks; it's a bus. That's just what
5 I remember. So I drove about a quarter of a mile past the bridge,
6 crossed over the median, over the eastbound ramp, over another
7 median to the service road.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. To turn back east to find my way towards those tracks.
10 We got on scene. Immediately my partner jumped out. He grabbed
11 the red bag. I grabbed two backboards. And we went straight to
12 the scene.

13 The way we -- there was a bunch of rocks and stuff to
14 get to the accident. When we got to it, we were about dead center
15 of the bus. My partner went right. I went left. I went -- I
16 surveyed the back to see if there was an entry point. There was
17 no entry point. I surveyed the top -- because it was on its side,
18 I surveyed the top. There was no entry point. I had jumped on
19 top of the bus, which was actually the side of the bus because it
20 was on its side, so I jumped --

21 Q. Right.

22 A. -- on that side. There was no entry point. And then I
23 made my way all the way around. I had noticed the two guards,
24 both deceased. And then I noticed the opening of the front of the
25 bus. There was a DPS officer close to it, and then there was a

1 gentleman inside of the bus, unrelated to the accident, I believe.
2 I jumped into the bus, and this gentleman -- I don't know his
3 name; called him the Mississippi driver -- he had a handcuff key
4 and he was in the attempt to unhandcuff some of the inmates. I
5 believe he got it from the DPS officer.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And he was talking about he's got to get him
8 unhandcuffed. I was like okay. And I was just looking. I was
9 just trying to survey. I looked straight in the back. I didn't
10 see anybody. I didn't see anything. And then I heard movement in
11 the back, and my partner -- and then I saw my partner head that
12 way. And he ended up -- they started extricating the driver -- or
13 not the driver, the guard that was in the back --

14 Q. The other -- okay, right.

15 A. Yeah. He said that he had to move several stuff to get
16 to him. So I knew he was -- he was doing that. Me and the
17 gentleman that was in there switched places. The gentleman got
18 out after he unhandcuffed one of the guys on top, one of the
19 inmates on top. All the inmates were in the front. They were all
20 piled on top of each other. I mean, it was just all right there.

21 Q. So after he uncuffed the one guy, did he help that --
22 that was a viable patient? You helped him out? Or he just got
23 out and then you went in?

24 A. Yeah, he got out and I got in.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And that's when I started surveying to see who was alive
2 and who wasn't.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. We were -- before we got on scene -- sorry to go all the
5 way back, but -- we were given the assignment of triage.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Our chief put on the radio, Rescue 7, triage as soon as
8 you get here. So that's why my partner went right and I went
9 left. He went to survey that area; I went to survey this area.

10 Q. Right.

11 A. I heard three voices that were talking, and I identified
12 two gentlemen that were alive. They were up talk -- they were
13 looking at me talking, but they were trapped underneath several
14 other bodies.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. We got -- the first patient on top, we removed him. I
17 believe he was --

18 Q. And when you say talking -- I don't mean to interrupt,
19 but when you say talking to you, what were they saying? Just --

20 A. Because I said call out. I said --

21 Q. Oh.

22 A. I said if you can talk, talk, and they said, I'm here,
23 I'm here. And that's when I asked, what's your name? A gentleman
24 gave me -- do you want me to say their names?

25 Q. Sure.

1 A. A gentleman said his name was [REDACTED].

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And the other gentleman said his name was [REDACTED]. And
4 those two were close to -- they were more north inside the bus.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. That's the way I can --

7 Q. I mean, well, would that be towards the front?

8 A. The back of the bus. Okay, yeah.

9 Q. Towards the back, okay.

10 A. They were the closest to the back of the bus.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. There was a bench -- two -- there was like two benches
13 on top of [REDACTED].

14 Q. Two seats -- two rows of seats?

15 A. Two rows, like, yeah, rows of seats on top of [REDACTED].

16 And then [REDACTED], his leg was jammed up underneath another seat, as
17 well as other bodies were on top of the other -- the left part of
18 him. We got the first body out, and then --

19 Q. And you got -- how did you get him out? Through the
20 front there?

21 A. No -- yeah. Right now there's --

22 Q. The front little area?

23 A. Yes, the only -- yeah, the only opening that we had at
24 the time. I know we got two out that way.

25 Q. With that small little area between the --

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. -- wall and that little cage or that little -- the cage
3 area there?

4 A. It was where the front is, the entire front.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. Not the hole that we cut out, but the --

7 Q. Right.

8 A. -- front, the very front. We got two out that way.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. One was -- I don't remember which one was first, but one
11 was alive and one was a DOA. I can't -- that's the one that's
12 confusing to me. Then there was a third patient on top of another
13 guy who I could -- you could see his feet moving.

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. But you could see his feet and hear his voice, but he
16 was literally trapped underneath, under this big heavy guy. So
17 after we got the two out the front, I told the guys on the outside
18 that I needed this wall to be moved. I needed this wall out so
19 that we could get this guy out. This guy was so pretzeled in
20 there, we couldn't pull him out. Like, every -- we'd pull, and
21 we'd get a little bit, we'd pull and we'd get a little bit of
22 leeway, and just we kept pulling and pulling and pulling. And
23 when they opened it, finally, we were able to get more hands in
24 there and pull him out. We used what we call rescue straps.

25 Q. Yeah, yeah.

1 A. And we wrapped them around the patient, around the chest
2 area. I had one around the chest area, one around the leg, and we
3 -- I was pulling up -- I was pulling and pushing. We had the guys
4 on the outside pulling as well, and we were able to pull him out.
5 And at the same time, we had to use bolt cutters to cut the -- or
6 not bolt cutters, but the big bolt cutters to cut the handcuffs.

7 Q. Well, what happened to the guy with the -- what happened
8 to the guy with the handcuff key? He just kind of --

9 A. He looked at me and he said he needed --

10 Q. To step out?

11 A. He needed to step out, and that's when we switched
12 places at the very beginning.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. I don't know how long he had been in there trying. I
15 don't know if he was just confused about it all. But we switched
16 places, and he stepped out for a breath. And then I remember
17 looking up and he was back in there, but not like in there all the
18 way, but he was up there like wanting to help, and he was just
19 like what do you need? And I was just like just pull on this, and
20 I handed him a strap. And as they're pulling, I'm trying to
21 maneuver and untangle the DOAs on scene. There's no easy way to
22 call this.

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. Sorry. After we cut the hole, we were able to move the
25 third inmate out of the hole that we cut.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And that's when we got the two -- that's when we got
3 ██████ out, because this guy was tangled up underneath -- like, in
4 between ██████'s legs. After we pulled him out, we pulled ██████
5 out. He was the first -- or the second survivor inmate to come
6 out of the bus. And then during all that, another firefighter had
7 climbed in and jumped over the cage and landed over there beside
8 ██████, and was helping maneuver ██████ out from under the benches,
9 the seats. We cut -- ██████ and ██████ were handcuffed together.
10 I bolt-cutted them apart. We got ██████ out using the straps,
11 rapid extrication, got him on a backboard. I didn't see what
12 happened after that, like, after he left. I'm sure they packaged
13 him and sent him on his way.

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. And then we got ██████ out. And after we got those out,
16 we had one more guy that was alive, and he was kicking his feet.
17 He was the one that was kicking his feet. He was pushed together.
18 Like he -- in other words, he was kissing his knees in a way.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. That's how he was sandwiched in there. And we were able
21 to finally see him. I could hear him the whole time, and he was
22 moving, but I couldn't see him. Finally, we were able to see him.
23 He told me his name was ██████. I don't -- he didn't tell him his
24 first name. He just told me his last name.

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. I said, okay. I was like -- I was like, all right,
2 we're going to get you out of here, just give me one more minute,
3 you know, because he was still tangled in there.

4 Q. And he was kind of at the bottom of the pile?

5 A. Yes. He was at the bottom of the pile. And we -- I put
6 straps underneath him and tugged him out. After he was pulled
7 out, we were ordered to get out of the bus, like, get out, let
8 someone else in.

9 Q. Oh.

10 A. We had checked -- I had physically checked the other
11 inmates in there, checked for a pulse. There was no radial --
12 there was no carotid pulse on any of those patients.

13 Q. So before getting out -- I'm just writing all this down,
14 trying to make notes of the highlights and --

15 A. Uh-huh.

16 Q. -- that's why I've got that to cover --

17 A. Right, yeah.

18 Q. -- the other stuff, but -- so before you got out, then,
19 before you were asked to get out --

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. -- to give you guys a break, you checked on all the
22 others -- you checked the pulse on all the others and you didn't
23 find any others?

24 A. No.

25 Q. Right?

1 A. No. And there was another firefighter in there that was
2 checking as well. Because there was one that was believed to be
3 still alive, and so we started to try to get him out, and then
4 when I was able to pull his head out, because he was underneath
5 another inmate, pulled him back a little bit and checked for a
6 pulse and there was no pulse.

7 Q. And who is the other firefighter you were inside --

8 A. ██████████.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. ██████████ is -- after a while, he's the one who went in on
11 the other side and helped untangle ██████████.

12 Q. What's his last name?

13 A. ████████████████████ (ph.).

14 Q. Okay. I haven't heard that name.

15 A. Sorry.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Yeah, he -- it was close to --

18 Q. So you and him were doing kind of a lot of initially,
19 you and ██████████?

20 A. He -- no, he jumped in after a while.

21 Q. Oh, okay.

22 A. Like he's part of Engine 6, Engine 6 Company, and he
23 came from the east side of town, so --

24 Q. Oh.

25 A. Yeah, it took a while for them to get there.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. We had already had the hole cut, had --

3 Q. So you were inside initially.

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. And then the -- and then who else was inside with you
6 before they cut the hole?

