



**SURVIVAL FACTORS – HIGHWAY GROUP CHAIRMAN’S
FACTUAL REPORT**

ATTACHEMENT 14: PASSENGER INTERVIEWS AND STATEMENTS

Valhalla, NY

DCA15MH006

(92 pages)

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First Train Car Passenger 1

The train passenger seated in the first train car, was interviewed by telephone on February 6th, 2015.

Notes:

- The gentleman was seated in the first car on the left side in the window seat of a 3 seat row forward facing in the 2nd forward facing row from the middle. The bathroom was behind him. He felt the car was “not all that crowded”; he rides on this train about ½ the time and when he takes the 5:44 express he likes the quiet car. He recalls all the middle seats of 3 were empty and few of the two seaters were shared.
- There was a man in the aisle seat in his row who got up and moved rearward before the accident (he believed the man normally exited at Chappaqua and was likely moving back to improve his position on the platform – thought he moved to a rearward train car).
- The first indication of a problem was the feel and sound of a boom and a jolt. He was startled. There was a pause of silence and then metal started flying through the car. There was sparking. It seemed to go on a long time with screeching and tearing sounds.
- When the train stopped, he realized the seat in front of him had been pushed back into his left leg and he could feel with his fingers that his left leg was broken just below the knee.
- He stated that there were “little spots of flame” on various seats throughout the car
- A fellow passenger 2 rows up, opened the emergency window exit. Somehow he climbed over the intervening seats and jumped out the window after that man. As he moved through this area, he was aware of someone on the opposite side of the train in an aisle seat and slightly ahead of him who was slumped over and not moving; he believed that person was dead.
- When he landed, he fell backward in the snow and could see the burning automobile; he was concerned about how close he was to it. Other passengers helped drag him farther away from the train. He thought he was the first one out the window but was aware of another woman he thought had rib injuries who came out that way and waited with him and some other (uninjured) passengers for help from EMS. They collected him on a board and took him through the second car and then for a ride to the ambulance on the back of an ATV.
- He mentioned his wife threw away his clothing because it smelled so much of gasoline.

**Transcript of Interview with First Train Car Passenger 2
February 7, 2015**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of: *
*
METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN *
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK * Docket No.: DCA-15-MR-006
FEBRUARY 3, 2015 *
*

Telephonic Interview of: CAR 1 PASS 2
Valhalla, New York
Saturday,
February 7, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: INTERVIEWER 1, Ph.D.
Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:

INTERVIEWER 1, Ph.D., Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

INTERVIEWER 2, M.D., Chief Medical Officer
National Transportation Safety Board

INTERVIEWER 3, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

INTERVIEWER 4, Chief Safety Officer
Metro-North Railroad

INTERVIEW

(3:00 p.m.)

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay. So, the recording is going. This is CAR 1 PASS 2,
7th of February, 3 p.m.

INTERVIEW OF CAR 1 PASS 2

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. So, we're conducting an investigation -- our agency is interested in improving
safety. And can you hear me still?

A. Yes, I'm sorry.

Q. No problem.

A. I have four dogs here. Okay. Go ahead.

Q. I have the same problem in my house.

And so, we're interested in highway safety, so we have various specialties -- well, all kinds of transportation safety, so we have various specialties collecting factual information on all different aspects of the accident. And we're focused on understanding the survivability aspects, so what happened to the people on the train, how they got out of the train, how the -- what kind of assistance was required, how the emergency response was handled, any types of, you know, issues or experiences or anything you had in that regard.

So, why don't I go ahead and just let you describe what -- when you first remembered that something was wrong, please just describe the events of the day that you remember.

A. All right. Can you hear me all right?

Q. Yes.

A. Okay. So I was sitting in the quiet car, the front car, and I was all the way at the back on the left-hand side by the window. And it wasn't -- there was not a lot of people on that car compared to some of the other cars. I think it's because it's the very front of the train, so people have to walk all the way up the platform at Grand Central.

And so, all of a sudden, you felt this -- there was no one in the seat next to me and I don't think there was anybody in front of me. There was a gentleman across the aisle from me, and we were sitting in -- you know, you either have two or three seats and this was -- each side had two seats in this, the back of this car. And so --

Q. Were you in the -- when you say the very back, were you sitting the absolutely -- do you know for sure if it was the very last row? Like, there's a little double seat --

A. Yeah, the very last row.

Q. And so, there's a little double seat --

A. Sorry?

Q. Yeah, okay. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

A. Do you -- you know what? Do you want to call me back on the landline? Would that be better or can you guys hear me okay?

Q. We can -- it seems like we can hear you okay. But if it's --

A. Oh, okay.

Q. But if --

A. Okay, fine. Yeah, I just --

Q. Yeah, if it gets, if it gets --

A. Okay.

Q. -- difficult for you or for us, we'll let you know and we can try that. But I think it's working okay.

A. Okay. So, yeah, the very, very back, you know. So the only thing, you know -- so we have like the door to the next car like back there. This car had a bathroom, which is kind of important because, when I tell you the story, you'll, like -- I couldn't see what was happening at the very front on the left-hand side because the bathroom juts out, right?

So, at any rate, we hit something and I thought it was -- well, I don't know, like a deer, because we kept moving. And it wasn't jarring. It was just kind of like you're going over rubble. It felt like we were going over something. And then -- well, I wasn't panicked at that point. I just thought, oh, God, you know. Then this piece, this beam, this steel beam comes through the right-hand side, right? It's on the right-hand side and this beam comes through at like head level, right? And it comes -- it shears through the car, right? And it hit --

Q. And did you see it enter the car or when did you first notice that something like this was happening? Like did you see it actually enter the car or just --

A. Well, I saw it like just -- when I saw the beam like just basically coming through the car on the right-hand side. So, again, I -- you know, it was fine at first. It wasn't even jarring. It wasn't like, you know, you hit something and you feel like you're going to like, you know --

Q. Yeah, understood. Yeah.

A. -- like an impact, like a really jarring impact. But this steel beam comes through the car. All of a sudden I just see it right -- because, again, that bathroom's in front of me. I see it as it comes (indiscernible) the bathroom. And it hits the man sitting across the aisle from me and kills him. And I saw -- you know, I saw my -- and then I, like, I bent over like I -- then I was like, oh shit. Like that's the first time I -- oh, my God, like, this is, you know --

Q. Yeah, that's a little distressing.

A. -- this is a little serious. And I saw it hit him, right? It hit him and like glanced off of him. And so, then you started smelling, there was some -- then you could smell some -- I didn't see any smoke, but I could smell like this real acrid smell. So then I get up, I put on my backpack, and I try and open the door that goes into the car behind us. Okay?

Q. Okay.

A. And someone's trying to open it from the other side. But then all of a sudden I see them shaking their head and they're like -- they're pointing down. And I look and the whole doorframe is crumpled. It's not crumpled, but it's all bent, right?

Q. Yeah.

A. So you can't open the door. So then, I'm like, okay. And then I looked at the guy next to me and I was like are -- hello? And that's when I realized that he was dead. And he -- and that that big steel -- the big beam is still there, obviously. And then there's people coming from other parts of the car. This is all kind of like -- not clear as day.

Q. Right. Yeah, this is --

A. Because there was kind of the --

Q. -- hard to remember the details, yeah.

A. -- the panic and everything. Even talking to you right now, I feel like I'm telling you -- like I watched a movie and I'm telling you a scene from a movie because it feels so unreal, but --

Q. Yeah, and if you need --

A. Anyway --

Q. -- you know, take -- if you need some time, take it, you know.

A. No, no, I'm okay. I've been talking to this trauma psychologist, or whatever, and that's been really helpful. But then, the -- you know the window that you can push out? That's in the seat in front of me. So these guys are like trying to push out the window. And there's these two ladies standing there, and they're like frozen. They just are, like, just standing there. I think they were just in shock.

And so we get the window open. I see there's -- somebody's like there's a guy cut in two back there, meaning -- back there meaning towards the front of the car --

Q. Okay.

A. -- from where, I guess, he had just come. And then people started jumping out. And it's so weird. I was like, oh, I don't have my coat on. So I take off my backpack and I put my coat on, And the guy below me on the ground now is like, come on, lady, just let's go. And so I get all my stuff, and then the ladies are still frozen there, so I climb over the seat. I'm like, you guys, you got to move. And they're just standing there. But anyway, so the guy helps me down.

Now, this is the part where I -- what I wanted to show you, because this is the part that's -- besides the man next to me, but this part is kind of bothering me. There's someone -- they weren't yelling, but they were like calling out. They're like, "Help, help me, help me." And I looked around. I could see the torso -- there's a man's torso like face down in the aisle where you're going to exit the train, where the doors are. So he's just laying facedown -- just his torso.

Q. Where you're going to exit the train --

A. And then, I could see another --

Q. I'm sorry to interrupt you.

A. I'm sorry?

Q. Okay. Where you're going to exit the train, but in the proximity in the rear back of the train where you are, not further forward or --

A. Right.

Q. Okay. Got it.

A. Yeah, there's two doors, because the very front of the train -- but, yeah, I can't see there. But the torso's in this -- towards this back part.

Q. Got it.

A. And then there's someone also who looked dead, pinned, like pinned -- what must have happened is -- when I picture it in my mind's eye, I guess the chairs -- you know you have the chairs that are opposite each other?

Q. Yeah.

A. It almost looks like one chair maybe is moved up -- he looks like he's pinned up. But the thing is, I can't in my mind's eye see what he's pinned by, but he's kind of like just pinned. And he's -- he looks -- he's not alive either. And then, I hear this -- God, that's what's killing me, the soft voice, the help me, help me. And I look around, and now the smoke is coming, like the really acrid smelling smoke, and I jump out. And then I freak out. And then I -- then there's a cemetery and I run like -- I kept on thinking, oh, my God, I didn't die, but if this explodes, I don't want to die now --

Q. Right.

A. -- by metal. So I -- you know, back of my mind I'm going as far into the cemetery as I can. And I call my folks and, you know, I'm now -- start freaking out. And then I'm like, okay, get a grip. I try and find a -- and then I start hearing sirens. As I'm talking to them, I'm hearing all these sirens. So I'm like, I got to go find someone because there's someone still in there.

And so, I go back, and people are like roaming around -- only the people in the first car, like, because at this point I looked down and none of the other doors are open. Then several of us are like screaming at people, you know, because I think we're all a little freaked out. We're all screaming, get off the train, get off the train, there's a fire. And you could see fire at the front of the train, not in the train, but at this point it's just in the front of the train. Like not in the train, but --

Q. Right.

A. -- it must have been the car. And so then I see a door open and then a bunch of people start coming out of a car towards -- you know, not the back back, but maybe the second or third car. And --

Q. So, when you say you saw a door open --

A. -- I see a policeman. So there's a guy walking towards -- I'm sorry?

Q. I'm sorry to interrupt you. So when you say you saw a door open, do you remember which car that was that the doors opened? Was it the first car or the second car?

A. No, and I want to say it was a door because I don't -- it wouldn't have been the window. I don't think -- I actually saw people jumping out. And I want to say it was like -- yeah, I think it was the second car, maybe the third car.

Q. Okay.

A. Back from, you know, back from the front of the train.

Q. Yep. Go ahead. Yeah, I just wanted to confirm which door you thought you saw that was opened, yep.

A. Yeah, and this was on the side away from the street, right?

Q. Yeah, the cemetery side.

A. So this was on the graveyard -- on the cemetery side.

Q. Yep.

A. And I see a policeman, or I see like an EMT person, and I say you've got to go to the front of the train. I said there's still people in there that are still alive. And the guy goes, well, we can't do anything until we disengage -- I can't remember what word he uses, but the third rail. And so, I'm like, okay, fine. And so then I walk -- now I'm walking alongside the train. We're still screaming at the people to get off the train.

And we come up -- and then, there's -- I see some man -- there's a -- now there's a police car and I see some man getting -- you know, being -- having some first aid with, I think, you know, like on the police -- you know, with the police people. And I'm just kind of wandering around and I kind of -- oh, and I say to the guy -- I say to someone, like one of the police people, what do I do? Like, what do we do? Like, what do we do? And they say, well, is there somebody you can call? I'm like, yeah, I said, I called them.

And so -- and everybody was just kind of like roaming around at this time. And so, then I -- and this is pretty much the end of my story. There is a lady turning around, and I flagged her. And I said, look, can you just drive me somewhere, like, somewhere where my folks can pick me up? And so she drove me to Valhalla, and at -- there's actually a restaurant at the Valhalla railroad station, and I just waited there for my folks.

Q. Okay.

A. And I think, you know, what upset me is when I found out that everybody had been burned beyond recognition, I was, like, God, well, that fire -- I mean, for the 20 or 30 minutes that I was -- you know, before I got the ride -- maybe it wasn't that long. I don't know how long it was, but it looked nobody ever made it to that front car to, like, see if there were any survivors.

Q. Okay.

A. So that kind of was the impetus for my call was the fact that there was someone still alive in there.

Q. So just to clarify what you just said, you felt like -- you didn't feel like the responders had made it to that front car to fully check that front car before the fire took it over? Am I characterizing that --

A. Yeah. Yeah, and the only reason I say that is because, you know, what I've read -- at one point when they finally -- in the, you know, all the hundreds and thousands of articles that came out afterwards, like, I read that they had to identify people by whatever dental stuff or whatever. And I thought, God, that means they didn't get to those bodies before -- beforehand, so --

Q. Right. Okay. Okay.

A. Not that the person who was alive would've survived, but still, because that's -- the smoke was a real -- that smell was really acrid and --

Q. Understood. Right.

A. -- acrid smell. Okay.

Q. Okay. Well, hey, let me ask a couple of clarifying questions. When you saw the women in the train that were, you were saying, frozen, did you notice any --

A. Yes.

Q. -- any physical injuries on them or other physical injuries on people besides the ones you already told us about?

A. No. They were -- they did not seem -- they were -- I don't think they were injured at all.

Q. Okay.

A. But I don't, but I don't know. They could have had something broken, but I didn't see any blood or -- and they were older -- you know, they weren't super young. They were older.