7 A. My partner, [REDACTED].

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And he was --

10 Q. He went around the back, got that guy out.

11 A. After he got the guard, after he got the guard out, he
12 came and he assisted me.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And he jumped on the -- there was a ledge, which it was
15 twisted metal, really, but there was like a little spot where they
16 could camp up there, and they were standing up there. And I was
17 standing right next between the bodies and the top of the bus.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. I was in the bus and they were at the front of the bus,
20 but they were still in the bus. Does that make sense?

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. Okay. And so -- and that's when we were able to have
23 leverage, like me pulling and pushing and then pulling, we were
24 able to load the patients onto a backboard and get them out of
25 there. So -- and Captain [REDACTED] was helping with that. He was on

1 the outside. Sorry. I'm not -- I'm all over the place.

2 Q. That's okay.

3 A. But --

4 Q. We'll figure it out.

5 A. So -- and but as far as anyone said anything, no. I
6 just kept telling the patients to keep talking to me and just stay
7 with me. And nothing was said about family, I mean nothing. It
8 was just what's your name? My name's [REDACTED]. Okay, we're going
9 to get you out.

10 And then he -- and then when they started cutting, we
11 were covering the patients and I couldn't hear them, and I was
12 like talk to me, and they're like, we're here, you know. And
13 that's pretty much all it was, like.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. Nothing, nothing was said.

16 Q. Well, they probably didn't even know what was coming.

17 A. Right, yeah. But nothing was --

18 Q. Right.

19 A. Other than I'm -- my name is such and such, that was it.

20 Q. Right.

21 A. Help me, is pretty much all it was --

22 Q. Right.

23 A. -- and we were doing everything we could.

24 Q. So the seats, I know, were -- so the seats are in the
25 way. The bodies are kind of intertwined with the handcuffs and

1 all that stuff, so --

2 A. Yeah. And all the bodies were in the front, which
3 was --

4 Q. In the front on the driver's side, right behind the cage
5 probably, right? Right in that corner?

6 A. The cage was flipped up. How can I explain that?

7 Q. Half of it was. I know it was kind of leaning over you
8 guys, and I know --

9 A. Yeah, that's the part --

10 Q. -- you had to get the strap to kind of hold that up --

11 A. To keep it -- uh-huh.

12 Q. -- because you couldn't really hold that up and work.

13 A. And then the other part of the cage was where the guys
14 were sitting. That's right. That's where the guys were able to
15 sit and to assist, and we were able to get, like, three guys in
16 and help pull and stuff like that. The seats were everywhere,
17 and --

18 Q. And plus they're on top of some of the people, right? I
19 mean, you had to move them and --

20 A. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Well, the top cage, there were seats
21 on top of that, and we were able to move those seats out. But
22 there were no seats on top of the patients except for [REDACTED].

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. He was the only one that was closest to the back of the
25 bus, or closest to the end of the bus, and there was a bench on

1 top of him.

2 Q. Oh, okay.

3 A. But as far as the other patients, they were just on top
4 of each other.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. That's why I had thought that there was patients with
8 some seats intertwined, you know --

9 A. [REDACTED] was intertwined with it, yes.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. [REDACTED] was. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] -- [REDACTED] was underneath
12 one, and then when we lifted one body, [REDACTED]'s leg was
13 intertwined with -- I want to say it was a -- yeah, I guess it was
14 a bench. And then we lifted the bench, moved his leg, and got him
15 out.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. But it was just like a bundle, and then it was like
18 [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] kind of by themselves. They were still
19 handcuffed, but they were just kind of off --

20 Q. Okay. So there's -- the majority of people were up
21 towards that one corner.

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. And then the two of them were kind of towards the middle
24 or towards the back still?

25 A. Yeah. Yeah.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. If we were there, I'd be able to tell you exactly where
3 it was. It was kind of hard.

4 Q. Yeah, I was in the bus all day yesterday with my PPE
5 gear. I'm kind of what they call crashworthiness.

6 A. Right.

7 Q. I do the interviews, look at the inside of the bus.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. I was looking at the seats and seeing how they all came,
10 came loose and all that.

11 A. Well, since you're really familiar with the bus, here's
12 the hole where we cut.

13 Q. In the roof, yeah.

14 A. Okay. I'm standing right here. [REDACTED]'s head is right
15 here by my right foot and [REDACTED] is right next to him. That --
16 does that help you?

17 Q. But the hole is cut on the passenger side. The bus is
18 on its -- on the driver's side? The hole is cut on the
19 passenger's side roof -- oh, it is.

20 A. The hole was cut on the top of the roof.

21 Q. On the top of the roof, but it's on the passenger side?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. And the bus is laying on the driver's side.

24 A. Yeah, the bus is laying on the driver's side, yes.

25 Q. Right. So where that hole is, unless you're talking

1 where you drop down from that hole --

2 A. Yeah. Like, I'm standing here and the hole is right
3 here --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- where we cut.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And where I'm standing, [REDACTED]'s head is right here to
8 my right. Like, his head is right here to the right. It's to the
9 back of the bus -- to the top of the bus. And then [REDACTED] is right
10 next to him.

11 Q. Okay. I'm trying to envision this.

12 A. Right.

13 Q. Because of the way the bus was turned --

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. -- and all this, it's kind of hard to --

16 A. Um-hum. Because see, there's the front of the bus.

17 Q. Um-hum.

18 A. There's the back of the bus.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. Here's the hole that we cut.

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. And there's the big hole by the --

23 Q. By the front.

24 A. -- front, uh-huh. I'm about in the middle of where the
25 bodies are.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. I'm in the middle. And the cage is right here. And
3 like I said, [REDACTED]'s head is about right here, right to my right
4 -- to the right of my foot.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. And then [REDACTED] is further that way.

7 Q. A little bit farther back?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So when we were able to use straps to get him out, we
11 just went this way. Because we slid the backboards in, put the
12 straps on and just slid them out.

13 Q. Slid them out, and I think there was another board
14 outside there that they kind of slid them down?

15 A. Uh-huh, yeah. It was just as soon as we got that hole
16 cut, it was (snaps fingers) really quick. We were able to get the
17 bodies out that we needed in order to get the live patients out.

18 Q. Okay. Okay. Anything else? Okay.

19 A. No. I mean, I'm better with if you ask questions than
20 just kind of describing everything --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- because I'll forget a lot.

23 Q. So I guess the only thing I'm -- so initially, before
24 they removed that cage, not the one that you had strapped up, but
25 before you --

1 A. Because I heard they cut that out.

2 Q. Right.

3 A. So yeah, they -- that was in there before they cut it
4 out.

5 Q. But initially, it was -- there was enough room there --
6 from the damage, there was enough room there to get at least two
7 of the patients out?

8 A. Um-hum, yeah.

9 Q. Right. And that's how you were able to get in
10 initially?

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. And that --

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. -- the Mississippi truck driver that everybody is
15 calling him?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. Yeah, he was just there to help. I mean --

19 Q. And then -- yeah, the chief said never got a name.

20 A. Never got a name. And --

21 Q. And he just -- all of the sudden, he was gone.

22 A. Yeah. I -- no clue.

23 Q. Wow.

24 A. I mean, he -- and the thing is, is he was already in the
25 bus. I didn't even for -- I didn't think that they were

1 handcuffed together until I saw him trying to work the handcuffs,
2 and then I was thinking, wow, this is going to be a little bit
3 harder than I thought. But --

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. And then he just said, I need a moment. And I said come
6 on out. And I didn't expect him to come back.

7 Q. Um-hum.

8 A. I mean, he's just a stranger. I didn't expect him to
9 come back at all, and I look up, and he's at the door going what
10 do you need. Or -- I say the door -- the hole.

11 Q. Right, yeah.

12 A. But yeah, the reason that the two were so, I'd say a
13 little easily -- more easy to access is because they were on top.
14 They were literally -- I mean, it was just like a ball, just a
15 ball, tangled web.

16 Q. Right.

17 A. And I hate to describe it that way, because these are
18 still people, but these two, it was unhandcuff them, and then you
19 just lift them and throw them -- and toss them on a backboard and
20 get them out. And it was just like plain.

21 Q. Plus the angle and the height you --

22 A. Yeah, um-hum.

23 Q. -- guys were up, it just made everything --

24 A. Because when I took the first body off -- the first body
25 out, he was right there, so it was easy to put him on a backboard

1 and kind of get him out. And then the second one was a little
2 lower, a little lower.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. So, and then when we had -- try to get the third patient
5 out, like I said, he was so intertwined that we needed that hole
6 cut because we needed more leverage. We weren't able to get him
7 physically by ourselves in the bus.

8 Q. Um-hum.

9 A. And as soon as -- like, while they were cutting the
10 hole, we were trying to manipulate him even more, even more, even
11 more, and finally, when they cut the hole open, we were able to
12 put a strap around him and just pull him right out.

13 Q. Right.

14 A. And then that's when it just kind of smooth sailing
15 going through, so --

16 Q. Okay. Well, you guys did an amazing job. I know it was
17 tough, but you --

18 A. Yeah. I always wish we could do a little bit more.

19 Q. Sure.

20 A. But thinking back on it, I'm proud of all of our guys.

21 Q. Oh, yeah.

22 A. We worked very cohesively in a very -- I mean, you show
23 up on scene and you don't even know what to expect.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. So --

1 Q. And for you to just jump right in there and -- that's --

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Yeah. Okay.

4 A. Sorry for all the confusion.

5 Q. No problem. No, you did great.

6 MR. [REDACTED]: That concludes our interview at noon.

7 (Whereupon, at 12:00 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: BUS ACCIDENT ON I-20
 NEAR ODESSA, TEXAS
 JANUARY 14, 2015
 Interview of [REDACTED]

DOCKET NUMBER: HWY-15-MH-004

PLACE: Odessa, Texas

DATE: January 17, 2015

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.