Q. Okay.

A. And to be honest with you, I don't know how many people got off the train. It wasn't a very full car.

Q. Right. Can you describe how you jumped out the window, like, exactly what you remember about how you got out the window and if there was any difficulty in doing that?

A. Yeah. No, some guy -- whoever the person was that helped me down was really awesome. He -- because it was kind of a -- it was a drop. It wasn't a terrible drop, but they were all -- people were all saying like -- people as they were jumping out were like what about the third rail? And then I -- the guy on the ground who was helping people -- and there may have been two of them maybe -- I think they realized that the third rail wasn't on that side because they were like, no, no, no, it's fine, it's fine. And so I climbed out the window and someone grabbed my torso and helped me, you know, reach the ground.

Q. Okay. All right. And you had -- you were completely uninjured after the fact after you'd had some --

A. Nothing.

Q. Okay.

A. Yep.

INTERVIEWER 1: I'm going to give it to Mary Pat to ask a question.

BY INTERVIEWER 2:

Q. So, I actually have -- hi, CAR 1 PASS 2. It's [REDACTED]. I have a few questions here. I'm going to go back to the beginning in your description of who was seated where. And if I have this correct, you're in the last row on the left side.

A. Yeah.

Q. There's a guy in the last row on the right side. There's nobody --

A. Yeah, he was -- oh, go ahead. Yeah, and he was sitting on the seat closest to the aisle away from the window. So there was a window seat, then him, then the aisle, then a seat, and then me.

Q. Okay. Perfect. And then right in front of you there's that three-seater. Was there anybody seated there?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Okay.

A. I don't think there was anyone in the three-seat -- in the seat in front of me.

Q. And then in front of that are the three-seaters that face each other?

A. Yeah, I don't -- there may have been someone, but I don't know. Again, it was -- I mean, I think that's why a lot of us were up in that car, it was really -- it was pretty much on the -- it was emptier more than it was full.

Q. Okay, that's great. I think, you know, in the end that worked to everybody's advantage. Do you remember anyone else --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- seated across the way, across the aisle, between you and that first door? If you don't remember, that's perfectly fine. I'm just asking.

A. Not definitively.

Q. Okay. And then you mentioned that there were two men and two women who -- two men who went out the window, opened up the window and went out the window first, then you went out, and then there were two other women that you described as frozen. But they --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- they eventually came out that window or you're not sure?

A. You know what, I didn't see them come out the window because I climbed out the window and I climbed up the embankment to the cemetery. And the one thing -- you know, there were some other people that went out before me. Like they were helping people out before I went out. I don't know how many.

Q. Okay. Okay. And then you talked about realizing that the guy who was seated across from you had died, had been killed. Do you have any sense of --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- where he had -- what part on his body had been struck by one of the beams?

A. Yeah. Yeah, he was hit by the third rail like square in the first -- in the forehead. And at first, that was the weird part is I was kind of like what is this beam -- it was almost like a beam you'd see in a building that's being built, you know. So I was like where did that come from? And then -- and I watched it - I mean, I watched it hit him. And he -- but it didn't -- it looked to glance him. What I think happened is it -- I saw his head thrown back, and it must have just broken his neck, because he -- and he had a little bit of blood coming out of his nose and his eyes were open, and that's when I knew he was dead. And,

you know, he -- the beam was just like right -- it had stopped like right there. So I think, you know, either his head had gone forward and hit the beam, or the beam had, you know, glanced off his head or something. But I saw the whole thing. I saw it hit his head and his head thrown back. And at first I thought, oh, he missed it, and then I realized he hadn't missed it.

INTERVIEWER 1: Right.

CAR 1 PASS 2: And that was the man from -- that was the man from the museum.

INTERVIEWER 1: And you heard -- you know that because of news reports and stuff, or did you -- you knew him from other rides on the train or --

CAR 1 PASS 2: No, no. No, I didn't know him. I didn't -- wait, hold on. I didn't know him, but when I saw the pictures of the people, and there was five of them, and I knew it wasn't the first person they released.

INTERVIEWER 1: Got it.

CAR 1 PASS 2: And then I -- then -- and I wasn't even sure it was him when I saw the second picture. But when I saw the rest of the people who were from different countries, I knew it was the man from the museum.

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay. That's really helpful.

BY INTERVIEWER 2:

Q. And then, if you had to guess, how many beams could you see in the car? Did you just see the one, or were there more --

A. Just the one.

Q. Just the one. And --

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. And you talked about realizing kind of as you were going out the window that there was one or two more other people who were seriously injured?

A. Yeah, I heard one voice. I heard just one voice. I heard just, I heard just one -- I had just heard help me a couple of times. And I'm assuming -- I just assumed it was probably -- it sounded like the same voice. It was real soft and like -- yeah.

Q. Okay. So that was just one other person that you were aware of who --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- was somewhere injured. And it sounds like you think that person was on the floor kind of in the vestibule by that door. Is that right?

A. No. I think that person was dead in the vestibule because it was only I think half his body.

Q. Okay. Where do you think the voice was coming from?

A. It was coming from down -- and again, I couldn't see because you know how in the train the bathroom sticks out? You couldn't see -- like I looked down and it really, it really was

-- I mean, it really also struck me how much stuff there was around. Like stuff had fallen and like -- I'm like, what's all this -- you know, what's all this stuff? And so I couldn't see

-- it wasn't like, oh, a clear passageway I could see down. It was all, you know, all -- I guess, the -- I can't really visualize it, but I can only see in my mind, I just remember at the time thinking, God, everything's like been uprooted. Does that make sense?

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay.

INTERVIEWER 2: Yes.

INTERVIEWER 1: Yes, it does.

BY INTERVIEWER 2:

Q. It definitely makes sense.

A. You know what I mean, like the chairs and stuff?

Q. Okay. And then, we've heard a couple of different descriptions from folks about smoke. It sounds like there was a smell. Was there visible smoke?

A. That's a good question. No, not like thick smoke. Not like thick smoke like you could see. It was more -- and that's actually what mobilized me. I think that's what snapped me out of it. I was like -- because I kind of was like, okay, I'm okay. But then that smell, I was like I got to get the hell out of here. And it was that smell more than visible smoke that that made me move.

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. What about flames? Did you see any flames or sparks?

A. Not inside.

Q. Okay. And did you --

A. Yeah, the reason we knew there was fire -- the reason I said there was a fire is because after you could see a little, like a little like -- and I knew it wasn't the train because it was like -- you know, again, it was dark, but it was -- like there was a fire, but it was like -- not in front of the train, but like it wasn't the train, like --

Q. Right.

A. -- the main part of that first car.

Q. Okay.

BY INTERVIEWER 2:

Q. And then, I think I have just one last question. When the train came to a stop, did the lights in your car stay on or did they go -- or were they turned off? Were they out?

A. They were on.

Q. I'm sorry. They were on or they were off?

A. They were -- I think they were -- well, I want to say they were on, because if they were off it would've been really dark. And I was able to like -- I think they were on because

when I -- I was like, oh, my coat. And I remember seeing my black coat. I want to -- I'm next to positive they were -- I'm 99 percent sure they were still on.

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay. Okay, and then --

CAR 1 PASS 2: Yeah, and they were definitely on when I looked at the man next to me.

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay. That makes sense.

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay. And then our investigator Cyril has a question for you.

BY INTERVIEWER 3:

Q. Hello, CAR 1 PASS 2. Could you hear me okay?

A. Yes. Hi, Cyril.

Q. Okay. How far were you traveling to before the accident occurred? What was your final destination?

A. I was going to Brewster.

Q. Okay. And I'm not familiar with that area. Is that a long way away?

A. Yeah. So my train ride from -- on that train is -- it's an express -- I think it's like an hour and 20 minutes.

Q. Okay. And were you taking a nap or anything like that before the accident occurred?

A. I don't know if I'll ever play solitaire again. I was playing solitaire.

Q. Oh, you were playing --

A. On my phone.

Q. On your phone. Okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. So when the first rail entered, okay, that's what --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- more or less startled you as the rail entered?

A. No. What startled me was this -- was the bumping.

Q. Okay.

A. You know, like we -- that we had hit something. And I thought it was a deer at first.

Q. Okay.

A. And I was like, oh -- and, you know, my first thought was, oh, my God, I'm going to be super late now, especially if the train had to stop. And it continued, right? It was like bump, bump, bump, bump, like you're -- like, you know, when you're going over a bumpy road. It was like going over a bumpy road in a car.

Q. Okay.

A. That's exactly what it was like.

Q. Okay. And then --

A. Like it wasn't jarring.

Q. Okay.

A. You know, it wasn't -- yeah, okay.

Q. And then soon after that then, then the rail came into the car that were you in?

A. Yeah, then the rail came in afterwards.

Q. Okay. Now, when the rail came in, did it go through the back wall or did it just hit the wall and stop?

A. I don't think it hit the wall. I don't know if it hit the wall. It hit the man.

Q. Okay.

A. But I don't know if it stopped and he -- his head was sort of forward and he hit it and then it snapped his -- hit his head back, or if -- but it did not go through -- no, it did not go through the wall.

Q. Okay. And then did you see any other rail come over the top of you that went through the wall or hit the wall?

A. God. No.

Q. Okay.

A. No.

Q. Okay.

INTERVIEWER 1: Did you hear, did you hear --

CAR 1 PASS 2: No.

INTERVIEWER 1: -- anything before the rails came in? Like did you hear any sounds outside the train or notice anything out -

CAR 1 PASS 2: No.

INTERVIEWER 1: No. So you didn't hear a train horn or anything?

CAR 1 PASS 2: No.

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay.

BY INTERVIEWER 3:

Q. When the --

A. No, it -- sorry.

Q. When the rail struck the man in the head, did it appear like there was electricity in the rail by any chance? Did you hear any zipping or sizzling sound?

A. No.

Q. Okay.

A. No.

Q. That's all the questions I have.

A. And I'm trying -- because -- okay.

Q. Okay.

INTERVIEWER 1: Yeah, INTERVIEWER 4 has a question.

BY INTERVIEWER 4:

Q. Hi, CAR 1 PASS 2. Yeah, I just have two questions I think. One, when you were trying to get out of the train, did you hear any announcements at all? Did the conductor make any --

A. Yeah, I did. The announcement was everything -- it was -- oh, God, what were the exact words because it was kind of funny at the time. I remember thinking, huh? They said - - God, what did they say? They said everyone stay in -- something like everyone stay in your seats, the conductor -- this part I'm sure of. The conductor is coming through now, you know, stay -- you know, actually I don't know if they said stay in your seats. I don't know if they said that. But it was like the conductor's coming through now. Because I remember being kind of like, oh, my God, the conductor has no frigging idea what's going on up here because we're -- I'm not staying in my seat. I'm not staying where I am.

INTERVIEWER 1: Right. Right.

CAR 1 PASS 2: So -- yeah, so I heard that.

BY INTERVIEWER 4:

Q. Okay. And then just -- INTERVIEWER 1 asked if you had actually heard a horn, the train horn, but I really didn't know if you heard him ask that question.

A. You want to know what's weird? And this is just like so, so -- well, my sister put me in touch with this -- like a psychologist who deals with trauma. And it's funny, because he

said watch out for like, you know, things that kind of, you know, get you or whatever. And I did, I stayed home for a couple days, but on Friday I actually went into New York to see him. And, you know, my job was like we'll get you a car service. And I was like I am not getting in a car, I'm not getting on a bus. I'm like -- because I should get on a train because this can't happen -- this wouldn't happen again, so that's the safest thing. But whenever I hear -- whenever I heard a car -- a train horn on that train -- I took the Danbury Line instead of the Harlem Line -- the Hudson Line instead of the Harlem Line -- I had an intense reaction. So I want to say that it is entirely possible that there was a train horn, but I am not going to say I absolutely heard a train horn.

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay.

INTERVIEWER 4: Okay, that's great. Thank you.

INTERVIEWER 1: Yep.

INTERVIEWER 4: That's all I have.

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay. All right. Well, I think we're -- I think that's all the questions we have. Is there any questions that you have or that -- or anything that you can think of that maybe we should have asked but didn't?

CAR 1 PASS 2: No. No, I think -- no. I'm --

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay.

CAR 1 PASS 2: No.

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay. Well, we really appreciate your time, and you gave an excellent account, that's very helpful for us, in a very difficult situation, so we really appreciate that. I sent you an e-mail with my contact information, so if you do have any follow-up questions or anything, feel free to contact me. And thank you very much.

CAR 1 PASS 2: Yeah, thank you. It actually is kind of helpful to talk about this with, like, people like you guys. So I appreciate it --

INTERVIEWER 1: Right.

CAR 1 PASS 2: -- a lot too.

INTERVIEWER 1: Great. Okay. Hey, thank you so much, and you take care.

CAR 1 PASS 2: Thank you.

INTERVIEWER 1: Um-hum.

CAR 1 PASS 2: Yeah, yeah, thank you very much.

INTERVIEWER 1: You bet. Bye-bye.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:

METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK
FEBRUARY 3, 2015

Interview of CAR 1 PASS 2

DOCKET NUMBER:

DCA-15-MR-006

PLACE:

Valhalla, New York

DATE:

February 7, 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.

Transcriber

**Transcript of Interview with First Train Car Passenger 3
February 7, 2015**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of: *
*
METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN *
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK * Docket No.: DCA-15-MR-006
FEBRUARY 3, 2015 *
*

TelephoCAR 1 PASS 3nic Interview of: CAR 1 PASS 3
Valhalla, New York
Saturday,
February 7, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: INTERVIEWER 1, Ph.D.
Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:

INTERVIEWER 1, Ph.D., Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

INTERVIEWER 2, M.D., Chief Safety Officer
National Transportation Safety Board

INTERVIEWER 3, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

INTERVIEWER 4, Chief Safety Officer
Metro-North Railroad

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER 1: And can you hear me okay?
CAR 1 PASS 3: Yeah, I hear you. Can you guys hear me?
INTERVIEWER 1: Yep.
CAR 1 PASS 3: Okay.