[REDACTED]
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of:

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PRISON TRANSPORT BUS CRASH
NEAR PENWELL, TEXAS
JANUARY 14, 2015

Docket No.: HWY-15-MH-004

* * * * *

Interview of: [REDACTED]

Central Station
Odessa Fire Department
Odessa, Texas

Saturday,
January 17, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: [REDACTED]

Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:

██████████, Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of [REDACTED]:

By Mr. [REDACTED]

4



I N T E R V I E W

1

2

MR. [REDACTED]: Today's date is January 17th. My name is

3

[REDACTED]. I'm with the NTSB. I'm with Engineer [REDACTED]

4

[REDACTED].

5

MR. [REDACTED]: That's correct.

6

MR. [REDACTED]: And we're at the Central Fire Station

7

here in Odessa.

8

INTERVIEW OF [REDACTED]

9

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

10

Q. And Engineer [REDACTED] is going to give us a description

11

of what all he did and saw at the crash on the -- on the 14th.

12

A. Okay. Well, first of all, we were actually -- the first

13

order of business was we was actually going to a training scenario

14

first thing in the morning at 8:00, and were actually en route to

15

our drill field to do training. We heard Chief get dispatched to

16

a wreck out on, I believe, the mile marker 93, if I remember

17

right, which we know all as well as the Penwell area. You know,

18

we run there a lot.

19

So we were en route to our training whenever our

20

battalion chief, [REDACTED], got on the radio. I believe the

21

description he came up with was bus accident with a train,

22

multiple units need to respond. I believe he initially called for

23

three more engines and three more medics. So at this time, I

24

notified my training captain, [REDACTED], who was doing our

25

training, advised him we were going to take that run, because we

1 were right on the interstate and we were able to really just hit
2 the eastbound I-20 traffic and go.

3 And en route, I believe Chief advised there was possibly
4 12. He was unsure at the time, but gave us an approximate number
5 of patients. There was some confusion on -- not on our end, over
6 radio traffic of where to go because the train had blocked the
7 actual crossover to get onto the south service road. But, I mean,
8 by the time we were en route and close to the scene, they had well
9 advised us over the radio, take the Moss exit to get on the south
10 service road.

11 So we had no problem getting there. Whenever we
12 arrived, I believe Engine 7, Rescue 7, Battalion 1 and Division 1
13 were on scene. So we were -- what would that be -- the fourth
14 unit, I guess. We were the second engine and Rescue 1 was ahead
15 of us. So actually there was two medics, one engine and then
16 battalion chief and district chief.

17 We had to park kind of off to the south side of the
18 tracks. There was the little overpass area. We was able to park
19 up there but you still had to walk 30, 40 yards to actually get to
20 the crash site.

21 Q. So you were on that frontage road then or you --

22 A. Yeah, we were on the frontage road.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. We were on the frontage road of I-20 and parked on that
25 little pull off area. It's just a caliche area.

1 Q. Uh-huh.

2 A. But we still had to walk probably 40 yards to get to the
3 crash site. Got halfway there, I noticed the -- what at the time,
4 whenever I walking up, I was thinking it was the back of the bus
5 because it was completely open. And I didn't realize it until
6 halfway through the scene or the scenario that it was actually the
7 front end of the bus.

8 Walking up, I seen some weapons, asked the battalion
9 chief. He said he had sheriff's office, they were securing
10 weapons and stuff. But as we finally got close to the bus,
11 battalion chief or our district chief at the time, [REDACTED],
12 asked for the K12 saw.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. So I radioed to my engineer and my crew to bring the K12
15 chop saw and our gas powered cut-off saw. So we got it up there.
16 My crew, we started it. And my district chief and the captain on
17 Engine 7, [REDACTED], they kind of had an idea to cut a hole in the
18 roof, because the bus was laying on what would be the driver's
19 side of the bus, to remove victims. Because there was a cage on
20 the end --

21 Q. But you cut the -- where you cut was on the passenger
22 side. That's above the entry door, which is on the passenger
23 side. But not that it matters. If you did --

24 A. Yeah. Yeah, well -- yeah, okay. The bus was laying on
25 the driver's side.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. And it was up against the embankment, U-shaped --

3 Q. Right.

4 A. -- cut-out of the railroad tracks. So where we actually
5 ended up cutting was actually on the passenger roof because we
6 couldn't get any lower because of the embankment --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- where it was positioned.

9 Q. Okay. Okay.

10 A. And that was kind of difficult as far as explaining what
11 was going on. The interior crews wanted it cut to their knee
12 height. The interior crews inside, which was [REDACTED] and --

13 Q. [REDACTED].

14 A. -- [REDACTED], their knee height was totally different from
15 the elevation change on the exterior. So where we ended up
16 cutting was ultimately almost chest high as far as where the --
17 moving the bodies out.

18 But had some problems with the K12 actually cutting the
19 roof. It was -- obviously you have an outer skin and an inner
20 skin and then you have support columns through the bus. My
21 original plan was to cut one member and two panels. And what I
22 found was, after running the K12, it wasn't deep enough to cut
23 through both layers at the same time.

24 Q. Binding up. Binding up on you.

25 A. And then it kept binding up on me. So we had to get

1 some pry bars and stuff to beat metal away just to break out the
2 K12.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. And then we continued. And, you know, didn't quite get
5 to finish the bottom cut as far as what I felt would've been a
6 little bit better, but we were able to get a set of jaws, pinch
7 the bottom cut and actually peel it open, which worked good too.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. You know. The problem was the way the bus was laying
10 and the terrain was we were cutting on the passenger top half of
11 the bus but all the people were on the driver's side --

12 Q. Right.

13 A. -- laying on the ground.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. So you had that difficulty of extricating vehicle
16 victims. At that point, as soon as we peeled that inner layer --
17 or cut it out and then peeled that inner layer back with the jaws,
18 you know, we were able to get a better visual inside as far as a
19 different view from just the end of the bus. We were able to get
20 some backboards in and I was out exterior of the bus with the K12,
21 then we removed two of the live victims. They had straps that
22 they were able to tie around their bodies to help exterior crews
23 with the lifting.

24 Q. Right. Because you didn't want to lose them off the --

25 A. Yeah. So we were able to get boards in where we made

1 our opening, lift the patients up to the board and then move them
2 out. Exterior, there was numerous people able to grab the boards
3 from there and then walk them safely down at least to a level area
4 of the tracks.

5 Q. Right. Yeah, I know, it's quite -- kind of a --

6 A. Yeah, kind of a concave kind of terrain there.

7 Q. Right. Almost like it was U-shaped when they --

8 A. It's kind of a -- yeah.

9 Q. They've lowered it in order to get -- the trains can
10 make sure they could --

11 A. Sure.

12 Q. -- pass underneath the overpass now.

13 A. So I was probably exterior whenever the second victim
14 came out. And at that point battalion chief asked, because there
15 was a cage, a metal cage on the interior side that was kind of
16 folded on a hinge piece that was actually kind of folding over the
17 crews working to extricate the patients. So he wanted me inside.
18 So I came around to the front of the bus and climbed into it on a
19 expanded metal ledge off of that bus.

20 And I was able to look. There was too many people at
21 that time, I couldn't see towards the end of the bus, if it was
22 still attached to anything. So what we ended up doing, I made the
23 recommendation to get another -- somebody's tie strap, and we just
24 tied it up to hold it out of the rescuers' way where they're not
25 having to hold this metal flange off of them --

1 Q. Right.

2 A. -- and still try to manipulate patients.

3 Q. Right. Because they were all entangled, intertwined
4 and --

5 A. So we got some tie straps. I believe at that time -- it
6 was a individual. I couldn't place the individual. I know he was
7 wearing street clothes. I don't know if he was the truck driver
8 or a bypass individual. But he was standing on top of the side of
9 the bus as well. And pretty much he was there helping us in a
10 helping manner and was a godsend. So I threw him up the strap and
11 told him to tie it off on one of the window frames so we could
12 support that and keep that out of the rescuers' way.

13 Q. Now with the truck driver there, I mean, did you -- I
14 guess the question may come, did -- wasn't there enough other
15 firemen to help out that --

16 A. Yes. And there was and very quickly -- I mean, he was
17 there. I had him just loop it for us and then we tied it off and
18 then I never seen him again.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I mean, I don't know where he came from, what happened.
21 He was there. I just used him to pass the webbing over -- as I
22 poked it through a window, he grabbed it and stuck it back down to
23 me and then we was able to tie it off. And then after that, I was
24 able to step back down into it. It was kind of a crowded area.
25 We didn't want too many people down in there because then you

1 wouldn't have any room to work. So at that point it was [REDACTED],
2 Captain [REDACTED] was inside at this time, our division chief.

3 Q. And yourself?

4 A. [REDACTED].

5 Q. So four.

6 A. And myself.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. There was a fifth one, a Station 6 hand. I'll think of
9 his name in just a second. He's -- I'm horrible with names, so --
10 so at that point I think there was about six of us interior on the
11 bus. And we just started asking for everybody's straps that we
12 carry in our bunkers. I started hollering out to everybody to
13 grab me everybody's straps. And --

14 Q. And that was --

15 A. -- I can't remember what --

16 Q. And the straps were used to?

17 A. The straps were used to assist with the extrication of
18 the victims, to actually wrap around their bodies. We can loop
19 them --

20 Q. On the board.

21 A. -- through the chest underneath the arms and actually
22 help to assist lift the torso of the bodies.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. So whenever I first stepped down in there, you know, I
25 was right behind [REDACTED], kind of holding him and helping him

1 with straps. And if I ain't mistaken, and I can't be positive, I
2 know we probably brought another two that were DOAs out through
3 the hole that we created in the bus to get to a live one that was
4 underneath, because we had no way to move any of the DOAs out of
5 the way interior on the bus. So, you know, we made the decision
6 we had to move them out to get to the next live victim.