INTERVIEW OF CAR 1 PASS 3
BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. Okay, so essentially the NTSB is investigating this accident to -- you know, our charter is to try and improve transportation safety. We have a big team out here looking at all

different aspects of the accident. People here are focused on injuries and anything to do with survivability or emergency response, and so --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- we're going to basically just have you describe your experience.

A. Sure.

Q. And with -- you know, and the types of details we're looking for are things that are associated with any types of injuries or -- I'll have you start with giving us your location, if you can remember it, the best you can remember it, on the train.

A. Sure.

Q. Other people's locations that were injured or that you remember, and then how you got out of the train, and from there?

A. Sure. So I was obviously in the front car. I was on the two-seater. So it was on the right-hand side of the car as it was set up that day. I was facing forward. So I was in the first sort of front half of the car, if you will, but I was kind of right almost at the middle. I think I might've been at that one seat that's like back to back, where the sort of seats flip from one direction to the other direction. Or if not that one, then the one right in front of that.

Q. Okay. So you don't remember if the seat in front of you -- you don't remember if the seat in front of you was a seat back or if was the open, like, the lounge type --

A. No, the seat in front of me was a seat back.

Q. Got it. Okay.

A. Yeah, because we were all facing forward at this point. It's just whether the guy behind me was facing forward or facing backwards.

Q. Okay.

A. I don't recall if I was at that first sort of middle seat, if you will, but I was kind of close to the middle spot in the train.

Q. Got it.

A. So it's normally -- it's actually not really my normal train, of course. I remember sitting down and as I was sitting down one of my neighbors, my friend (ph.), who I think you guys are talking to him tomorrow, slapped me on the shoulder and he said what are you doing here? I said, ah, (indiscernible) late, which I wasn't really. I had to deal with a friend of mine before, so --

So, I mean, I guess you want me to just progress with the whole story of what I remember?

Q. Yes. And you can start with when you first realized that something -- the very first indications --

A. Was wrong?

Q. -- that something was amiss, yeah.

A. Yeah. Yeah, so I'm just --

INTERVIEWER 1: He's a good friend with the guy that's coming in tomorrow.

CAR 1 PASS 3: We were just kind of cruising along. I'm listening to music and doing, you know, inane stuff with my cell phone. I couldn't even tell you if I was looking at it at the time or if it was just in my pocket and I was listening to music and daydreaming. I wasn't doing anything at that particular -- and I kind of remember just coming along at a little clip and then kind of like a bang and a thud.

And then I remember a lot of shaking. The whole -- everything started to, like, really shake pretty violently. I remember at this point thinking, what the fuck?

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. Right.

A. This is going to slow my day down. Something, like, broke on the train, derailed. It wasn't like this is violent --

Q. Extremely (indiscernible)?

A. -- and dangerous at this point. This was -- but this is all happening, of course, in milliseconds, but this is sort of as I recall things.

Q. Right. Okay.

A. And then, like I said, my friend was on the train and I -- he's got kind of a distinct voice. He was sitting a couple rows in front of me, also on the same side of the train. And then I kind of remember hearing him going, oh, my God, what is happening? And at this point it felt like a tidal wave of sort of metal just kind of cutting through down the -- down basically the aisle.

At some point I had sort of -- I think I was standing on the chair at this point, on the seat, kind of pressed as much close to the glass as I could. I could tell, you know, there's clearly something terribly wrong going on in the middle of the train and I had to get as far away from that as I could. So I kind of remember being pressed up against it. I recall the -- sort of the idea that there's -- we're clearly moving, there's movement coming out of sort of the right side of my eye. It's like just little, like street lights or tree shadows, that sort of thing, yet at the same time there's movement happening in the train.

As we sort of -- the wave of debris is coming in, it's actually growing from the floor. As I read the stories, I understand exactly that means, as it was sort of stacking up on itself.

Q. Right.

A. And you can sort of -- and you could've felt, like, things just sort of like raising up and just sort of screeching and crashing noises.

Q. Right. Yeah, it's --

A. And some sparks, and flashes of light.

Q. So you saw -- you did see sparks, then, and --

A. Yeah. There was definitely some sort of sparking going on.

Q. Okay.

A. Whether it was, you know, electrical sparks or just friction and things being so hot and melting and --

Q. What kind of sounds did you hear?

A. Like just, like, screeching and metal-on-metal sounds. But -- I've gone through a couple of therapy sessions -- but as I was saying to him, I don't recall, like, screams of terror or agony.

Q. Okay.

A. I recall sort of terror, but -- I probably heard terror, but not, like, pain. It was sort of like a lot of oh, my God, oh, my God, what is this? What's going on here? And then as quickly as it all started, it all stopped. And it was just like a thump; we just stopped right there instantaneously.

And I remember just kind of looking around and trying to get a quick lay of the land and seeing this sort of pile of what -- I couldn't really figure out what it was. I just knew it was metal. I knew it was bad. But I actually thought maybe it was the train tracks, the third rail, you know, the actual rails.

Q. Yup.

A. I was thinking it was something like that that was sort of like, like a can opener, like, cutting us open. But instead of just popping up and cutting and moving on, it like kept growing and filling back up and raising up, if you will.

At this point, so we had stopped. It's, like, it's bright. There's, like, sparks and little bits of flame in front of me and behind me. The lights, they felt really bright. I don't know if that's just my memory being real sort of cranked up at this point or what. I remember looking around. I remember someone saying, just sort of -- you know, he was at my right. I remember someone saying we have to get out. And I remember someone saying, okay, push on the windows.

There was a window, emergency window sort of directly across from me on the other side of the train.

Q. Okay.

A. And I remember a man, like, sort of struggling with the windows. I remember yelling at him you have to push it up, you know, push the little red handles up. I looked back. There was a man a couple rows behind me that was working on the window on our side. He got that open pretty easily. I remember my friend screaming that there's a man on fire and taking his coat and slapping it at, like, a little bit of fire that was, you know, in the middle sort of pile of rubble. I don't remember seeing bodies. I just remember seeing the flame. I remember thinking that if there was a body in that metal, that there was nothing that you could do for it. And I think I said just get off the train.

There was a woman in the row right in front of me. Her name was ----, I found out. She's terrified. She's shaking. She looks back at me and goes, what happened? I was sleeping; what just happened? And I told her there's an accident and we have to get off the train. And she said, like, I can't move, I can't move. And I think I asked if she was hurt. She says I just can't move, like she was just terrified though.

So I asked her her name, what's her name? She said her name was -----. So I took her hands and then I said, follow me, we're getting out of here. So I helped her get over the seat back. I remember looking -- she grabbed, she said I got to get my bag, so she pulled back a little bit, and I remember saying leave it. But she said, no, I need it. So I guess I just -- you know, in that moment, I think I grabbed my coat as well. It was on the -- up on the rack, the left rack on the top.

Q. The -- yup.

A. And they were exactly where they're supposed to be. Like, I mean, it didn't, like - it wasn't like it got thrown off. They were -- I just reached right up and it was right there. I grabbed it.

I remember looking across the aisle. The man had gotten the window at this point open. There was another man there. He said he had a broken leg. He was standing on the seat. But I looked at that pile of metal and there was no way in heck I was going over that. I didn't know that it was sort of hot or what have you, but I just knew it was bad and I couldn't go that way.

Q. Right.

A. There were two or three other men who looked to be in pretty good shape. They weren't injured, or at least didn't say they were. I think we all sort of said everyone try to get out as fast as you can. I turned around and helped -- to help ---- get over the next seat back. As I looked down -- back down on the ground, there was a man's body. It looked like he was pinned into the sort of -- underneath the seats, if you will.

Q. Could you describe where you believe he was at on the train?

A. I think he was like smack dab in the middle of the train.

Q. I'm sorry, could you repeat that?

A. Like pretty much right in the middle of the train.

Q. Okay. And on the -- sort of on the middle or right-hand side?

A. The right-hand side. Like, so if he was sort of in sort of the -- in the debris, but kind of -- at this point he was kind of tucked up underneath the seat. So to the point where, as we were stepping over the seat back and stepped down on the seat, I told her not to look down so she wouldn't see him. And I made sure that -- I said keep looking up, keep looking forward.

Q. Yeah.

A. He wasn't in -- it wasn't like a real gruesome scene. It was just all I could see was, like, a back, like, tucked over, the head tucked down. Actually, I don't even know if I saw a head, honest. But it was, like, you know --

Q. Okay.

A. -- I made that -- I made the view and it was like you knew right away that this was -- I couldn't stop for that guy because it was --

Q. Right, right. Okay. Thank you.

A. Now, whatever it was I saw there, I knew that.

We got another seat or two or before we got to the emergency window. It might've just been that next row of seats. I'm kind of -- it's a little confusing about how many seats it was. It wasn't very many that we had to hop over to get to. There was another man there. He said just stick your head out to the window and breathe the air, because the smoke was starting to get a little thick at this point. It really stunk. It was really, like, burning plastic, like really bad. And it's only a few seconds, but it was already starting to, like, make us cough and such.

I remember the first breaths of air was incredible. It was the most, like, sort of comforting and satisfying breath of air I think I've ever had. Like, you know, like (indiscernible) breath of air.

Q. Understandably. Yeah.

A. Like a Peppermint Patty and that first breath of air again --

Q. Okay.

A. -- it's real (indiscernible).

I remember looking out. I think I threw my coat out. I think I might've thrown --- jacket and coat out too. There was a man down there who said -- with his hands up. He said it's not too far, just come on. And I guess I just grabbed sort of the windowsill, if you will, and just, like, threw my legs over and just kind of hung myself down. He sort of guided me down and it wasn't that far.

She came quickly out behind me. At some point -- someone at some point, you know, screamed out, you know, watch out for the third rail. So we all realized that was right there as well and we stepped over -- had to step over that to get back sort of onto solid ground, if you will.

I don't remember -- you didn't tell me this -- if there's a row of train tracks right there or if we were just sort of sitting on, standing on the hill there or the slope. We weren't that far from the train, but was far from the train that you felt like you were at least safe.

Q. And you're on the parkway side of the train?

A. Yes, sir. I'm on the parkway side. That's correct.

Q. Yeah.

A. So I don't know, is there a row of train tracks right there or is that not --

Q. There was another set of train tracks on that side, yeah, because the train --

A. There is? Okay.

Q. On that day, the train was traveling on the --

A. On the southbound track.

Q. -- the cemetery side of the tracks. Yeah.

A. Yeah, okay. Okay. So I remember catching my breath a little bit. There was another man or two that came out behind me, to the window. I remember helping them down. One was a little heavier set. We got away there and I finally saw my friend, gave him, like, a great big hug.

I remember a woman sort of yelled if anyone have a scarf or a t-shirt or something to tie off a tourniquet because someone, some man had lost his legs. She clearly had had some sort of training before. I don't know if she was a passenger. I had to only assume she was a passenger because this is all within -- couldn't have been more than 30 seconds after we stopped.

Q. Right.

A. Because it stopped that fast, and there's no -- I mean, there's no way someone, even if they ran from the road, I don't think they would've made the distance.

Q. Okay.

A. So I remember -- so I think she must've been a passenger. So and then we just looked around. I didn't really know what to do. We were all kind of, you know, hugging and going on, oh, my God; saying, what the hell happened? I think at some point someone had said we should get away from the train. So we started just -- it was just as a, you know, a group of, I don't know, six, seven, eight of us, and we just started walking back sort of southbound towards the back of the train.

I do recall still seeing the cars sort of right in front of the train when we got off the ground -- or got off the train and was on solid ground.

Q. Could you describe the --

A. I remember --

Q. Oh, go ahead.

A. Yeah? Well, I was just going remember -- I was just saying I remember when we got to the second car, people -- the doors were open and people were standing at the doors and we were just telling them to just jump out, just -- or get out of the train as fast as possible, it's on fire. And I remember them saying, well, they told us not to go anywhere. And I remember one may saying, well, there's a third rail there; I'm not jumping down, I'm not -- and I just thought to myself I just climbed out of the window and it didn't hurt me. He needs to get out.

Q. Right.

A. That was sort of an internal thing. But, you know -- I'm sorry. What were you going to ask?

Q. Oh, I was just going to say, once you got out of the train, could you describe what you remember about smoke or fire?

A. Yeah. So when we first got -- when I first got out and we were still sort of helping people out, the smoke was starting to get a little thicker, a little blacker. There were small fires, sort of scattered, like, all through the car. The second car --

Q. You're talking about the interior of the car, right?

A. In the interior of the car. Yes, sir.

Q. Okay.

A. I don't recall there being flames at the front where the actual car was. As we made the decision to start heading backwards, you could, the fire was actually starting to really get going in sort of the back little corner of the first car. I remember the flames were starting to pick up there, so that between the door to the next train car and the door out of the car, that sort of -- that little spot there, the flames were starting to really pick up there.

Q. And so at that point when the flames were starting to pick up in the back of the car --

A. Yes, sir.

Q. -- was the front of the car fully engulfed or was it not really that engulfed?

A. No. I don't feel like the front of the car was fully engulfed. I feel like there was definitely flames in the front of the car, like, inside.

Q. Yeah, but it wasn't like a --

A. But I don't --

Q. -- it was scattered around? It wasn't like the flame just moved step-by-step through there? It started --

A. No, no, no. No, it didn't -- it didn't only get started in the front and just worked its way back. It was like it kind of started in multiple places, it felt like.

Q. Got it. Okay.

A. You know, there was -- you know, obviously there's a kind of friction in force that's happening at that point, so --

Q. Right.

A. I remember then we continued to just sort of walk back and just, you know, yelling to everyone that's on the train to just to move back or get off or whatever. I just remember just like just gesturing, swinging my hands back, swinging my hands back. I think I'm holding Ari in one arm and I think I'm still holding ---- hands with my other hand.

At some point an officer, EMT, fireman, someone of some sort of authority was running towards us and we just said there's a lot of hurt people, you need to get up there; it's pretty bad.

As we got finally to the back of the car, or the sort of intersection, if you will, there were, you know, half dozen vehicles with flashing lights and a few -- and several other sort of firemen were -- they had, like, I remember they had, like, sleds, you know, put their equipment on. They were dragging them. They were starting to drag them up towards the front of the car --

Q. Right.

A. -- of the train, front of the train.

Q. Okay.

A. I remember someone asking, you know, just sort of checking if anyone was hurt, you know, walking around asking how we felt. You know, I was in -- I'm, like, I don't have a fucking scratch on me. It's outrageous. I had blood on me, on my face, my shirt and my pants.

Q. Okay.

A. But it wasn't mine.

Q. Right. Right. Okay. Can you --

A. But you know --

Q. -- do you remember -- going, taking you briefly back insider the car, do you remember any smells while you were still in the car?

A. Well, I mean, the smoke stunk. It was a pretty acrid smoke.

Q. And --

A. It wasn't a gasoline smoke. It wasn't -- but it was a rubber smoke.

Q. Okay?

A. And, like, plastic.

Q. And once you got --

A. You know --

Q. Yup. Got it.

A. And, like, electrical fire smoke. Like, you know --

Q. Yeah.

A. -- sometimes at -- it was, like, you know, that ozone smell a little bit, when a spark sparks?

Q. Yup. I know what you mean. Yeah.

A. That kind of -- yeah.

- Q. Okay. And then once you got out, did your clothes smell?
- A. Yeah. Stunk. My jacket, I think, stunk.
- Q. How did they smell? Like same acrid smoke smell? Or --
- A. Similar, that similar acrid smoke smell, yeah.
- Q. Okay.
- A. Yeah.
- Q. You didn't notice any gasoline smell on your clothes?
- A. No. I, honestly, like, that's the thing, I don't remember a gasoline smell at all.
- Q. Okay.
- A. And I don't know if that happened later or even if it happened instantly and, you know -- well, you guys would know better. But like --
- Q. Right.
- A. -- get that fireball and it's gone and then now it's --
- Q. Right.
- A. -- something else causing the fire.
- Q. Okay. The woman you described, ----
- A. Yes.
- Q. -- was she injured? Do you remember anything specific about her injuries?
- A. No. She was not injured. I didn't know her at all. I've never met her before in my entire life. Obviously she was very, very scared. But no, sir, she was -- if she was injured, it was very minor. It wasn't interfering with her ability to walk or --
- Q. Okay. And you said she was --
- A. -- (indiscernible).
- Q. I'm sorry. You said she was one or two rows in front of you?
- A. She was sitting directly in front of me.
- Q. In one -- right in front of you? Okay.
- A. Yes, sir.
- Q. And when she -- when you jumped out of the window, and then did you look back and see how she -- I guess now that I know she wasn't injured, it's a little more clear to me. But did you see how she jumped out or did she have any trouble getting out?
- A. No. And so -- and I've actually gone through this several time and I've discussed it with my therapist about this, which I can't believe I just said my therapist because that's something I never thought I'd say.
- Q. Well, you went through -- this is a difficult event, so --
- A. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. He said -- so there was a man there who specifically said, you know, take -- get your head out and breathe the fresh air. He was still in the car.
- Q. Okay.
- A. And he said -- basically, when that happened, that guy took over. So I think he just told me to climb out and told her to climb out. So, like, it's kind of like, you know, I got her that far and then as soon as he said that, it was like that was now his job is to get us out the window. You know, just sort a subconscious thing. But --
- Q. Right.
- A. Yeah, so she just sort of -- I think he was still in there. He had to maybe helped her sort of throw her legs over.
- Q. Okay.
- A. She wasn't -- she was, you know, 5'4", 5'5", not thin, but not big at all, you know?
- Q. Right.
- A. An average woman. That's -- she should've been able to throw her legs over and get out.

- Q. Right. Okay.
- A. And like I said, there was still, like, a couple guys as we came down -- and I even think, honestly I don't recall if I stayed there and sort of caught her or -- I caught a couple people. I just don't know if I caught her or at least caught one guy.
- Q. Okay. So you stayed there at the window and helped get a couple more people out?
- A. Yes. Yeah.
- Q. Okay. Okay.
- INTERVIEWER 1: INTERVIEWER 2, do you have any questions?
- INTERVIEWER 2: Yeah. I'm going to ask a couple of questions.
- BY INTERVIEWER 2:
- Q. It's INTERVIEWER 2. First thing, thanks so much for taking the time to talk to us. This is really helpful for us.
- A. Yeah.
- Q. When the train came to a stop, you kind of had a chance to look around?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Were the lights on?
- A. Yes, the lights were still on.
- Q. Okay.
- A. In fact, I feel like the lights were brighter --
- Q. Okay.
- A. -- in a weird way. But I don't know if that was just because, you know, I was sort of -- everything was so vivid just because of the situation, if it was sort of the sparks on the fires helping with the brightness. But it felt -- it was eerily bright.
- INTERVIEWER 1: Okay.
- BY INTERVIEWER 2:
- Q. Okay.
- A. And quiet -- deadfall quiet, besides a couple people going -- screaming, there was, like, no sort of mechanical sounds.
- Q. Okay. At any point in all of this did you see anyone that you identified as the engineer?
- A. No, ma'am.
- Q. Okay.
- A. I did not.
- Q. And the -- it sounds like you were pretty sure that on your way back towards the emergency exit window, there was someone to deceased on the floor under some of the third rail.
- A. Yes.
- Q. Is that correct? Okay.
- A. Yes, that's correct.
- Q. Okay. I think that's all the questions I have.
- INTERVIEWER 1: Okay. INTERVIEWER 3 has a question.
- BY INTERVIEWER 3:
- Q. Yeah. CAR 1 PASS 3, thanks for your time. I just got a couple -
- A. Sure.
- Q. -- quick questions.
- A. Sure.
- Q. When the rail started coming in, was it all coming in in the aisle area on the floor or did you see it, like, raising up at any time?

INTERVIEWER 1: Oh, did we -- I think we lost him. We just -- there must've been a radar sweep or something because my antennae just went to nothing and then back again.

(Background conversation.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He just didn't want to talk to you, INTERVIEWER 3.

INTERVIEWER 1: And just to let you know, I emailed the other guy too and he knows we're going to be late in this, like, next one. All right. I got to call him back.

(Background conversation.)

INTERVIEWER 1: I just got to double check. That should be the -- is the getting the latest one? This is J -- 914?

Oh, maybe it's not doing (indiscernible) to call us. Whatever.

(Background conversation.)

INTERVIEWER 2: And the first piece came in here and other pieces stacked up first -- well, his description was shooting down the aisle and then growing. That's exactly what happened. And then it came back. There was only one that got all the way back to here.

INTERVIEWER 1: I guess I don't have a very good --

(Background conversation.)

CAR 1 PASS 3: Hey. I thought you guys (indiscernible)?

INTERVIEWER 1: Hey, CAR 1 PASS 3. Sorry about that. My antenna just went to zero, so that I think there was either a UFO or a -- something. All right. So --

CAR 1 PASS 3: You forgot to pay the phone bill.

INTERVIEWER 1: go ahead.

BY INTERVIEWER 3:

Q. Yeah. CAR 1 PASS 3, when the first piece of rail that came in, did you see it just come in, like, snaking through the floor with other pieces of rail? At any time did you see anything like raising up heading towards the higher elevation?

A. So, yeah, it's hard to -- it's sort of -- I don't know how to describe. But so it not only came towards us, but it felt like it was growing, like, raising from the floor. It's just sort of a -- it's like sort of stacking on top of each other, like (makes noise).

The first piece itself, I don't remember seeing the first bit of metal. I just remember seeing, you know, the sort of -- a lot of the metal. That first sort of incident I don't recall exactly how it looked.

Q. Okay. All right. Also --

A. I don't think I looked over. And, in fact, I think -- and I can almost imagine that some of the guys, you know, you hit -- something happens and you sort of, you know, when you give -- you kind of poke your head into the aisle, right?

Q. Yeah.

A. Look forward, what the hell happened? And I think that was probably really -- that might've been a bad decision for a couple of the guys. I can only imagine. I just -- I don't know what made me think the opposite, but I immediately went against the wall. I don't know if I saw sparks or flames or the metal first, but the initial sort of my reaction was to get away from that as far -- as much as I could.

Q. Okay. I just had one more question. With the commotion that was going on, did you hear anyone kind of in a soft voice asking for help, like help me?

A. Oh, God, no.

Q. No? Okay.

A. I hope not. No, I don't recall that.

Q. Okay. Thank you.

INTERVIEWER 1: Does anybody else have any other questions?

Okay. All right.

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. Hey, CAR 1 PASS 3, I just want to say --

A. Yes?

Q. -- thank you so much, you've been super --

A. Can I ask you guys a few questions?

Q. Oh, yeah. And actually, that was kind of my --

A. That would be kind of --

Q. -- my standard last question is, do you have any questions for us? Yeah. Go ahead.

A. Yeah. I mean, I have a few thoughts as I'm trying to piece it all together and I kind of want to --

Q. Absolutely, yeah.

A. I guess my first question is, my memory is sort of, like, a thud and a bang, the first thing I feel and then shaking, which honestly, in my head, tells me that we hit something, first. And I read stories about the guy hitting the brakes. What would it feel like if we hit the brakes, like dumped the break, so to speak, at that speed?

Q. Yeah.

A. Would it feel like a thunk at first? I kind of feel like I should've -- at that force change, I should've been thrown against the seat, and I don't recall that happening.

Q. All right. I'm going to let Anne answer that, or whoever.

INTERVIEWER 4:

Q. Yeah. So typically, when the breaks get released, there's a whooshing sound and it's usually a steady deceleration.

A. Oh, okay.

Q. It's not a thunk.

A. It's not like the sound of (indiscernible) --

Q. You don't get thrown, but -- yeah, by those brakes. It was being thrown is --

A. Something could've happened without me realizing, almost realizing it; is that what you're trying to say? Is it possible?

INTERVIEWER 2: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER 1: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER 4: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER 1: Yeah, like you --

CAR 1 PASS 3: Like something -- you can be on a train and they could be thrown and you may not even actually notice it until you looked out the window and saw things slowing down?

INTERVIEWER 4: Yes. Yes.

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. It could be like --

A. Okay. Okay.

Q. -- when you're in your car and you put on the brakes medium-hard, you know, and it kind of pushes your body forward a little bit, but it's not going to be like a --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- it's not going to be like an --

A. It's not like throwing the emergency brake --

INTERVIEWER 4: No.

CAR 1 PASS 3: -- when you're in a car?

INTERVIEWER 4: No.

INTERVIEWER 1: Right.

INTERVIEWER 4: Not at all. Not at all. This is -- it's releasing air that's holding the brake, so it's a much steadier deceleration.

CAR 1 PASS 3: Okay.

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. Did you hear -- I just -- made me think of a question. Did you hear, you know, right before you saw the rails and all that stuff or before the shuddering and shaking, did you hear anything outside the train or --

A. No. And, in fact, I did speak with the -- the other day, some detectives with the MTA, and he asked me if I recall hearing, like, the train horn or the whistle either, and I don't recall any of that stuff. Although, that's such a normal sound during travel that I don't know if I would've sort of --

Q. Yeah, that's a good point.

A. -- you know, (indiscernible) hear it either way.

Q. Yeah, good point.

A. It just kind of happens. I don't -- you know.

Q. Okay.

A. I had a -- and, I'm sorry, I had a few more --

Q. Sure. Go ahead.

A. -- but I don't know if you guys can answer them or not. The men that didn't make it, is there any way to tell if -- if they could've been saved or were they -- was it, like, instantaneous for them? Or is it no way to tell?

Q. I'm going to let our chief medical officer, answer that.

BY INTERVIEWER 2:

Q. I can tell you for sure that the --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- majority of them, I don't know if all of them, were killed very, very quickly.

A. Okay.

Q. But I know that for sure at least some of them were. And there was nothing anybody could've done for them even by the time the train came to a stop.

A. Okay.

Q. So -- yeah.

INTERVIEWER 1: Yeah, the -- yeah.

CAR 1 PASS 3: Thank you. Thanks. And I don't know -- I don't know also in your investigation if you guys come across this woman named ---, but if you, if you do and you could get her -- I might want to just sort of say hello to her. I don't know if that's possible or if you guys can do that. Or put me in contact with her information and let her decide if she wanted to say hello to me. But if you come across her name, I don't know if you could do that?

BY INTERVIEWER 2:

Q. So we can certainly keep that in mind.

A. Okay.

Q. We would do the latter. We would give her your information since you've given us permission to, and then it would --

A. Yes. Yeah, give her my information.

Q. -- be up to her.

A. Absolutely. Yeah, that's fine.

Q. Okay?

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. Yeah, and --

A. That would be fine.

Q. And we haven't been able to identify, you know, everybody on the front car, so we don't know -- I'm not sure at this point if we will even be able to identify who she is, but --

A. Yeah, that's fair too. I don't even know where she lives.

Q. Right.

A. But there -- my wife knew of another passenger on the first car. I want to say his name is, like, -----. Do you guys have that --

Q. We don't have it -- I don't know if we have it yet. You know, we haven't been able to compile the information, but --

A. I tell you what, I'll ask her if she can give me it and I'll have to send you an email with his contact information. If you have it, great; if you don't, then maybe you can reach out to him too.

Q. Yeah. I can, yeah, if you just email me and -- and I you have any -- like after we're done, if you have any other follow-up questions and things, go ahead and email me and I'll get back to you.

A. Sure. Oh, I guess one other question.

Q. Sure.

A. I've got a list. Were there any other victims in the back of the car, the back of the train, or were they mostly in the front of the train?

Q. They were, yeah, they were all in the --

INTERVIEWER 2: They were all in the first car.

CAR 1 PASS 3: Yeah, of course. No, I mean, in the front of the car or the back of the car, or do you not sort of --

INTERVIEWER 2: There were victims both in the front of the car and the back of the car, yes.

CAR 1 PASS 3: Oh, okay. Okay. So, yeah, figure out why the hell this happened, guys.

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. Right.