7 We moved the two out. Crews exterior had backboards in
8 the -- our extrication hole, and we were able to pass webbings
9 through and they can assist with us to lifting them out of our
10 hole. Let's see what else happened.

11 Got to the live one. Got another backboard. Kind of
12 did the same routine. I mean, it was actually pretty calm in
13 there. We all worked pretty well as a team. The victims that
14 were alive still at this time were probably two. Whenever I
15 entered the bus, we had to remove two dead -- DOAs to get to the
16 first live one.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. And now this is upon the time whenever I entered
19 interior on the bus. And then we had to move one more dead one to
20 get to the second live one, I believe -- or the last living victim
21 that we extricated from the bus.

22 At that time, after the second living victim was
23 removed, I believe we had four more bodies in there, I believe,
24 and they were all DOAs. So we all kind of collectively looked at
25 a better exit strategy and we ended up getting the Jaws of Life

1 and a cutter and we cut that top expanded metal cage that we had
2 supported earlier.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. We could actually see the back side of it and it wasn't
5 attached to anything at this point. So we actually took our
6 cutters from our Jaws of Life, cut that support bracket, just one
7 cut and it came out, giving us a better field of operation. Not
8 so limited.

9 Q. Right. Because -- yeah.

10 A. And then from there we kept passing straps, and I
11 believe [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] exited the bus at this time, after the
12 second victim removal -- or the last live victim removal.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. I believe they exited the bus because, I mean, it's very
15 physically demanding lifting dead weight. So we relieved them.
16 And my engineer for that day was [REDACTED], and he came in and
17 assisted me. I'm trying to think of the guy at 6. Man, I'm just
18 drawing a blank right now. I can't think of his name. But at
19 that point we all collectively started working on the dead bodies
20 to go ahead and exhume them from the bus. I mean --

21 Q. And how were you -- any issues? I know they were
22 handcuffed or chained to each other. And what were you --

23 A. Okay. Yes. As a matter of fact, I had actually forgot
24 about that. That was one of the hard things because the bodies
25 and the arms and legs were kind of tangled all together, so to

1 speak, in a pile. We opted to get a pair of bolt cutters because
2 the prisoners were handcuffed. So we cut the chains from the
3 handcuffs so we could move the actual limbs around to better
4 position them for extrication --

5 Q. Sure.

6 A. -- from the bus. So every one of them we ended up --
7 some of them we had a hard time cutting. We actually ended up
8 with a pair of handcuff keys from our Battalion 1 that he has,
9 that we were then, some of them, we were able to actually undo the
10 handcuff on, I think, two victims and we didn't have to cut the
11 chains.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. But pretty much all the rest of them we ended up
14 cutting. At the point, after we started with, I believe the last
15 four DOAs in the bus, we started -- hopefully they're good with me
16 staying here.

17 Q. Well, we're almost done.

18 A. Other than that, we decided to go a different route
19 after we removed that metal piece that was hindering to go
20 overhead with extrication.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. We cut it out of the way. And we found that that would
23 -- we thought it'd be better so we tried one. We had a backboard
24 out the front of the bus and tilted it up at a lower level and
25 used our webbing straps, hoisted them up and was able to put them

1 on a board and slide them out from the front of the bus at that
2 time. And it worked okay. Either way was rough. I don't know
3 that there was a good way to do it.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. Just because of the terrain out the front was so
6 littered with carnage and metal debris, plus the angle of the
7 slope, some people had to hold the board over their heads to move
8 them out and while the other ones were down by their knees. So it
9 was kind of awkward getting them out as well, so --

10 But we removed all four of them using -- I used a
11 fireman on top of the bus. What we did is we passed a webbing
12 string around their torso, tied another one onto it to have
13 somebody on the bus vertically to help us lift as well. After we
14 got them all out, we looked. We started -- a lot of the cars -- a
15 lot of the passenger seats had broke free from the bottom of the
16 bus. I guess their --

17 Q. Right.

18 A. -- anchor points. So there was a lot of the seats that
19 whenever they initially got there, they just started throwing them
20 towards the back of the bus. And what we attempted to do was
21 starting to move all of those seats out just to make 100 percent
22 sure there wasn't anybody else in the bus. So we removed, I would
23 say, six to eight bucket seats. I guess they're -- bucket or
24 tandem seats, I guess. They were side by side seats that mount in
25 the bus. We removed several of them out from the front of the bus

1 and that way we could see clearly the entire length of the bus --

2 Q. Sure.

3 A. -- the floor, made sure nobody else was there.

4 And then at that point we exited the bus. I mean, once
5 we made verification that nobody else was there, we exited the
6 interior bus and we were all exterior from there. And at that
7 point, I believe -- I mean, all the medics had taken the live
8 victims to the hospital at that point. I think one of the medics
9 had already returned back to scene.

10 But at that point, there were 10 dead bodies outside the
11 train. We kind of had them spaced out along the train tracks.
12 And, you know, pretty much the extrication was done and, you know,
13 they verified that they were dead. So we just started putting up
14 all of our tools.

15 Q. So how many of the -- so not everyone was taken out
16 through the roof? I think initially, what, you had -- or you --
17 maybe you weren't even there, but they had -- well, they had the
18 one from the back and they had the one, I guess, that -- they were
19 able to get one live one out through the front.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And then they opened it up. They got everyone else or
22 did you take out -- once you cut the cage, you --

23 A. No. Every --

24 Q. -- got some of the deceased out at the front?

25 A. Okay, we got -- all of the living came through the

1 extrication hole that we created from the exterior with our K12
2 saw. The only people that we or I had a part of extricating out
3 of the front was all DOAs.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. There were -- they were all dead. Because we had time
6 to --

7 Q. And that was four?

8 A. I believe there was four.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. If I ain't mistaken. So --

11 Q. Okay. So you had the one taken out the back and --

12 A. I believe they had one in the --

13 Q. -- the four and then that other -- well, the two that
14 were on the ground, but then you had one initially that I think
15 [REDACTED] helped or that trucker helped --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- get out through the front.

18 A. And then they had the --

19 Q. The one from the back.

20 A. -- one in the back. And then there was three interior.
21 I helped with --

22 Q. They came out the roof that were living?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. The living ones, yeah.

2 A. Yeah, the rest of the three, I believe -- three living
3 came out of the roof, our extrication hole.

4 Q. Right. Now, you had a couple deceased come out of the
5 roof but it wasn't until you cut away or you --

6 A. We removed that --

7 Q. Cage.

8 A. -- metal cage that was hindering efforts, that we at
9 first supported with webbing strap.

10 Q. Right.

11 A. That we cut that cage out of the way and then we got the
12 rest of the deceased out through the roof.

13 Q. And you're thinking three or four?

14 A. Three or four.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. If I ain't mistaken.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I mean, you know, at that point it was -- you know, you
19 hate to say this, but at that point it's just like, okay, here's
20 another body, let's go, let's get them out.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. You know, and here's another one.

23 Q. Right.

24 A. Well, let's get them out.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. Hey, we got to get this one out because this one's
2 head's underneath this guy, so you got to get this one first. So
3 it kind of turns into which one do we take first. But I know all
4 the living came through our extrication hole.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Pretty rapidly, I mean. And then after that, that's
7 whenever we had a little quote/unquote "time." Not that we wasted
8 any time, but we was able to look at that cage. It was like, hey,
9 one cut, this whole thing can come out. And all the rest of them
10 -- there may have been three, you know. I think there was 10
11 total dead.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. So that would probably be -- yeah, the two in the front.
14 One, two, three -- heck, we may even took five out of the front
15 after everything was --

16 Q. The deceased.

17 A. There might have been five down there.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. So let's see. And then other than that, we simply
20 packed up all of our tools. We brought them -- loaded them back
21 onto our truck, cleaned them up, and then we stayed behind for
22 assisting the medical examiner's office, because it is kind of a
23 trek to get dead bodies out of the train track way.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. And they only had two or three of them there, so they

1 requested help. We stood back and helped them. So we helped them
2 put them in the body bags. Well, we didn't help with the
3 identification, but -- you know, they had their IDs, put them,
4 pictured them --

5 Q. Yeah, I seen that out there.

6 A. -- inventoried.

7 Q. How they put the IDs with the bodies inside of the --

8 A. And then we -- the only part we really assisted them
9 with was moving the dead patients, putting them in bags, and then
10 it was just easier for us to put them on a board and have four
11 people carry them out to the vans that were waiting.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. You know, and they did a very good job. I mean, it's
14 hard to carry that amount of people out. So we stuck back and we
15 held with that.

16 Q. Yeah, because that terrain, you said that terrain's not
17 easy there.

18 A. No. And, you know, I'm probably assuming maybe a 40-
19 yard walk from where we had to bag the patients to where we put
20 them on stretchers. I would assume maybe 40 yards, you know.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. But you do that 10 times, it can get kind of weary
23 and --

24 Q. Sure.

25 A. -- you know, can wear you out. So we didn't mind

1 staying to help the medical examiner's office. So we stood there
2 for -- we probably didn't get back until right at 11:00, I
3 believe. But then we gathered up all the other EMS equipment,
4 brought it home so we could at least decontaminate it --

5 Q. Right.

6 A. -- and start the decontamination process.

7 Q. Yeah. That had to be a process in itself, yeah.

8 A. Sure. Sure. So, I mean, other than that -- oh, man, I
9 don't know what else really happened, you know,

10 Q. Sounds like you covered it all.

11 A. (Indiscernible).

12 Q. Okay. That concludes the interview with [REDACTED]

13 [REDACTED]. Is it [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]?

14 A. [REDACTED].

15 Q. [REDACTED], okay. And the -- and it's -- [REDACTED] is
16 spelled [REDACTED]. The time is 11:25.

17 (Whereupon, at 11:25 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

18

19

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: PRISON TRANSPORT BUS CRASH
 NEAR PENWELL, TEXAS
 JANUARY 14, 2015
 Interview of [REDACTED]

DOCKET NUMBER: HWY-15-MH-004

PLACE: Odessa, Texas

DATE: January 17, 2015

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.