A. Because we should've won when we hit that car, and we didn't win.

Q. Yep. Okay. Okay, well, hey, I -- so I really want to thank you. You've been extraordinarily helpful. This is, you know -- I know it can be difficult to talk about, but it really helps --

A. Yup.

Q. -- us put together a good investigation and have the best opportunities to improve things in the future. So thank you so much.

A. You're welcome.

Q. And like I said, if you -- you know, if you run across any other thoughts or questions, go ahead and send them to me.

A. Okay. Thanks. Good luck, guys.

Q. Okay. Thank you.

A. All right.

Q. Bye-bye.

A. See you guys.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK
FEBRUARY 3, 2015
Telephonic Interview of CAR 1 PASS 3

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-MR-006
PLACE: Valhalla, New York
DATE: February 7, 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.

Transcriber

**Transcript of Interview with First Train Car Passenger 4
February 7, 2015**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of: *
*
METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN *
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK * Docket No.: DCA-15-MR-006
FEBRUARY 3, 2015 *
*

Telephonic Interview of: CAR 1 PASS 4

Valhalla, New York
Saturday,
February 7, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: INTERVIEWER 1, Ph.D.
Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:

INTERVIEWER 1, Ph.D., Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

INTERVIEWER 2, M.D., Chief Medical Officer
National Transportation Safety Board

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay, so this is CAR 1 PASS 4.

INTERVIEW OF CAR 1 PASS 4

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. And so, what we're doing is, you know, we're doing an investigation. Our objectives are to improve transportation safety. We have a big team out here, obviously, you've seen on the news, investigating various aspects of it. We're focused on understanding the survival factors portion of it, so we'll have you describe your appearance, especially with related to injuries, where you were seated on the train, where you saw other -- if you saw other injuries, the types of injuries you saw, how people were evacuated, what kinds of emergency response assistance there was. And then also, from the railroad side, they're interested in the types of details of like, you know, how the fire progressed in the train and that kind of thing.

So why don't you go ahead and start by -- can you tell us where you remember being seated on the train?

A. Yeah. I was seated in the rear part of the train. If you -- well, you know the configuration of the compartment.

Q. Yeah.

A. It was the first row of seats behind the rear exit doors on the right-hand side of the train going forward. Those seats are -- there are two seats on each row facing each other in that particular area.

Q. Yup.

A. So I was on the seats facing forward.

Q. On the seats facing forward. Okay. So that's the very last row of seats in front of the exit?

A. Yeah, right. There were two rows behind me in that last car, I believe.

Q. The --

INTERVIEWER 2: Behind you?

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. Oh, oh. So, you were behind the exit, not in front of the exit?

A. No, I was behind the rear exit door.

Q. Got it.

A. On the right-hand side there are two banks of seats, double seats, facing each other.

Q. Yep, got it. We understand where you were. Okay.

A. So I was in the -- facing the -- facing forward. I was on the window seat.

Q. The window seat. Got it. Okay, and do you remember people seating immediately around you?

A. You know, I don't have any recollection of anybody sitting either across or next to me. It may be that somebody was seated there and got off at Chappaqua, but I don't think there was anybody next to me in that row.

Q. Okay. And how about across the aisle?

A. Yeah, I'm sure there were people across the aisle. I didn't really, quite frankly, take a lot of notice, but I'm quite sure there were others in that area.

Q. Okay. Okay, so why don't you describe -- what was the first indication that you had that something was amiss or out of the ordinary?

A. Well, there was an explosion. I actually saw your conference yesterday evening. I was interested in what the engineer had said because I think he said that he didn't hear an explosion, but I -- there was distinctly an explosion, almost like a shell going off in the forepart of the compartment. And then, you know, fire afterwards. But, again, what really interests me is that I think the engineer said that he thought the fire had originated in the area behind the lavatory, and I don't see that that could be right because, you know, I was sitting just behind that area and I certainly didn't see any fire there.

Q. Right.

A. And that area remained pretty much intact --

Q. Yeah.

A. -- you know, after the initial explosion.

Q. Why don't you go ahead and describe the -- right after the -- like when the train came to rest -- or describe what kind of fire or sparks or smoke that you saw inside the train.

A. You know, it was like a fireball. You know, quite frankly, I thought it might have been a bomb because it did sound like a bomb detonating, and then, you know, fire in the forepart of the compartment, and then the compartment filled with smoke.

Q. Okay.

A. So, you know, you have to understand I -- I am sure you appreciate this all happened, literally, within seconds.

Q. Right, right.

A. So it's very difficult to pull, you know, a clearer timeline. But I do recall that initially -- explosion and then the fire and, of course, the acrid smoke afterwards.

Q. Can you describe the smell?

A. Yeah. As I said, it was acrid. You know, it could have been from burning upholstery and gasoline, but it was clearly, I would say, not something you'd want to inhale, you know, for very long.

Q. Did you smell specifically gasoline?

A. I'm trying to remember if -- I can't say it was exactly gasoline, but it was certainly, you know, very pungent smoke.

Q. Okay. Okay, so you felt this -- or you saw or felt this explosion, and then what happened?

A. Well, of course, there was absolute panic in the car. A lot of people were screaming. The ones around me were trying to get out of the car, and that's a big source of concern to me because the exit doors, of course, weren't opened and the door connecting the first car to the second car behind us, apparently somehow got locked or jammed, so people were trying to open the door and weren't able to. I think there may have been people on the other side trying to open it, but for some reason or another, that door jammed.

A. Right.

Q. So there was a huge amount of panic in the rear compartment trying to find a way to get out.

Q. Okay. And I'm going to have you describe how you got out in a second, but before I do that, I just wanted to ask about -- so after that first explosion and the panic, do you remember how the train came to a stop or anything in that phase between the explosion and when you were trying to find a way out?

A. You know, I don't -- actually, I don't even remember the train putting on brakes, quite frankly. I mean, if it did, it was very gradual because I didn't feel any deceleration of the train. The first impression I had that anything was wrong at all was the explosion. I was actually reading a newspaper and then there was this tremendous bang and then the fire. But the car, you know, remained upright. It wasn't -- I didn't feel that I was jolted forward. But instinctively, I kind of ducked after the explosion to try to get under the seat. But I don't recall any, you know, rapid deceleration of the car, of the railroad car.

Q. Okay. So the next thing you remember is that the train has stopped and trying to - - and you're thinking of ways to get out?

A. Yeah, exactly.

Q. Okay. Okay, so what happened next?

A. Well, it's -- again, it's a very, very quick time frame, but apparently someone, either from the outside or the inside, managed to get the large window opposite my seat open. And --

Q. And when you say opposite your seat, opposite the side?

A. Yeah, to the left, to the left of where I was sitting, on the opposite row, which was a row of triple seats facing each other.

Q. Got it. Yep.

A. You've got the location that I'm talking about?

Q. Yes, yes. On the --

A. So there's a large, you know, the large window there and --

Q. And that would be the cemetery side of the train?

A. -- that was initially closed. But when I got oriented, somehow, somebody had managed to get it open. And there were the two gentlemen who were brave enough to stand underneath the window and when I was able to climb out, they helped me down.

Q. How did you climb out the window? Just describe that.

A. Well, I mean, I just put two -- my, you know, first leg and then the other one and then, you know, slipped down, and they were able to help me. It was quite a drop, as you probably know, from the car. This was on the other side of the track; it would have been the left-hand side of the track going north.

Q. Yep.

A. I guess it was the side opposite the third rail. So there was no third rail on that side.

Q. Got it.

A. And -- but there was a pretty deep snow bank and actually a little creek that runs parallel to the tracks and the cemetery. But, you know, fortunately, they were there; otherwise, it would have been -- you know, I probably would have gotten more injuries if I had tried to just jump on my own. But there were two passengers there who helped people getting out.

Q. Okay. And so once you got out of the train, did you see others -- so some -- you saw people come out before you or after you?

A. I saw a lot of people lying around. I think there were some severely-injured people ahead of me. I remember one man saying that he couldn't walk, and there was somebody next to him trying to help him. You know a lot of cries that the train was on fire and, you know, everyone should get out, just get out. You know, there -- these were all passengers at that point. The emergency response people hadn't gotten there yet or they were, you know, just arriving.

Q. Okay. So then -- so, you're out of the train. What happened next?

A. Well, and actually I grabbed a -- you know, I had a brief case because it had my cell phone and my iPad in it. And my left hand finger was pretty badly injured. I thought at first it had actually been severed.

Q. Yeah, now that we're --

A. So I (indiscernible).

Q. Yeah. So, why don't you describe your injuries and how you believe you might have sustained them?

A. Well, that's a question really I had wanted to ask you guys, because, as I say, I ducked after the explosion, like, almost instinctively, and a few seconds later when I looked up, I saw the finger on my left hand was bleeding pretty profusely. And I had some lacerations to the head and they were bleeding profusely too. So, you know, my shirt and my jacket and trousers were, you know, bloodstained. But I was able to, you know, to move around. I mean, you know, I wrapped the finger with a -- there was a mitten lying on the floor and I wrapped it around the finger. So I was able to, you know, extricate myself from the compartment. But how that injury could have happened, I'm still, you know, puzzled. Because, you know, I didn't notice a lot of flying debris but in the press conference I think you mentioned that one of the third rails actually penetrated through the first car into the second car and --

Q. Right. So, what I'd like to --

A. -- (indiscernible) --

Q. You've got --

A. -- you know, when they described that, it seemed almost as if it had passed either under or over my feet. And I do remember -- because I had a coat in the upper rack and it seemed like there was a lot of damage --

Q. Right.

A. -- on the roof of the train, but not to the floor of the train because I was able to move around pretty frequent -- pretty freely on the floor in that area.

Q. Can you tell us which finger was injured?

A. It was the middle finger of the left hand.

Q. And which -- where on your head and how, like, large would you describe the lacerations on your head?

A. Well, they were large. I mean, there -- it was like a Y-shaped cut and it was on the left side of the head, towards the, you know, the back and the top.

Q. Left side aft portion of your head near the top?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay.

A. And I was bleeding pretty profusely at that point.

Q. Okay. And so, when -- what I'm going to do is have you continue describing your experience, and rather than us telling you -- you know, you've got a couple of questions about what might have contributed to injuries and so forth, but I'd rather have you finish your story before we give you the information because I don't want to cloud your story, so --

A. Yeah. No, it's -- that's fine. I don't have a lot more information to give you because this all happened quite quickly and I think, quite frankly, everybody in that compartment was in a state of shock. So, you know, the recollections probably aren't going to be entirely clear as to what happened.

But I -- it was quite an awful experience because, you know, as I said, there was a deep snow bank there and then the cemetery was up on a ridge above the bank. So I managed to get across somehow and walked along the cemetery to -- by that time I had seen the emergency response vehicles. Quite a number of them actually had arrived by that time. So I made my way up to a police car, told them that I was injured, and, you know, they helped me to one of the ambulances. And there was one other fellow there, I believe, from my compartment who had some bad burns on his hands.

Q. Okay, I'm going to -- here, I'm going to have INTERVIEWER 2 have you continue with that. I have to step out for just a couple seconds and then I'll be back.

INTERVIEWER 1: So, INTERVIEWER 2, do you want to follow on that line?

INTERVIEWER 2: Sure.

BY INTERVIEWER 2:

Q. CAR 1 PASS 4, so you were aware that there were some other people who were injured inside that made it out. Were you aware of anyone else who was injured who wasn't able to get out of the train?

A. No, because I really couldn't see what was happening in the front of the compartments in front of me. I think most of the people who were -- that I'm aware of -- and again, my recollection is not great because of the timing. But I think that people in that section that I was in were able to get out through that window. I don't recall actually seeing anybody exiting through that window. I certainly was able to get out with the help of those two gentlemen, but I suspect that there were others who were able to get out that way as well. But I don't know what happened in the front part of the car because of the smoke and the fire.

Q. Okay. Could you actually see flames inside the train, inside the compartment?

A. Absolutely. Yeah.

Q. And can you tell us where you saw them?

A. Well, as I was saying before, I saw the flames initially after the first burst of the explosion and the flames coming from the forward part of the car. So it would have been behind the, you know, the engineer's compartment but somewhere between where the engineer was sitting and the rear exit platform of the lavatory, and I think it was considerably further forward is where I remember seeing the fire.

Q. Okay. And if you had to sort of give us an idea of the size of the flames that you're talking about, are we talking about, you know, the size as sort of a candle flame, are we talking about the size of a --

A. Oh, no, you're -- I'm talking about a big flame. I mean, it was an explosion. It's the kind of explosion, you know, you would -- or fire you might expect to see after, you know, firing a shell or a bomb, you know. It was a significant burst of flame, not a candle-size. It was large.

Q. Okay. And can you -- a couple more questions. We know everybody got on at Grand Central. What was your destination? Where were you off to?

A. Katonah.

Q. Okay. And is this a train that you take frequently?

A. Yeah, that's really my regular train because I like the quiet car, and that's usually the time that I would leave.

Q. And did you --

A. So I'm usually, usually seated in that -- actually in that seat most of the time in the front car.

Q. And did you know any of the other people that were in the car with you?

A. I didn't. I didn't recognize anybody. I know some of the regulars there, but I don't remember seeing anybody that I knew.

Q. Okay. And what were you doing during the sort of -- I guess it was about not quite 45 minutes that you were actually en route?

A. Reading a newspaper.

Q. Okay. And were you asleep at all?

A. No.

Q. Okay. And I understand your head was lacerated and your finger was broken, it sounds like, and you had all of those things fixed at the hospital; is that correct?

A. Yeah. I had surgery on the finger the following day and the head lacerations were stapled that night, and then I was released the following day.

Q. And are you doing okay now?

A. I'm sorry. Could you say that again?

Q. Are you doing okay now?

A. Yeah. I mean, it's fine now. I don't -- I have to go back to see the surgeon Monday to see, I guess, how the splint is doing. But it's -- you know, at least it's stabilized now. It was a pretty severe fracture and the finger was basically -- he described it as being mangled. So I'm obviously a little concerned about the post-operative recovery, but hopefully it'll be okay.

Q. And can you just give us an idea -- you say you were reading the newspaper. People have habits for doing that in different positions. Are you a guy who kind of holds the newspaper up in front of your face or are you a "fold it up and leave it in your lap" kind of guy?