[REDACTED]
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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PRISON TRANSPORT BUS CRASH

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NEAR PENWELL, TEXAS

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Docket No.: HWY-15-MH-004

JANUARY 14, 2015

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Interview of: [REDACTED]

Central Station House
Odessa Fire Department
Odessa, Texas

Saturday,
January 17, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: [REDACTED]

Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:

██████████, Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of [REDACTED]:		
By Mr. [REDACTED]		4

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. [REDACTED]: Today's date is January 17th. I'm [REDACTED]
3 [REDACTED] with the NTSB. I'm here at Captain [REDACTED] from
4 Station 7, and we're conducting this interview at Central Station
5 House -- at the Odessa Fire Department Central Station House. And
6 Captain's going to give us a brief description of what all he did
7 and saw when he was on scene for the January 14th MCI.

INTERVIEW OF [REDACTED]

8
9 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

10 Q. Go ahead, [REDACTED].

11 A. Okay. Approximately, I believe it was like 7:45, 7:50
12 a.m., we were dispatched on a possible rollover at the cap rock.
13 I know that the engine had been out there several times on
14 rollovers during the night and we -- I was actually talking with
15 the off-going captain about that.

16 Q. What's cap rock? I've heard the others say that.
17 That's just the area, cap rock?

18 A. When you're going up that hill, when you get to the top,
19 that's the top of the cap rock.

20 Q. Oh, okay.

21 A. And the railroad track runs underneath it. So we was en
22 route out there. We had made several runs out there over the last
23 several days because of the weather anyway. It seems like a bad
24 place, you know, real slick road and everything at the top of that
25 cap rock on I-20. So we're heading out there and we're getting

1 pretty close to being on the scene and we hear that there's been
2 an accident and there's possibly a vehicle on the railroad tracks.
3 That's all the information that we got before we got on the scene.

4 Once we got on the scene, there was guardrail and stuff
5 all over the highway, and then that's when the battalion chief had
6 been notified that there was a bus on the railroad tracks below
7 us. I couldn't actually see it because I was sitting in the
8 westbound lane. So we had to cross the median, get onto the east
9 side traffic and exit at 866 to get around to Murphy, which is the
10 road that runs on the south side of the tracks to get us around
11 there to the accident. Well, the train was blocking that exit, so
12 we had to go down -- back down to Moss, which is approximately a
13 couple miles back to the east, and exit there to get onto Murphy
14 and then back around. So somehow or another, the medic and
15 Battalion 1 was able to get down there a little quicker than us
16 because we had to go back around that direction.

17 Once we got there, I got out, went straight to the bus,
18 climbed up on top -- or climbed up the side of the embankment
19 where the bus was laying, and hollered -- Engine 1 was pulling up
20 at that time. I hollered at [REDACTED] to bring the K-12 -- or asked
21 him if he had his K-12 and he said yes, and I said bring it.

22 So he comes up there with the K-12. We start cutting a
23 hole in the roof. We were going to try to cut a 5-foot hole. We
24 ended up cutting about a 2½ by probably 3-foot-long hole, enough
25 to -- maybe 3-foot by 3-foot hole. It wasn't quite as big as what

1 we wanted, but started cutting through and realized it was a
2 double ceiling with a gap in between for braces. So we had a
3 little bit of trouble with the K-12. It got jammed a few times.
4 So we got the jaws up there to help us pry it apart also while we
5 were cutting it.

6 Once we got that cut open, we used a strap, and the
7 people inside -- me and [REDACTED] stayed up in the hole and we had
8 four people inside handing bodies up to us. And we would pull up
9 with the strap and get them up on the backboard and pull them out.

10 Well, two of them got taken out of the bus because they
11 had been in there quite a while. Me and [REDACTED] went into the
12 bus. First thing we did was take the jaws and cut the cage out
13 and take it out the end of the bus so it would give us more room
14 to get the last, I would say, five people out, maybe five or six
15 more out that we had to get out. Plus, we had to remove the -- we
16 removed the cages, plus we had to remove all those chairs, too,
17 so -- those double chairs, to get them out of the way so we
18 could make sure --

19 Q. Well, you just moved them out of the way but you didn't
20 cut any of the chairs?

21 A. Most of them were broke loose already.

22 Q. They were already broke loose.

23 A. Yeah, but we went ahead and took some of those out,
24 also, because we was trying to make room to make sure we checked
25 every area of the bus and --

1 Q. Whether there was bodies back there.

2 A. -- there was no more bodies, yeah. But we had, I would
3 say, four or five, six more bodies to get out. We had gotten all
4 the live ones out before me and ██████ entered the bus.

5 Basically, after we got done with getting all the bodies
6 out and moving all the chairs and making sure there was no more,
7 then we exited the bus and got our stuff together and left
8 sometime thereafter.

9 Q. Okay. So when you're saying you cut the cage, you cut
10 the cage that was at the very front, right, cut the one side of it
11 so you can get the other deceased out, or did you also cut out
12 that --

13 A. We cut both pieces, both sections of the cage out.

14 Q. Because that one that was inside that was over the --
15 they had it that they had --

16 A. Tied up.

17 Q. -- one strap tied up. You cut that one out?

18 A. We cut that one out first.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And then when we did, we was able to get the other one
21 out because we got that one out. So we went ahead and cut it,
22 took it out also. And it was just two cuts with our cutters on
23 our jaws.

24 Q. So you used the jaws on that?

25 A. Angle iron. Um-hum, yeah. Yeah, we actually had the

1 spreaders hooked up when we was working on the hole outside,
2 because we was having to spread it every once in a while to get
3 K-12 blade back out because it would get jammed because of the
4 double-wall ceiling having a gap was causing us a problem. But
5 once we got inside, then we switched the jaws to the cutters so we
6 could cut those angle iron joints out so we could get that cage
7 out.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. Once we got that cage out, it helped us a lot. Then we
10 was able to throw a bunch of chairs out, so --

11 Q. And so what do you think -- with the problems with
12 cutting that, what do you -- any kind of time frame you think it
13 took to cut that hole?

14 A. The hole took the longest. Cutting those cages out,
15 that cutter cut right through it like it was nothing.

16 Q. Yeah. Like butter, yeah.

17 A. Cutting that hole was tough. I couldn't possibly tell
18 you how long because you have no concept of time during something
19 like that. I mean, I -- you know, there's no telling. It could
20 have been 15 minutes; it could have been a half hour. I have no
21 idea because it seemed like it took forever, but someone might
22 tell me, no, it took you 5 minutes, and you'd think golly, really?
23 It seemed like it took forever, you know. So -- because I know we
24 got jammed several times trying to cut through those -- there were
25 support beams in between the two plates and then I'm sure that

1 with the bus being in the position it was, I'm sure it had a lot
2 of metal stress. And I would think that when we cut -- when we
3 would make a cut, that stress would increase and was probably what
4 was causing --

5 Q. Because it was torqueing?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. It was kind of torqued? Yeah.

8 A. I think that probably caused us to have problems with
9 the blade jamming even more.

10 Q. Sure.

11 A. I would bet that. Because you've got that bus in a
12 position that it shouldn't be in anyway. We're trying to take
13 pressure off that roof. You know, I'm sure the more we're cutting
14 it, the more it's getting in a bind.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. So I'm sure that caused us a little bit of problem. I
17 know that gap did. I know that gap did. So I don't know if
18 Quentin might've told -- thought that same thing or not when he
19 talked to you, but that's just what --

20 Q. Oh, he just said there was difficulty. But you're
21 saying that -- that makes sense that, that would have been a
22 reason for it to get jammed up, other than besides it was double-
23 walled with that brace in there.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. But just the fact that, like you said, the bus is at a

1 weird angle, and it's just all the stresses that are already on
2 the bus.

3 A. I bet there was a lot of metal -- I bet there was a lot
4 of stress on the metal, you know, being in that position. And the
5 more we cut it, the more it probably stressed.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. And probably jammed us up a lot. We jammed up several
8 times. And we had a good blade on there. That was one of --
9 that's one of those blades that, you know, they tell you, hey, you
10 know, put this blade on your K-12; this blade's the new, improved
11 thing right here. And we still had a tough time.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. I mean, we were having to get it -- it didn't take us
14 long to figure out we was having to get the RPMs up quite a bit
15 before we'd even try to enter the metal because it was jamming on
16 us so quick. But once we started figuring out what we was up
17 against, it started getting a little better. But it took some
18 time.

19 Q. Sure.

20 A. It really did. It took some time. We used the jaws and
21 the spreaders a lot, too, to help us open that hole up, so -- it
22 took both of them.

23 MR. [REDACTED]: Okay, that concludes our interview at
24 12:35.

25 (Whereupon, at 12:35 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: PRISON TRANSPORT BUS CRASH
NEAR PENWELL, TEXAS
JANUARY 14, 2015
Interview of [REDACTED]

DOCKET NUMBER: HWY-14-MH-014

PLACE: Odessa, Texas

DATE: January 17, 2015

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.

[REDACTED]
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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PRISON TRANSPORT BUS CRASH
NEAR PENWELL, TEXAS
JANUARY 14, 2015

Docket No.: HWY-15-MH-004

* * * * *

Interview of: [REDACTED]

Courtyard Marriott
Odessa, Texas

Saturday,
January 17, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: [REDACTED]

Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:

████████████████████, Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

████████████████████, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

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By Mr. [REDACTED]		24
By Mr. [REDACTED]		29

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. [REDACTED]: Today's date is January 17th. My name is
3 [REDACTED]. I'm here at the Courtyard Marriott in Odessa.
4 Along with me here is Trooper [REDACTED], who was the DPS
5 officer who was on scene at the time of the crash occurred, and
6 also NTSB Investigator-in-Charge, [REDACTED].

INTERVIEW OF [REDACTED]

7
8 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

9 Q. So why don't you just start, Trooper, and just give
10 us -- I guess, just give us a brief description where you were and
11 what all you saw and what all you did?

12 A. Okay. My name is Trooper [REDACTED]. I had just got
13 called out to the same location at the I-20 mile marker 103 for a
14 rollover, and there was another vehicle that crashed shortly after
15 that, a blue Mustang that hit the guardrail into the median. That
16 wasn't a rollover. It was just guardrail damage.

17 I arrived on scene, did my thing with the crash
18 investigation for that first rollover. I would say probably 30,
19 45 minutes had just passed waiting on the wrecker to arrive for
20 the first, for the first rollover, and that's when the third
21 vehicle had lost control going eastbound on I-20, lost control of
22 the vehicle, went across the median, ramped across the westbound
23 traffic, landed on the north side of the guardrail and rolled over
24 to the same location of the first rollover.

25 Did my thing with that, checked for injuries, no

1 injuries were reported. Got my -- got the driver out, got him
2 into my patrol car for EMS to show up. Shortly after that,
3 probably about 5 minutes, that's when the driver of that rollover
4 that was previous said, whoa, look at that. I looked up. That's
5 when the bus had -- was approaching the semi -- a truck-tractor,
6 semi-trailer, and had appeared to lost control due to the icy
7 conditions, went off to the left, through the guardrail, and all
8 of a sudden hit the center barrier and down the ramp towards the
9 train tracks.

10 Went ahead and gave the driver's license back to the, to
11 the driver, told him to get out of the side, get out for safety.
12 Went ahead and went -- turned on my lights back again, went ahead
13 and diverted through traffic so that I could get into a safe
14 position to, I guess, see if there was any injuries or see if
15 everyone was okay in through the bus.

16 I immediately looked down the ramp towards the train
17 tracks. At first I didn't notice that a train was passing
18 through. Noticed that there wasn't a bus down there towards the
19 train tracks, so myself and three others -- three other civilians,
20 had walked down with me and noticed that the bus was just south of
21 the intersection or the overpasses of IH-20 mile marker 103. We
22 went ahead and went straight to the bus. All we heard was people
23 yelling for help, for us to grab people off of them.

24 We immediately noticed the front passengers laying down
25 what appeared to be the front cabin of the bus, which appeared to

1 had hit the train while in motion. We immediately noticed them.
2 There was one that was -- appeared to be snoring or asleep. It
3 appeared that he was barely breathing. We tried to get him to
4 respond. There was no response whatsoever and, shortly after, I
5 believe he had passed away.

6 We went ahead and tried our best to see if we could open
7 the gates of the secured transport bus. I immediately called my
8 communications to divert them from the other rollover to here as a
9 priority. Shortly after, we tried -- we tried our best to see if
10 there was any opening whatsoever. Being that it was such a
11 secured bus, it was hard to enter in the bus for care to the
12 survivors.

13 Shortly after that, we had heard someone yell for help
14 in the back of the bus. I immediately asked two of the civilians
15 to check in the back and check if everyone's okay in the back.
16 That's when myself was -- shortly after the door was open and
17 extracted out of the vehicle, EMS had shortly got there, arrived
18 on scene. Shortly after that, that's when a female fireman had
19 arrived. We ended up opening the -- myself and another civilian
20 had opened the front portion of the cabin for the -- to extract
21 the survivors and/or bodies. I observed -- I would say everyone
22 was in front of the portion of the bus, piled in a -- just kind of
23 like a doggy pile-type thing. I observed maybe six, seven bodies
24 unresponsive. The three that were responsive were all under the
25 bodies that had -- were pronounced dead on scene.

1 Myself, the civilian, and the fireman immediately went
2 ahead and tried our best with body straps and just our strength to
3 get everyone out as quickly as possible. The one passenger that
4 was on the top of the pile ended up coming back and responsive, a
5 very, very little strength to help us get him out. We ended up
6 getting him out and tried our best to get everyone else. Everyone
7 else was calm. And everyone that was -- survived at the time was
8 calm and responsive and they were just waiting on us to get the
9 bodies out.

10 Shortly after that, it was tried and tried with body
11 straps, but it was just hard to get them out through that little
12 opening. That's when EMS ended up getting their saw, getting on
13 the top portion of the bus, opening that opening for an easier
14 access to get the bodies and survivors out. Shortly after that,
15 we ended up doing our investigation, being that EMS and several
16 fire stations had arrived on scene. That's when we started taking
17 pictures, being that the help was already needed and already there
18 on scene. Contacting my supervisor shortly after he arrived on
19 scene and --

20 Q. And who was that, your supervisor?

21 A. Sergeant [REDACTED].

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Yes, sir. And then right before that, that's when
24 several other troopers out of the area arrived on scene, as well.
25 Took as many pictures as possible. Gave everyone, I guess,

1 duties. One trooper was in charge of getting everything -- every
2 information for the train.

3 Q. The sergeant started divvying out responsibilities,
4 then?

5 A. Yes, sir. Well, it was myself and my sergeant.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. I ended up giving the Trooper [REDACTED] (ph.) the duties to
8 get every -- all the information from the train. I gave Trooper
9 Maureen the duties of everything on the road itself and the
10 guardrail. And then also, shortly after that, that's when we
11 found out that there was three other crashes that happened in the
12 same location. So we -- him and Trooper V [REDACTED] (ph.) ended up
13 taking care of everything up there. And then Trooper [REDACTED]
14 (ph.) was in charge of going to the hospital with EMS, with
15 securing the weapons and prisoners. And shortly after, that's
16 when TDCJ showed up shortly after that.

17 Other than that, I think that's it.

18 Q. Okay, now there was -- in talking with the incident
19 commander for the -- the battalion chief with the fire department,
20 he mentioned that one of the, I guess, civilians that were down
21 there with you, he was -- they just knew him as a Mississippi
22 truck driver?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Okay. Did you happen to get a name for him?

25 A. Yes, sir. I got all the names of the three civilians

1 and good contact phone numbers.

2 Q. Wow. We'd like to get their names and contact
3 information.

4 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Once I get back to, I guess, my
5 notepad at my apartment, I will quickly call you or --

6 Q. Great. Fantastic.

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Now, they also mentioned that this Mississippi truck
9 driver, he was -- he went inside with you, I guess, and this
10 firefighter, female firefighter?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. And you guys were trying to get -- and he had a -- did
13 you let him use the handcuff key?

14 A. Handcuff key. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Okay. Because, yeah, I was wondering where they got
16 that, and he said DPS, so --

17 A. Yes, sir, that was -- yes, sir, that was me. Once we
18 found out that they were both all tangled and tied up together and
19 by handcuffs, I was the only one that had a handcuff key, and
20 that's when -- he was inside with all the passengers inside, and
21 that's when I gave it to him and they ended up unlocking all the
22 necessary handcuffs and got everyone out.

23 Q. Well, I think they did some of them because then, I
24 guess, he probably -- I guess he got kind of emotionally or kind
25 of mentally spent, so he got out?

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. And then you got out, and then you got your key back,
3 because I know that they -- when they were using some cut --

4 A. I guess some wire cutters or --

5 Q. Right.

6 A. -- bolt cutters.

7 Q. Bolt cutters to do -- release some of the other guys who
8 were all kind of tangled up.

9 A. Yes, sir. Shortly after EMS and several fire stations
10 got there, that's when myself and the civilian had ended up
11 getting out of their way and letting them do their thing.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. Okay. And do you know, did these other civilians, did
15 they happen to mention to you that they witnessed the crash as
16 well?

17 A. They were the two that drove shortly after the bus went
18 over the embankment.

19 Q. Okay. And which was shown on your dash cam?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. One of the guys? Okay.

22 A. Yes, sir. Yeah, and in the dash cam you'll also see
23 those three. There was one that quickly gets out as soon as I'm
24 going down the embankment, and then there's two others in that
25 video that follow, as well, and those are the three.

1 Q. Now, did you -- when you -- so you let the guy out of
2 your car and give his license. You went back. And then did
3 you -- where did you pull your squad up to? Did you pull it up,
4 like, in front of where the guardrail was kind of out in the
5 middle of the road or where did you pull up to?

6 A. Yes, sir. Shortly after that, that's when I ended up
7 turning on my lights so that I could make some room for myself to
8 go through traffic. I ended up going to the inside lane and right
9 away noticed that the guardrail was clear across the left lane.
10 That's when I ended up pulling behind the truck-tractor semi-
11 trailer and went in front of or the west side of the guardrail and
12 had my lights still on, and that's when I jumped out and went down
13 the embankment to the railroad tracks.

14 Q. Okay. Now these -- so the civilians, there was just the
15 one civilian, this Mississippi truck driver, I guess, that was
16 helping you a lot, or the other two were there or were they kind
17 of helping out at all or --

18 A. Yes, sir. The first one that got out immediately out as
19 I was going down the embankment was a prior paramedic, I believe,
20 for the Odessa Fire Department, and he ended up going down as well
21 and helping as much as he could. Shortly after, when he found out
22 that someone -- well, everyone needed medical attention, he went
23 back up to his truck, got his EMS paramedic bag, and went back
24 down.

25 The Mississippi driver that you guys were talking about

1 was the one that was inside the bus. And then the third guy,
2 after I talked to him, I believe yesterday, he stated that it was
3 just too hard of a scene for him to be around.

4 Q. Sure.

5 A. And I told him that was understandable and I'm glad that
6 you stood by and helped out with making room for us to enter into
7 the bus.

8 Q. And how did they do that? How did they -- because I
9 know that the cage was there.

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Was it partially already kind of -- just kind of torn
12 away or became disconnected from the bus from the impact damage?