A. No, it was fully opened in front of me. You know, I don't normally read the newspaper; I just happened to have a copy of The Times that day, and that's what I was doing when I heard the explosion.

Q. Okay. That's great. I think that's the only questions I have. I'm going to -- I'm looking around.

INTERVIEWER 2: Anybody else? INTERVIEWER 1 is back in the room as well.

BY INTERVIEWER 2:

Q. Did you have some questions for us?

A. Well, what I'm trying to do, which will be helpful for me going forward, is trying to figure out how I could have sustained the injury that I have. You know, I know it's going to be very difficult to reconstruct that, but I was very interested in hearing about the third rail or rails in the compartment, and I'm wondering whether you can tell me, if you know, that the rail

that went through the first car into the second car, did that pass through the top of the car or the bottom of the car or --

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. Well, I can tell you one thing. You're very lucky.

A. Yeah, I know. I realize that after seeing the pictures of the car.

Q. So, yeah, the -- so basically what happened was the third rail and, in fact, multiple third rails, punctured the -- at the floor of the car, near the front of the first car, and then sort of as they traveled through the car, they travel higher up towards the ceiling. So the further back in the car you were, the higher up the third rail would be. And it wasn't just one third rail, they kept -- as they would -- the sections of third rail would stack and keep feeding into the car.

A. Gotcha.

Q. So at the location you were at, there were large sections of steel rail penetrating the car in the upper portions of the car. So without, I mean, totally -- I don't know if we're --

INTERVIEWER 2: I mean, I think it would be our guess, and let me put it very much in the guess category, that one tiny portion of one of these rails, and we can't tell you which one, probably -- and note the -- I'm not giving you absolutes, but may well have been the way that you got injured.

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. Yeah, grazed -- you could have been grazed by a rail. Now, I mean, we're in kind of a funny situation here because we're -- we don't want to make guesses about what happened in the accident, and please don't --

A. Yeah. No, no, I understand. I actually deal with the NTSB on marine investigations quite a lot. I understand what your function is. I don't, you know, expect --

Q. Yeah, we don't want you going out and telling the news, well, the NTSB said that I got hit by the third rail, you know.

A. Yeah. No, no, no, no, I fully understand that. I'm just -- it would be helpful, you know, if I could just try to figure out --

Q. Yeah. We're trying to be as helpful to you as we can. And so --

A. Now, what did the -- were the rails, did they splinter like -- was it like shrapnel or were they --

Q. No, they were -- they're intact.

INTERVIEWER 2: They were pretty much intact. And you certainly -- at least one went by you.

CAR 1 PASS 4: Geez.

INTERVIEWER 2: So, you know.

INTERVIEWER 2: Yeah. Well, I -- that was what I would have thought because, as I say, my perception of the damage in that area was probably at the ceiling or the top of the car, not the floor --

INTERVIEWER 1: Yeah.

CAR 1 PASS 4: -- because I was able to walk around. I didn't notice any immediate damage of the floor.

The other question I had was if -- I mean, do you have any idea where the fire originated? Because the engineer seemed to think it originated behind the lavatory area, in the rear of the (indiscernible) area.

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. That question, yeah, it goes in -- there's too much -- we're in the fact-finding mode of this right now and I don't want to venture any kind of speculation on that. So --

A. Okay. All right. Because he seemed to indicate the fire started there and then moved forward, which was I was trying to understand.

Q. Yeah, I --

A. But that was not what I observed. I observed the fire originating forward.

Q. Right. Yeah.

A. And the smoke, of course, moved towards the after-part of the car. But fortunately there was no fire; otherwise, I would have been probably also incinerated myself.

Q. Right. Okay. Well, I think that's all we have. We -- I just want to thank you very much. You -- all of -- you've been very, very helpful and this is -- it's extremely helpful for us to get a sense of what's happening in this car and piece together all the -- you know, get the puzzle put together. And as you know -- it sounds like you've got some experience with this kind of thing. We've got have to stuff like -- information, detailed information like this to really know what's going on.

So, if you have any -- you know, if anything comes up, further questions, or you think of anything, you've got my contact information, feel free to get back in touch with me.

A. Okay. I am happy to help. Do you have any idea when you're getting to be -- well, I suppose it's difficult to say when -- you'll issue a preliminary report, or?

Q. Well, our on-scene investigation is going to wrap up in another few days, several days, middle of next week sometime. We issue a preliminary report in -- fairly soon. It's not very descriptive. Basically, it's just a one-page thing that gives the accident number and a very, very -- like a one-paragraph description of factually what occurred in the accident. And it's really just a placeholder for when you go onto our website in the future. It'll take several months and things before anything really significant gets posted to it. But there will eventually be a public docket that gets opened for this case and all of -- and there will be lots -- you know, hundreds of entries of reports and photos and it'll all culminate to a big Board report which will -- there'll be a Board meeting, a public Board meeting that you can either attend via webcast or in person, and that'll happen -- usually, they happen in about a year, and that's where we adopt the official report and make any recommendations to improve safety.

A. Right. Okay.

Q. Okay. So, yeah, you can monitor it by, you know, kind of watching the website, but it's going to be a while before there's really anything significant on there.

A. Yeah. Okay, very good, sir.

Q. Great. Thank you very much.

A. Okay, thank you.

Q. Yep. Bye-bye.

A. Bye-bye.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK
FEBRUARY 3, 2015
Telephonic Interview of CAR 1 PASS 4

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-MR-006

PLACE: Valhalla, New York
DATE: February 7, 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.

Transcriber

Statements and Interview with First Train Car Passenger 5

a. Emailed Statement on February 6, 2015

Sent: Friday, February 6, 2015 02:47 PM Eastern Standard Time

Subject: MTA Valhalla Crash, First Car, First Row Passenger Account

I was seated in the first car, 1st row (3 seater facing rear) in the aisle seat. The engineer's compartment was just behind me to the left. The 2nd row facing me was a 2 seater staggered to my right as I was facing so I was open to the aisle (stretch my legs). There is a man (40/50ish) in the 2 seater facing me. He is in the aisle seat (i.e., my right foot is effectively in the same spot as his right foot). There is a man (40/50ish) directly to my left across the aisle in the 1st row (2 seater) also facing rear. I don't remember anyone sitting in the 2nd row facing him (2 seater). A woman (mid-twenties) was seated in the 3rd row diagonally across the aisle from me in the aisle seat. There are a few other people in the front section (forward of the doors) but I don't recall their specific location. I don't recall if anyone was standing in the vestibule.

The first indication of anything wrong was a sudden and continuous horn blast followed shortly by the emergency brakes. The collision with the SUV was several seconds after the brakes were applied. The impact with the SUV was startling but the railcar didn't respond dramatically. As we continued to slide, we began to hear loud "popping" and then I saw what I believe was the entry of a rail segment roughly in the middle part of the car. A man adjacent to that rail jumped up and his clothing immediately burst into flames. A moment later there was a burst of flames to my right from the floor to the ceiling. My next recollection was simply that we were stopped. The man to my left instantly darted towards the door (right side door as the railcar is moving) and began attempting to open it. There wasn't a long struggle with the door - once opened, he and two other men jumped immediately onto the adjacent tracks (over the third rail). It seemed they bounded out without confirming whether another train was approaching on the adjacent tracks so I remember telling others near the door to take a look before getting down. When I approached the door, I noticed a man sitting on the floor very near the door who was missing his left leg below the knee. He appeared to be in shock.

I don't recall the fire inside the railcar being substantial at this point. I climbed down and with the help of one of the men already down, carried the man who had been seated just across from me, onto the far side of the adjacent tracks. His left leg was badly injured (femur fracture and sheared below the knee). I don't remember seeing him get injured but a segment of the 3rd rail must have come through the floor under his left leg. I believe the fire plume that had occurred to my right (near his left leg) was caused by that segment of rail as it came through. Another group of passengers assisted the amputee and carried him across the adjacent tracks near us. The woman who was seated across the aisle from me (mid-twenties) was consoling the amputee and seemed to be giving direction to the others helping to move him. She was remarkably composed. I gave her my belt so she could apply a tourniquet. I didn't apply a tourniquet to the man I was carrying given his femur fracture and the practical matter of not knowing where to apply it otherwise. In any case, he wasn't bleeding nearly as much as I would have expected (cold?). We wound up using his belt as something he could bite down on as he was in a great deal of pain.

We began carrying the injured men along the tracks to move away from the burning SUV. Looking back at the railcar, it didn't seem that anyone else was still attempting to exit. The rear door and emergency windows were open. The SUV exploded before we reached the end of the first car but presented no danger. The fire within the railcar was now picking up intensity. As we walked past the rear door of the first car I saw the torso of a body just inside the door. We continued carrying the injured men until the first responder arrived (approximately 15 minutes after the collision). We had set the injured men down to apply dressings. I shot the attached video as we were waiting for a stretcher. You can hear the man I was carrying – again, in a great deal of pain. I was very surprised that the first emergency person on the scene had no flashlight or radio. I helped secure the injured man to a stretcher and then helped one of the other emergency personnel pull the amputee in a sled (brought along with the stretchers) back to the intersection where multiple ambulances were stationed. The woman who had been consoling the amputee moved with us. There was a great deal of confusion near the ambulances. We were directed first to one ambulance and then to another. Once the amputee was loaded onto the gurney I left along with the other passengers. I believe the woman stayed with him.

To my knowledge, no other passengers were injured in the front section of the railcar. I believe I later saw the man that was on fire in the center of the railcar as we were making our way to the ambulance. He clearly had burns but was walking with assistance.

b. Emailed Statement on February 8, 2015

Sent: Sun 2/8/2015 7:48 AM

Subject: MTA Valhalla Crash, First Car, First Row Passenger Account

I'm not sure it was clear but by locating the two injured individuals I reference in my account you can find the others who were in that forward section including the man to my left that I said moved to the door first. Those two injured individuals provided information regarding relatives so that they could be contacted - the woman received that information from the amputee (as we got to the ambulance) and the man (the man who moved to the door) who helped me carry the other injured man received the same from him. As I said, I believe they knew each other to some degree. As the injuries of these two were very specific they should be relatively easy to locate. Within the video I sent, you can see the group carrying the amputee just to the right. The time of that video was 6:47 as we were waiting for stretchers. Regarding the engineer, his compartment door was closed as I moved towards the door and I don't recall him assisting anyone exit that particular door.

c. Transcript of Interview with CAR 1 PASS 5 on February 8, 2015

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:

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METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN
 CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK
 FEBRUARY 3, 2015

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* Docket No.: DCA-15-MR-006

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Telephonic Interview of: CAR 1 PASS 5

Valhalla, New York
Saturday,
February 7, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: INTERVIEWER 1, Ph.D.
Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:

INTERVIEWER 1, Ph.D., Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

INTERVIEWER 2, M.D., Chief Medical Officer
National Transportation Safety Board

INTERVIEWER 3, Chief Safety Officer
Metro-North Railroad

I N T E R V I E W

INTERVIEWER 2: -- and someone who caught on fire.

INTERVIEWER 1: CAR 1 PASS 5.

INTERVIEW OF CAR 1 PASS 5

INTERVIEWER 2: Were there odors that you recall?

CAR 1 PASS 5: I don't recall odors. I mean, not until later after the car was stopped. But, I mean, while we were moving, I mean -- when I wrote, you know, that there was that person whose clothes caught on fire, I mean, we were still sliding at that point.

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. You were still sliding; is that what you said?

A. Yes. Yes, the car hadn't come to a stop yet. So it just seemed like, you know, there was a popping, which I presume again was, you know, the rail itself attempting to enter the car or was entering the car. And I didn't see it because perhaps it was happening more towards the rear of the first car. But I do remember distinctly that that man, sort of in the middle of the car, roughly, there seemed to be something that penetrated next to him. And then he just, you know -- he was just engulfed in flames immediately.

And then I just noticed that the plume of fire that was, you know, immediately to my right -- I remember looking up and seeing the flames kind of go overhead. And then at that point I think we came to a stop. And, you know, I think that's where the -- you know, I described the person coming through the door that was to my left. I don't -- I mean, in terms of smells, I don't know if you mean did I smell fuel and gasoline, or just --

Q. Yeah, did you smell any fuel or gasoline?

A. I didn't. I don't remember that.

Q. Okay. And your clothes didn't smell like it?

A. No.

Q. Okay. And did you say that the man was -- so you noticed -- you recognized a guy that was on fire even prior to the train stopping?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay.

A. Yes, I believe so. So we're still sliding when that happened. He had stood up when -- I mean, it's hard to recall. But at least -- you know, penetrated right next to him, and he was on fire. So that's -- you know, that, to me, was happening before we came to a stop. I'm fairly certain of that.

Q. Okay.

INTERVIEWER 2: Can I ask --

INTERVIEWER 1: Yeah. Yeah, INTERVIEWER 2.

BY INTERVIEWER 2:

Q. Hi, it's INTERVIEWER 2. Do you recall seeing anybody that you recognized as the engineer as you were getting out of the train?

A. No. No, and I remember as I was walking to the door, towards the door, looking over at the engineer compartment -- and I don't know why, but I just assumed he was okay, and I kind of assumed, you know, he's making calls or whatever. But I didn't see him come out. In fact, I don't recall seeing him at all. So I -- you know, I presumed that when we began to move, you know, these injured passengers off the train, that's, you know, when he was being moved. But I never saw him.

Q. Do you recall seeing the door open or closed when you looked towards the compartment?

A. Closed.

BY INTERVIEWER 3:

Q. Do you have a sense of who it was who opened the exit door?

A. So the man who was immediately to my left, I believe it was him. And, you know, when he -- he moved to the door very quickly, and he was working on the door. And I think there was one other person there also. There were, you know, multiple people there at the moment trying to get the door open. But it wasn't a long time. And so I don't know physically which one of the individuals there opened it, but he was one of the first ones at the door attempting to open it.

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay.

BY INTERVIEWER 3:

Q. If you had to give us an estimate -- I don't if you, when you got on if you sort of got on at the very front and just went into your seat or if you kind of walked through the train car, but can you give us an estimate or a guesstimate of about how many people, total, you thought were in the first car or even in the first half of the first car?