13 A. Yes, sir, which was the passenger's side of the gate.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. It was partially off, being that the whole front cabin
16 was --

17 Q. Gone.

18 A. -- torn apart.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. That's when we ended up just wiggling it around and
21 ended up coming out completely, and that was the opening that we
22 had. The passenger seat was being held by two bolts, and of
23 course it was attached by two -- well, the plywood that was on the
24 floor.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. We ended up wiggling that around and moving it out of
2 the way and --

3 Q. Oh, so the one jump seat, you guys were able to pull
4 that out and get that out of the way so you'd have more room
5 to --

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Okay. Good information, yeah.

8 And these three other accidents that you mentioned, was
9 there -- was that -- you were working the one, there was another
10 one. What's the sequence with these other accidents?

11 MR. ██████████: I'll go through them because there's a
12 number of them there. I've got them numbered. There's actually
13 seven. And I just wanted to go through each one of those
14 individually --

15 MR. ██████████: Okay.

16 MR. ██████████: -- and just look for their direction of
17 travel and where they ended up before this one happened. So not
18 to take away your thought, but just --

19 MR. ██████████: Go ahead.

20 MR. ██████████: If you want to continue with
21 (indiscernible) --

22 MR. ██████████: No, that's -- I was just going to ask
23 about these other three accidents because I had heard about those
24 others.

25 MR. ██████████: Okay.

1 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

2 Q. I got just -- that there were -- that there was an
3 accident that occurred at 5:50 a.m.?

4 A. Yes, sir. That was the one that I had got called out
5 to, the first --

6 Q. Involving a white pickup truck?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. And he started off, he was going eastbound?

9 A. Yes, sir. He was going eastbound, lost control of the
10 vehicle and --

11 Q. And where did he end up at?

12 A. He ended up --

13 Q. If you can just put on the diagram for me?

14 A. Okay. I would say about right here.

15 Q. Okay, so that's going to be the first crash?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. And he was originally coming in either the right-hand or
18 left lane here?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. After he crossed the bridge, he goes and impacts the
21 median from behind or impacts --

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. -- the guardrail from behind?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. And was that guardrail deformed in any way, or --

1 A. No, sir. It is believed that he rolled over the
2 guardrail, and most of his, I guess, equipment or items that were
3 in the bed were on the right shoulder, which was the north
4 shoulder of the westbound side. And then immediately just rolled
5 over that north side guardrail and came to rest.

6 Q. And was he -- and how did it come to rest? On its -- on
7 all wheels, on its right side, left side?

8 A. Yes, sir, top -- up --

9 Q. Totally upright?

10 A. Upright, yes, sir, facing west.

11 Q. And he was facing west?

12 A. West, yes, sir.

13 Q. Okay. And then there was one at 6:05 that involved the
14 blue passenger car?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. That was traveling eastbound?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. And that was the Mustang that you talked about that
19 ended up in the median?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Okay. Can you just give me an idea somewhere where that
22 car ended up?

23 A. She was in the outside lane. She lost control over the
24 overpass. She spun around facing westbound in the eastbound side,
25 hit the guardrail all across the driver's side, immediately

1 ricocheted off into the median and came to rest, spinning, facing
2 eastbound, and came to rest.

3 Q. Okay. So she ends up facing eastbound?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. And so she started off in the right-hand lane, went into
6 the barrier after she spun out?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. And then ricocheted from there, then went out into the
9 median?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. And then we had a report at 7:35, a brown pickup truck
12 with (indiscernible) was traveling eastbound and crashed again.
13 So can you walk me through that crash?

14 A. Yes, sir. And that one's also on video, as well, being
15 that I'm still at the scene, in the north improved shoulder on
16 westbound side. As he was coming eastbound in the inside lane, he
17 lost control over the overpass. He came into the median
18 immediately, ramped through the guardrail, hit his driver's --
19 front driver's side part of the vehicle and immediately just
20 rolled down to the same location and still facing westbound.

21 MR. [REDACTED]: When you say he went through the
22 guardrail, is that the guardrail that the bus hit, as well?

23 OFFICER [REDACTED]: Yes, sir.

24 MR. [REDACTED]: So that was towards the end treatment of
25 the guardrail? Would that have been towards the end of --

1 OFFICER ██████: I would say it was --

2 BY MR. ██████:

3 Q. This was --

4 A. No.

5 Q. -- this being in the end of the guardrail and then this
6 being the guardrail and then it gets real, real thick up in this
7 area --

8 A. Yeah, towards --

9 Q. -- as it makes the transition to the bridge here.

10 A. Yes, sir. I would say the front portion of the --
11 towards the barriers is when -- was where he went through. So I
12 would say the same location where the blue Mustang came to rest.

13 Q. Okay. So this guy number 3, he started in the left-hand
14 lane?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Going eastbound?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. And then he came down here, and this is -- he spun out
19 in the median or he just --

20 A. No, he --

21 Q. -- traversed the median and then ramped over?

22 A. Yes, sir. He kept on going straight, straight towards,
23 and then right after that he ramped through the guardrail,
24 airborne, and once he hit the north improved shoulder, that's when
25 he started rolling down the hill.

1 Q. Okay. And this vehicle number 1 rolled over, correct?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Correct?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Okay.

6 MR. [REDACTED]: And that's the one you were out there
7 initially?

8 OFFICER [REDACTED]: Yes, sir. That was the very first one.

9 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

10 Q. And these other two were captured on dash cam, as well?

11 A. No. This one was the one that I got.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. That I got called out to. Shortly after this one is
14 when this one happened. So once I arrived on scene, it was this
15 one and that one that were still in the same resting place.

16 Q. Okay, but this crash number 3 that I've identified it as
17 was on the dash cam?

18 A. Yes, sir, that one's on the dash cam, sir. And that's
19 the video before the bus crash.

20 Q. Okay. And then the bus crash happened at about 7:40?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. And so did the bus impact the guardrail in the same area
23 that was impacted by the pickup truck in crash number 3 and the
24 pickup truck in crash number 1?

25 A. From what the video shows, it appears that it did to the

1 same, the same location of the guardrail.

2 MR. [REDACTED]: Now, would that have -- impact have any
3 -- would that have caused the guardrail to come out into the
4 roadway or do anything like that, or was it still bent up, or did
5 he literally vault over that guardrail or --

6 OFFICER [REDACTED]: To tell you the truth, I didn't think
7 it would have been a problem being that, first of all, I guess, we
8 diverted -- I diverted my attention to the safety of the driver.
9 Immediately after that, I looked at the roadway. Everyone seemed
10 to be fine, traveling without any, I guess, diversions or
11 complications. And so to me, I thought everything was fine. And
12 obviously there was damage to the guardrail, but there was nothing
13 extravagant to still stay in the left lane.

14 MR. [REDACTED]: There might have been some debris or
15 something out there, possibly?

16 OFFICER [REDACTED]: Debris from the third crash, no. There
17 was debris from the first crash, but it was all out of the roadway
18 in the improved shoulder.

19 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

20 Q. And there was nothing in the left-hand lane at all?

21 A. No, sir.

22 Q. And then after the bus crash occurred, then there was a
23 gray passenger car. Did you know anything about that crash or
24 not?

25 A. No, sir, that was --

1 Q. Okay. And then --

2 A. All the attention was to the bus.

3 Q. And right almost immediately after that one, there was
4 involving a gray pickup truck --

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. -- that was traveling westbound, and then about 10
7 minutes after that, there was one traveling eastbound with a white
8 pickup truck, and that one ended up on its side on the shoulder of
9 the road over here?

10 A. Yes, sir, over here.

11 Q. Right.

12 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

13 Q. And that's why you sent the couple -- or the one
14 trooper, at least one or troopers back up there because all these
15 wrecks were happening over there?

16 A. Yes. Yes, sir.

17 Q. You guys had your hands full.

18 A. Yes, sir, it was bad. Immediately, when I -- after the
19 bus, that's when ended up everyone started piling up and braking,
20 and that's why I immediately said we need other troops and other
21 help to come to the area immediately.

22 Q. Now, do you happen to know, or I guess I can look at the
23 logs, about approximately what time the -- did you end up closing
24 down -- you ended up closing down the interstate at some point?

25 A. The left lane, yes, sir.

1 Q. The left lane going westbound?

2 A. The left lane, left lane going westbound, being that the
3 guardrail was still there.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And then shortly after that, that's when other troops
6 stayed in the left lane and we ended up communicating with closing
7 down eastbound traffic and going through the service road.

8 Q. Diverted them off onto that service road?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Because being that we can divert anyone, it's kind of
12 going to be hard because there's no service road on the north side
13 of that --

14 Q. The westbound?

15 A. Yes, sir, for the westbound. So there's no -- there's
16 really nowhere to go. So we just tried our best to slow everyone
17 down and not go through that left lane.

18 Q. So they went around, like, on the shoulder, then,
19 because that guardrail was out there, or --

20 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

21 Q. So you were kind of working with the sheriff? I guess
22 they were helping --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- doing some of the traffic control and all that?

25 A. Yes, sir, the deputies. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Okay. So as for -- of course, you don't know what time
2 the roadway closed down, but I guess that's something I can
3 probably get from the dispatch log?

4 A. Yes, sir. Dispatch will probably have that log, where
5 we closed down the eastbound side. I would say maybe 20, 30
6 minutes after the bus crash, approximately, that's when we
7 diverted traffic to the south service road of the interstate.

8 Q. Right. And how long did you end up being on scene?

9 A. When everything was done, like, when I went home, or --

10 Q. Yeah. Yeah, when you left the scene?

11 A. Yeah, I would say about 7, 7:30 at night.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Yes, sir. I was there, yeah, that whole day.