A. Like in the forward section, so forward of the doors, I think six to eight. And then it didn't feel like a full train. Maybe behind the doors, as far as, you know, as much as I was paying attention, I don't know, another 8, 10, people. I'm just not sure.

Q. Okay.

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay.

BY INTERVIEWER 2:

Q. Can you describe the two gentlemen that tried to open the door? Or that eventually opened the doors?

A. Well, the person who was sitting to the left of me that I'm describing that went to the door, he was the one who was helping me with the man who was sitting across from me who got injured. He was outside. So he helped me carry this man off, you know, from the car and then, you know, carry me -- or carry this passenger, you know, up the tracks. So he was with -- we were together for quite a bit. And I got the impression that he knew this injured man. I don't think very well, but there was some, I don't know, some sense of an acquaintance there. I'm not

sure, but -- you know, I guess my point is if you find the individual, the man who was injured who was sitting across from me, you'll be able to find that person. Because we were -- the three of us were together. So the two of us were carrying that injured man.

Q. Okay. But I guess what we're looking for is, you know, tall, thin, white, black? That kind of thing.

A. Tall, glasses, white, older, maybe 50 -- 50ish.

Q. And what -- yeah, and what about the other gentlemen that was helping open the door?

A. I don't recall.

Q. Okay.

A. I don't recall.

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay.

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. Okay. Did you see any of the windows being opened?

A. Specifically, no. I think when we came to a stop, I mean, they moved towards the door, and then I was -- essentially, I mean, I feel like, you know, my vision was sort of focused on that space towards the door. And there were people who were there coming up the aisle from behind me, but not in the forward section. But I don't remember specifically seeing somebody open a window.

Q. Okay.

A. But I did drive a girl home who was in the middle of the train on the right-hand side who said she did go out a window with two other gentlemen.

INTERVIEWER 3: And do you remember her name?

CAR 1 PASS 5: Her first name is [REDACTED], and I'm trying to find her phone number.

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. Oh, did you right down her phone number?

A. Well, it went into my phone, I thought it did, and now I'm not sure. But her first name was ---. I drove her -- so my car, I normally take the Golden Bridge. I'm at the Golden Bridge Station. And she walked with me to meet my wife and, you know, we had walked a half mile to the intersection away from the accident, and we drove her, and her father met us basically at the Golden Bridge --

Q. Okay.

A. -- Train Station. Her first name was ---; I can't remember her last name.

Q. Yeah, the reason we asked was just because we spoke to another gentlemen who helped her out, and he was curious about how she was, so --

A. Yeah, if it's the same person, she was completely fine.

Q. Great, great. Okay. Let's see here --

BY INTERVIEWER 3:

Q. Before -- you know, as -- you know, you're facing the other way. As the accident, you know, as sort of things are unfolding -- well, let me ask a couple of questions. Were you aware that the train started to brake?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Did you wonder what that was about? Or did it seem normal to you?

A. Well, I mean -- no, it was not normal. And I remember well, I mean, it's a sequence that I remember, is the horn -- abrupt, right? So normally they'll pull the horn and it's sort of -- it's almost an elongated pull, whereas this was -- you could tell it was just a rapid yank on the horn. And, you know, it certainly didn't sound right. In my recollection, in terms of the sequence, then the brake occurred.

INTERVIEWER 1: So just to --

CAR 1 PASS 5: And at that point I assumed we were going to hit something. I mean that's what -- I was -- you know, the way the brakes hit, you felt the -- you know, the train.

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. Okay, so just to clarify what you said there, make sure I got it straight. So typically your experience is --

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK
FEBRUARY 3, 2015
Telephonic Interview of CAR 1 PASS 5

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-MR-006
PLACE: Valhalla, New York.
DATE: February 7, 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.

Transcriber

First Train Car Passenger 6 February 8, 2015

In person interview with first train car passenger 6 on February 8, 2015 in person at the hotel.
Notes:

- He was seated in the first car towards front, in the big middle section, 3 or 4 rows from the front, on the right side, on a 2-seater by himself.
- He had a phone in his hand and was doing some heavy emailing for work. Had an Ipad on lap just in case he wanted to read. He had earphones on and was listening to music. He wasn't paying attention to who was around him except that when he got on the train at Grand Central he noticed his friend/neighbor on the train, who never takes that train. This friend sat 3-4 rows behind him.
- The first thing he noticed was a big banging sound and vibration, which he felt was obviously the impact with the car. The train was shaking as it was going down the track for about 3 or 4 seconds. He thought the train had derailed and was waiting for the train to flip over and he was happy it didn't.
- He said that suddenly the left side of the train imploded. The bottom fell up, and the seats and the people in them were thrown around. He thought that the luggage rack fell. He remembered metal, fire and sparks. He cowered towards the window, and then everything settled. He heard lots of noise and saw patches of fire.
- He saw at least two people to left in the three-seat aisle buried in debris. They weren't moving. There were parts of them where their bodies were on fire.
- He thought he took his jacket out of the luggage rack. He started screaming 'they're on fire' and tried to put fire out with jacket, but it wasn't really working and smoke was filling up the car. The train was not fully engulfed in fire at this point.
- He saw little fires under the floor, and the floor was ripped up. He realized that getting the fire out wasn't working, and they were probably dead at that point.
- At some point, he found himself in the vestibule at the front. He doesn't remember walking down the aisle (his wife interjected that in his first phone call to her, he had said that he had climbed over the seats).
- He went to the door, and it was open in the vestibule, which he was surprised to see. He saw a guy in the vestibule who had had his leg severed at his shin, or at least close to being severed. He saw people with gashes and burns moaning. There was a young woman who was screaming that she was an EMT, and she didn't know what to do.
- He saw another man, who he often sees on the train with his wife, start taking bodies out of the car.
- He believed that he jumped out of train at that point and found himself on the tracks on east side (not cemetery side).
- He said that the smoke was really bad, but train was not yet engulfed in flames. He believes this was about 15-20 seconds after the train had stopped. He did not hear explosion at this point. At this point, he says his chronology is a bit mixed up, so he will mention the 3 or 4 things he remembered:
- He went to front and saw SUV was not on fire. He went to the driver's side window to see if there was someone in car that he could help, but it was dark and he couldn't see anyone. Through the back seat window which had shattered, he saw a little fire inside the car, or underneath the car, or outside the car, and remembered screaming that the car is going to blow up soon and we all should start running. He started running at that point.

- He saw the engineer, and it was clearly well after the impact. He saw the engineer opening his compartment, shut the door, and bolt. He jumped over people and jumped out of train and ran to the back. He didn't see the engineer again.
- His stuff was still in the train, so he asked a stranger if he could use his phone to call his wife, and the stranger said that he had not called his yet.
- He then saw his friend/neighbor and they started rounding up people that were outside.
- Someone then told them to start moving towards back.
- He noticed that all the other passengers on the rearward cars were staring at them with confusion as to why they were walking back and had blood on them.
- He and his friend started telling those passengers who had opened the back doors loosely what had happened, telling them they got to get out of train. There was still no explosion at that point, and the car and train were still not engulfed flames as they were walking away.
- His wife mentioned that they still have his clothes in a bag and were willing to provide them to investigators. The clothes smelled strongly of rubber, metal, but nothing they could clearly identify.
- He walked to Commerce, and the first responders were just pulling up, and he didn't understand why they were lackadaisical while putting on gear and stuff. He started screaming that they better hurry up because there were people dead and hurt up there. He stated that he was pleasantly surprised how quickly police got there.
- There must have been 5-7 of them (passengers) at Commerce, including his friend and a tall guy with a cut on his head and a shorter woman who was sleeping at the time. He was hanging out there for 5-10 minutes until a guy from the gym came across the street and told them they can go across the street where there was water, ice, phones, and internet. They went and washed blood off.
- He said there was blood all over him, but it was not his. There was blood on his face and glasses. Witness stated that there were no EMS, police, or NTSB at the gym. He walked up to the next intersection, a mile up road, and got ride home from friend's wife.
- He mentioned that everything was a mosaic, and that it was only after he discussed the accident with his friend, and also later learned that it was the third rail that pierced the car, that he was able to piece together what he had seen.
- He described the person under debris in aisle across from where he was seated. He remembered two men, remembered a blue shirt. He did not see their head or feet, just parts of bodies.
- He discussed events prior to accident. He did not feel the emergency brake kick in. Train noise is white noise so he wasn't paying attention and said he was 'zoned out.' His first indication was the impact [with the SUV].
- He was asked about who was in the seats around him. He said that it was 75%-80% as full as it normally is. Usually all the two-seaters are filled and the three-seaters are usually filled at window and aisle positions. The day before was a snow day, so he felt that probably people stayed late to catch up. He thought that there might have been about 3 or 4 people around him. He restated that he was sitting alone, and his friend was also seated alone.
- He stated that this was his normal spot on the train. He always sits in the first car because the staircase that leads to parking lot at his stop is right in front of that car.
- He was asked about noises and had has no recollection of noises other than people screaming. It was just chaos. No recollection of hearing words.

- He was asked about lights on train and said that the lights were on because he could remember the color of one of the victim's shirt, and it was light blue.
- He was asked about the passengers on left side and stated that he didn't remember seeing anyone on left side except dead people.
- He was asked about flames and said he saw spot fires throughout cabin, like fireplace size fires. The fire on the body were smaller than that. Where the floor was gone, there was a fire there. There were also small spot fires. His decision to leave train was due to smoke.
- He was asked if first responders talked to him and asked questions. He stated that no first responders talked to him. He thought that the EMT asked if anyone was hurt or needed attention and that tall man with head injury went with the EMT.
- His wife asked how would CAR 1 PASS 6 know if he is okay? She was concerned that there was no safety net and people were allowed to disappear into the night. No one gathered passengers to identify them and find out if they were really okay. Not one told passengers what steps they should take next. She wondered why she was the one reaching out to first responders and others (she contacted MTA, NTSB, etc). She wondered why there weren't any first responders proactively doing this? They felt like they were on their own. CAR 1 PASS 6 thought that 3 MTA staff seemed too few given the number of passengers on train.
- He was asked if was already outside when he was the engineer leave the cabin, run through aisle, through door, jump, and run. He thought the engineer was just fleeing scene. Hi wife asked why the engineer didn't tell people around him what he was doing. She suggested that the engineer should have said, "I'm calling for help and going to a radio" or something. Some kind of communication was necessary. CAR 1 PASS 6 said that seeing the engineer fleeing the scene made him very angry.
- CAR 1 PASS 6 had been in touch with a crisis counselor. He was still trying to deal with loss and tragedy. He was wondering whether it was possible to get in touch with others who were involved in accident, and thought it was very useful to have his friend on the train to talk to. MTA representative said that she will look into it.

First Train Car Passenger 7

The train passenger seated in the first train car was interviewed in person by NTSB Investigator on February 9, 2015.

Notes:

- He was in the back of first car, on the right hand side, second row, sitting on aisle. There was a person directly behind him who would later die during the accident sequence. He stated that he was reading a book. He didn't remember the braking sequence and thought he was probably just really into his book.
- The first thing he remembered was the sound of the crash and the impact, which threw him forward in chair a little bit. He had been in a previous train accident where his train clipped a tow truck, where the tow truck arm scraped the side of the car causing sparks and knocking in windows. Because of this, the first thing he did was put his head down to the right and hold the bottom of seat. He was really worried about windows getting knocked in and he could hear scraping and the sound of the crash in general. When the train stopped, he still had his book in his hand, and he used the book to brush off debris on his seat that was on fire.
- He stood up and noticed train tracks above him. He had put his jacket in racks above his head, and he noticed that it had been blown back and had holes in it. As soon as he sat up he saw the passenger behind him who was killed. He said the eyes were wide open and not moving. The door adjacent to the deceased was caved in by 3rd rail right below handle. It was pushed in and was not usable. He saw people in the second car looking toward him and it looked like they were trying to help, but that door was not an option. There was already some smoke and fire in the car.
- He was only conscious of his area of the car up to the vestibule. There was a man near the window who had pulled the red handle that pulls the caulking off the window, popped the window out, and people were going out the window.
- Some people had qualms about jumping out window. He jumped out the window and he and another man helped others out of window.
- People seemed worried about the height of the drop or worried about the third rail. Everyone who could move eventually got out through that window.
- While this was happening, the witness was conscious of someone closer to the front of the car, where SUV was located, yelling, but he couldn't tell what that person was saying.
- He turned to look at this other man, who said that his leg was shattered and wanted to be pulled away from the train because he was concerned that the SUV or the train car were going to blow up.
- He went over to the man and asked if he really wanted to be dragged away since it would hurt. The man confirmed that he wanted to be moved. Witness grabbed the man's arms and, with the help of another man, pulled the injured man up and away from the train. He gave the injured man a cell phone to call his wife.
- The flames started getting higher and higher. At that time, they were positioned on the rise outside of the cemetery. To be safe, they pulled the injured man all the way to the cemetery among the tombstones.
- There was also another woman there complaining about her ribs.
- At this point, someone in their group suggested that they start flagging people down, since they were located on the far side of the road away from where the first responders

were showing up. He and another man circled past the SUV to wave down first responders.