14 Q. So you had -- so, yeah, we'll definitely want to get,
15 when you get a chance and get back, if you could just give me a
16 call with the contact information for those three other civilians,
17 and we can -- just to give them a call, just to -- you know, I'd
18 like to get statements specifically from that -- the one
19 gentleman, the Mississippi truck driver, that went in and helped
20 you, get a statement from him.

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. And seeing what -- if they -- of course, we've got your
23 dash cam, so we've got a description of what occurred in the
24 crash, but --

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. You know, get their statements from them, as well.

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 MR. [REDACTED]: I've got a, I've got a couple questions.

4 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

5 Q. How long have you worked in this area?

6 A. A year and a half, sir. This is my first duty station.

7 Q. Was this your, was this your first -- I guess this is
8 your second wintertime?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Cold weather time that you've worked at here?

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. Have you ever dealt with other crashes out there with
13 icy conditions or similar conditions as this?

14 A. Actually, recently. It was about a month ago when we
15 had a severe ice storm. That wasn't nearly as bad as what
16 caused -- what potentially caused this crash.

17 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

18 Q. Oh, was that right after -- like January 1st, January
19 2nd? I heard it was --

20 A. Yes, sir. It was actually around New Year's, yes, sir.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. Is when we had pretty much, I would say a quarter or a
23 half an inch of ice all over the roadways in Odessa, all the
24 Permian Basin.

25 Q. And do they call that area -- it's called, like, the cap

1 rock or something?

2 A. The cap rock, yes, sir.

3 Q. Cap rock?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. And that's because it's the top of the -- there's kind
6 of a hill that comes up there?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Okay.

9 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

10 Q. And is there a policy or procedure that when you
11 encounter hazardous road conditions or anything that you make
12 notification to the TXDOT or to the county services or anything?

13 A. Oh, yes, sir. That's our main priority, safety for the
14 drivers.

15 Q. How does that work?

16 A. Well, that's just all up to us, whether we -- just like,
17 just like this instance, I had actually notified TXDOT to make a
18 priority for that overpass to be passed through or try and treat
19 it. It was after the rollover, the third rollover.

20 MR. [REDACTED]: After that, that's when you called into
21 dispatch to tell them you need to get TXDOT out?

22 OFFICER [REDACTED]: TXDOT out there. Make a priority.

23 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

24 Q. And that was after the third crash?

25 A. Yes, sir. And being that they were all over the Odessa

1 area, that's why I said make this a priority to come out here
2 first before anything else. So pretty much, yeah, it's all up to
3 us and whether we determine whether it's unsafe to travel through
4 these without being untreated or --

5 Q. Okay.

6 MR. [REDACTED]: Now, even when you were out there and you
7 were, you know, pulled off to the side, would you estimate what
8 kind of speeds the traffic was still doing?

9 OFFICER [REDACTED]: I would say about 10, 15 under the
10 speed limit.

11 MR. [REDACTED]: Which is 75?

12 OFFICER [REDACTED]: About 60 -- 60s, 60, 65. Yes, sir,
13 unfortunately. And being that my lights were still on, I
14 think -- and being that it was -- you could still see probably
15 about a mile in advance, with my lights being on, approaching that
16 overpass. But it's just a high -- a very fast-pace work area
17 environment here and, unfortunately -- we try our best to slow
18 everyone down.

19 MR. [REDACTED]: It's a high-volume traffic area there?

20 OFFICER [REDACTED]: Yes, sir.

21 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

22 Q. And what were the atmospheric conditions like then? Was
23 it rainy, was it clear, was it misty, or --

24 A. Oh, it was all, it was all --

25 Q. What were the atmospheric conditions?

1 A. It was all overpass [sic]. Every time you breathe you
2 could see your breath. During that time that I was out there, it
3 would come in and out as freezing rain and sleet, sleet or snow.
4 But both of those, I guess, the rainfall and the snow, it was --
5 it wasn't as heavy as what you'd think might it be.

6 Q. And what time did you start your shift that day?

7 A. At 5:30 is when I got called out. So 6:00 in the
8 morning, once I got dressed and ready to go.

9 MR. ██████████: Oh, they called you out early that day
10 because of all the --

11 OFFICER ██████████: Yes, sir. I was on call that night.
12 Yes, sir.

13 BY MR. ██████████:

14 Q. And when you came out, were the conditions the same or
15 did they deteriorate or anything from the time you were called out
16 until --

17 A. Well, first, it started with no rainfall, no sleet or
18 snow at first. Once time passed and I arrived on scene, that's
19 when that freezing rain, very light, and sleet and snow, very
20 light as well, ended up happening during those two crashes,
21 working those two crashes. And every time I would get to the
22 rollover and also the blue Mustang, the guardrails were real
23 slippery, and that's what kind of indicated that the overpass
24 would have been the same, as well.

25 Q. What were the surface conditions like?

1 A. Wet. Wet, and the improved shoulders were more icy than
2 the road itself. I did not get a chance to see the surface area
3 or condition of the overpass itself, but the guardrail was real
4 slick, had a very thin ice coat to it. But other than that, I did
5 not get a chance to get to the overpass, being that it's a hill
6 and I didn't want to startle anyone and cause another crash, being
7 that I was there or --

8 MR. [REDACTED]: So it would kind of go -- are you --

9 MR. [REDACTED]: Can I just -- I just wanted to --

10 MR. [REDACTED]: Go ahead. Okay.

11 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

12 Q. And the atmospheric conditions were -- they were
13 sufficient enough that you needed to use wipers?

14 A. I would say after a while, driving through the rain, it
15 would be a lot more than just sitting and parked on the side of
16 the road. But after a while, you would have to use your wipers.

17 Q. And the vehicle, the patrol car that you were using, was
18 that fully marked with overhead lights?

19 A. Yes, all lights were on at that time. My rear, front
20 and directionals to the left were on.

21 Q. Does Texas have a move-over law?

22 A. Oh, yes. Yes, sir.

23 MR. [REDACTED]: That's if they can, but when you have --

24 OFFICER [REDACTED]: Yes, sir. Yeah, the lane immediately
25 to the emergency vehicle, you have -- you're required to go 20

1 under the posted speed limit or you can move over at the same
2 speed.

3 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

4 Q. In the dash cam, one section of the dash cam, it seems
5 like a majority of the vehicles that are passing are in the left-
6 hand lane.

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. And do you have an opinion for that?

9 A. I was glad for them to be moving over to the left, being
10 that it was possibly slick, and for them to slow down, being that
11 the number of crashes that happened in that same overpass. But I
12 was really glad to have that safety for everyone moving over to
13 the left.

14 Q. When you first drove up on the accident scene, the
15 debris that was in the roadway consisted of the guardrail, and
16 none of that was on -- was any of that on the roadway prior to
17 this crash or was there any loose debris or anything, you know,
18 adjacent to the roadway to the left-hand lane?

19 A. There was no debris, no guardrail damage that were
20 obscuring any of the lanes when I arrived on scene.
21 Unfortunately, with all this weather that had passed through here
22 prior to that day, there was guardrail damage all over the place.
23 But there was no guardrail or debris in the roadways to divert or
24 cause any other crashes that would pass through there. All the
25 debris was just on that north improved shoulder, just left of the

1 first rollover.

2 MR. [REDACTED]: And it was on the shoulder?

3 OFFICER [REDACTED]: Yes, sir.

4 MR. [REDACTED]: Okay.

5 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

6 Q. So when you had -- kind of going back to when you and
7 the three civilians, when you removed the jump seat, was that you
8 and the female firefighter or was it the civilians that did that
9 before she got there or when she got there?

10 A. The seat itself was already moved prior to EMS and
11 firemen arriving on scene. They had arrived on scene shortly
12 after, being that I had just called them out to that third crash.
13 But being that I told them to get diverted over here, it was
14 really hard for them to divert their attention real easily down
15 the embankment, and they had to divert to another exit and down
16 that service road to get to an easier access to get there.

17 Q. Right. But as for removing that jump seat, you said you
18 were able to pull it out of the way in order to get to the cage
19 that was already partially damaged that you guys were ending up
20 pulling away. But was it you and the fireman that removed that or
21 was it you and the civilians that kind of -- I know it was
22 partially already detached from the floor. Did you guys pull it
23 the rest of the way out and threw it out of the way?

24 A. Yes, sir. It was myself and the civilians that had
25 ended up getting that seat out of there and that opening, because

1 we were already entered in the bus prior to any EMS, any firemen
2 to arrive on scene.

3 Q. Okay. And so you guys removed the seat. That was
4 before the fireman, and then you were able to kind of pull the
5 rest of the -- that one passenger side of that cage out a little
6 bit farther so you could gain access back there?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Okay, okay. I'm pretty much through. I just want to
9 say that you did a tremendous job out there. And like I said, I
10 told you that that the fire chief said -- had great things to say
11 about you and, you know, you ought to be commended. For being
12 such a young officer, you're on your way to better things, no
13 doubt --

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. -- within the department.

16 A. Yes, sir. Well, I appreciate all that, and I'm glad
17 that all the survivors are still surviving at this time.

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. Being that with all the help that we had. But I'm
20 grateful for those three civilians that helped me out, as well,
21 because I don't think we would have been able to do it without
22 them.

23 Q. Oh, you couldn't have done it by yourself, yeah.

24 A. Oh, no.

25 Q. You would have had to wait a little bit longer and --

1 A. Yeah, not at all.

2 Q. Right. Okay.

3 MR. ██████████: That concludes our interview at 3:45.
4 (Whereupon, at 3:45 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: PRISON TRANSPORT BUS CRASH
NEAR PENWELL, TEXAS
JANUARY 14, 2015
Interview of [REDACTED]

DOCKET NUMBER: HWY-14-MH-014

PLACE: Odessa, Texas

DATE: January 17, 2015

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.

[REDACTED]
Transcriber