- He also said that at one point, he had also gone to the second car and yelled through an open door for first responders to come to other side of tracks because they needed some help.
- He said that the first responders arrived very quickly. By the time he had circled to the other side of the train to look at the road, first responders were already there.
- He remembered that one of the first fireman to arrive was named -----.
- The biggest issue was that the injured man needed a board to be moved, and it took a while for the board to get there (20 minutes?).
- The injured man did not have a jacket, and even with a blanket he was getting cold and was feeling pain. Eventually, the injured man and the lady were strapped to boards, and were taken through the second car doors to the other side of the tracks.
- There were 3 other people that stuck around. He was not sure who was from the first car. One of them was a person that he remembers interviewed on the news as having an EMS background but was not an EMT.
- Once the two injured persons were carried off, and he walked away, trying to figure out how to get home. Fortunately, a friend lived close by and eventually picked him up.
- He was asked about odors and described toxic odors and an acrid smell. He said it was not gas, but more like burnt plastic or construction material. Once he was outside, there was definitely a gasoline smell.
- It didn't occur to him that the train would burn as quickly as it did. Even from the cemetery, he could feel the heat from the train.
- He was asked how the flames spread. He said there were small fires from crash. There were pieces of debris on his seat that were on fire, and there was no one big source of fire.
- Once out, he noticed that the SUV was already burning pretty good.
- When he first started dragging the injured guy away from the train, he could still see the back end of the car. Not even another 5 minutes went by before the car was completely engulfed in flames.
- It took longer time for train to catch on fire, and he saw mostly smoke. It took a while for fire to spread through train.
- The SUV was clearly the main source of the fire early on.
- He was asked to describe what first responders were doing. He said he was with a group of fireman/EMS getting people out. The first responders evacuated the injured to the other side of the train through the doorway of the first vestibule of second car.
- By the time he had followed, he wasn't sure where everyone went.
- As he was walking away, he noticed something on the track, and it was an ATV. He noticed a few police, firefighters, EMS around the intersections, with most down the road parallel with tracks.
- He made a right to go to a crossroad to be able to cross the road and start heading north.
- He went up Commerce to Stevens Avenue, veered left to Elwood Avenue to Hawthorne Station (about a mile or two north of the Commerce intersection).
- He passed a Mexican restaurant called Mexicali.
- At Hawthorne station, a friend picked him up.

First Train Car Passenger 8

The passenger on the first train car spoke to Metro-North Railroad on February 10, 2014, who provided the following notes.

Notes:

At 8:10 a.m. this morning, I received a call from CAR 1 PASS 8, (address) (DOB). She sustained bruising all over her body and a minor puncture wound to her side. She has not sought medical treatment. She was seated in the back of the first car, two rows in front of the back four. She mentioned assisting ---- whose two feet were dangling by a thread. CAR 1 PASS 8 stated that the train car was not on fire until about 20 minutes after she evacuated the car. She primarily called to locate her HP laptop that was on her lap at the time of the accident. She wants it back even if it is destroyed; there are photos on the hard drive. Her cell is ----- and her husband ---- cell is ----- . CAR 1 PASS 8 already met with MTAPD Detective ----- . She would like contact information for ----- wife to see how he is doing. She is interested in speaking with the NTSB even though she already spoke with the MTAPD. ----- has been copied on this email. ----- will be added to our spreadsheet.

This passenger was then interviewed by the NTSB on March 10, 2015 by telephone. The notes are as follows.

Notes:

- She described sitting about 2 rows forward of the back train door , and on the right side of the train. She was in the middle seat of a triple, aft facing seat, with no one to her left or right. There was a man across from her, facing her, she believed in the window seat.
- She noticed the impact with the car, but not the emergency braking before. She described the impact as significant, but not enough to throw her out of the seat.
- She felt large I-beams coming down by her and on her left shoulder. She saw something that looked like a window frame, and after seeing news reports, thought it was part of the third rail support structure. The beams kept coming and she fell back in her seat with her feet up and out front of her.
- Then when it all stopped, she heard people talking about fire, and someone was asking about fire extinguishers, but none could be found. She felt that it was too difficult to locate a fire extinguisher.
- She then looked for an emergency exit and saw the evacuation handles to remove the window. She tried to pull them, but she was at the wrong angle and could not get the appropriate leverage.
- Another passenger approached the window with a better position and pulled the handles to release the window. She did not remember the person who opened the window. She did not think it appeared difficult to open the window with the proper position.
- The location of this window was about a row or two forward of her position, on the same side of the train. She believes it was the second window from the back of the train car.
- She described lifting her legs up and out the window and jumping out of the train. It did not seem difficult.
- She saw people on the opposite side of the train car kicking at a window to remove it. They were not successful at opening the window, and when they saw that the window on her side of the train was open, they climbed over the third rails, over to her side, and out her window.

- She thought that she was probably the second or third person out this window, and that the others must have followed her.
- When she got out of the train it seemed quiet and calm and only about 8 or 10 people gathered around.
- She remembers someone calling 911 and thinks she may have called her husband at this point.
- She then realized that she had seen an injured man further forward, in one of the doorways. He was in the front entrance on the right hand side of the train, and had his feet cut off. She believed he was seated on the left side of the train, but when he got hit by the rails, or when fell, ended up on the right side doorway of the train.
- She was wondering where the first responders were, and it seemed to be taking a long time for them to arrive.
- She said that although there were little spots of fire inside the train, the fire inside the train was not an issue. She said that the car that had been hit by the train was on fire, but that it had not spread to the inside.
- She felt there was time for EMT to go in and help or check for survivors, but did not see them doing this.
- She gathered up some people to help her get the injured man off the train. They lifted him out of the train and onto the ground, where people started putting belts as tourniquets on him.
- Again she was thinking it was taking a long time for first responders to arrive.
- People started to worry about the fire, and so decided to move him further away. Some people picked him up and moved him further away from the train.
- They saw some EMT's and fire fighters arriving and called out to them to come and help. She did not feel that there was a sense of urgency on the part of the responders.
- The EMT's put the injured man on a backboard and moved him away.
- She noted that some of the passengers were raising their voices to responders, trying to get them to hurry up.
- She also noted that she saw a fire fighter across the creek and called out to him. He seemed to indicate that he could not cross the creek and she did not understand why he did not just come across.
- She was asked about injuries, and indicated that she did not realize that she had any injuries until the next day, and then realized she had a number of scrapes and bruises. She felt they were probably from climbing out the window.
- She walked over to the gym with others. She was asked repeatedly if she was injured and need to go to hospital.
- She called her husband who then drove as close to the scene as possible to pick her up. She had to walk about one mile to get to the spot where he could pick her up, that was not closed to traffic.

First Train Car Passenger 9

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of: *
 METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN *
 CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK * Docket No.: DCA-15-MR-006
 FEBRUARY 3, 2015 *

Telephonic Interview of: CAR 1 PASS 9

Valhalla, New York
 Tuesday,
 February 10, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: INTERVIEWER 1
 Human Performance Investigator

APPEARANCES:
 INTERVIEWER 9, Human Performance Investigator
 National Transportation Safety Board

I N T E R V I E W

DR. INTERVIEWER 1: All right, here we go.

INTERVIEW OF CAR 1 PASS 9

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. Okay, CAR 1 PASS 9, what I'd like to do is get an idea of where you came from, the people around you, and just your overall impressions of your ride prior to the accident.

A. Sure. Should I just say that, or --

Q. Yeah, go ahead and just talk.

A. Oh, okay. So, I mean, this is the train that I pretty much always take, you know, 70, 80 percent of the time, if I'm running on my normal daily schedule. And so I always sit in the front car, because that's the quiet car, and I like to read. Pretty much I always sit in the same seat, which is -- so facing, you know, facing forward in the car, on the rear left-hand side behind the doors, the second set of the doors that open, you know, onto the platform?

Q. Okay.

A. There's like a full bed of seats there right behind those doors and then there's two double rows facing each other, and I always sit in those double rows. So I always sit in the aisle seat facing forward.

Q. Okay. And those are the ones with the three seats, right?

A. That's right.

Q. Okay.

A. Three seats. So the -- so, you know, it can hold six seats, six people.

Q. Okay.

A. And generally -- but generally there's only four in there. You know, fortunately, the other day there was only two. There was a lady that -- of course I don't know everybody's

name there, but you recognize faces. There's a lady from Brewster that always rides on the inside of that seat facing forward; she's always there. She was by the window.

I'm on the -- as I say, I'm on the aisle seat. And across the way there was another lady that sits there usually about half the time. She generally is knitting. So she was across the aisle on the right-hand side of the car. There were some other faces sitting in the back of the car that I recognized too. I mean, just a lot of people, you know, always sit in the same seats.

Q. Okay.

A. So that's where we were. I mean, generally we were just sitting down and reading, everybody, or knitting, I guess. And I didn't notice anything, to be honest. I mean, I guess, the only thing that -- and I may be incorrect on this, so you know, please, it's just a recollection. But generally, you know, a conductor comes down and checks your ticket to make sure, you know, you have your tickets for the right ride and so on. I don't recall that. But I could be mistaken on that. And generally that conductor then, if that's right term, when he actually finishes his run, goes to the front of the car, or sits there. Where exactly they sit, I don't know. You said -- I know now that the engineer's in the front too.

But in any event, so we were just, again, just sitting reading. You know, everybody was just reading, and then -- I don't remember the brakes, but they must have come on, that alerted me to something. Because I distinctly remember, you know, the thud, like the soft thud when we hit, it turned out, the car.

Q. Okay.

A. I wasn't sure what it is that we hit initially, but you know, it certainly seemed -- you know, it was a soft thud. Not like a loud brittle sound; it was just a soft thud. And it seemed to me at that point that things went flying overhead. It sure seemed like it. So me and the lady next to me, we just ducked into that now unoccupied front -- I mean that row of seats, the three seats in front of us.

Q. Right.

A. Ducked down into that.

Q. And then, I mean, we heard as we were ducking down -- you know, I -- at least I heard, you know, definitely the screeching of the brakes, and maybe one or two little shudders, you know, initial with a smooth, you know, grinding. It was just one or two shudders, and then we came to a stop. And when I looked up from the -- when we had stopped, I looked up, and immediately there seemed to be a lot damage on the right-hand side of the car.

Q. Yeah.

A. Particularly in front of me. I mean, immediately in front of me, of course, is the rest room there. And I couldn't see anything at all down the left-hand side, but I looked up -- as I say, I looked up, I really -- there was certainly the overhead rack, I mean, the coat rack was down, and it must have been other things. I just could not see clearly like to the front of the car.

Q. Okay.

A. Like from anything -- like from the edge of the restroom forward was blocked. I couldn't see on the left side. Like things were down. I just couldn't see up above that. There were one or two seats right adjacent from the rest room on the right-hand side that looked okay, but I couldn't see above that.

And so when I got up, I saw that. And, you know, my -- and then someone shouted out -- I was right next to the emergency window on the left-hand side. They said open it up, you know, open that up. But my first reaction was to try to get out through the back of the car because I didn't want to necessarily jump, I guess. It seemed safer to go out the back. But someone back there shouted that it was jammed and it wouldn't open.

Q. Oh, okay. So the door on the left-hand side of the car was jammed?

A. It was the rear door. The very rear door that you would access to go into the second car.

Q. I see, I see.

A. So it was a -- so that was my first reaction was just to go into the second car. I think other people too, but someone said it was jammed, it wouldn't work. So when they said that, and since I was sitting next to the emergency window and someone was saying, you know, pull that, I pulled on that, you know, that big emergency exit -- exit, emergency window?

Q. Yes.

A. Initially I couldn't get it open right away. But and then someone jumped on the right-hand side of that window, I pulled on the left, and we got it free. So we got it free, and then we threw it out the front. I mean, I threw it out to the, you know, the side there, onto the ground.

Then someone -- we were just stood waiting there and someone poked their head down there and said I wonder -- you know, someone said I wonder if the third rail is there or not. You know, we didn't know, of course. And that was kind of in the middle of that window. But two guys jumped out on either side of me, you know, and everything looked fine there. And actually one of the guys out there, he had jumped out without his coat. He said, could you get my coat? I mean, I looked for it. I couldn't find it. Apparently, even on the right-hand side in the back there, things were disrupted, like the coat rack and stuff. Maybe things had come flying off. I couldn't find it, but I looked around.

By the time I looked back out there was maybe four or five people out in the snow. So then I jumped out, and the lady right behind me who was from Brewster, she came out. And a couple guys helped her, who were already there ahead of me, helped her out. I mean, everybody -- it was really calm in the back of the train by me. It was very calm. You know, everybody's just, let's get out, that's all.

Q. How many people do you think came out that window?

A. I think there must have been 8 to 10, something like that, that came out that window.

Q. Okay.

A. I mean, I guess in retrospect, I didn't realize -- I just didn't -- that maybe the doors in front there would have opened too. I mean, I just didn't know that.

Q. Okay.

A. I don't think anybody knew that. Maybe we could have tried that rather than -- because you would have been a little lower. Because when we jumped it was, I don't know, maybe 5 feet or so to the ground. And it was falling away the ground, so it was -- you know, it was a little ditch there. Not a big one, just a little one. All covered with snow. But I would guess that, you know, maybe 8, 10 people did that, got out that way.

Everybody seemed okay. There was some, like, minor cuts and bruises -- cuts, I don't know about bruises. And there was absolutely no panic. And then we're all pretty much on the outside from the back of the car pretty rapidly. And many of us had walked up the embankment, which was the cemetery there.

Now, there was a fellow that -- I didn't see many people going out on the front of my side of the car. I guess they got out on the other side. Again, I'm on the left-hand side. Just got out that window. There was one fellow up there on the front of the car, he had hurt his leg. He said he hurt his leg, and then next thing I know, two people rushed over to him and dragged him up by either arm and pulled him up to the cemetery grounds.

And then after that, there was -- as we were just standing there, then there was -- I mean, you could definitely, where we were, see that what he had hit was a car, and it was burning pretty fiercely in front of the locomotive. It was sort of sticking over on the left-hand side.

Q. Okay.

A. And then there was not -- I should say one other thing. I mean, when we were about to -- or when we did exit that car, there was some smoke in the car, but you didn't see flames at all. Or I couldn't. But our view of the front was really blocked. Although, I should make one little change to that. Just about as I was about to jump, and I looked back just to look down the right of the car, there was like a little flame coming out more or less like right across from that location of the car, right across from where the rest room was, like in front of the rest room. And it looked strange because, I mean, it almost looked like the, you know, the flames -- I mean, it just looked strange because, I mean, I didn't think there was anything in the car to burn. But anyway --

Q. Yeah.

A. -- there's like almost a little -- I mean, it almost looked like a (indiscernible), but maybe it was a piece of clothing burning or something. So it was not a big fire, but it was, you know, coming out. Smoke was starting to rise right before we jumped. And then -- but everybody got out. And the car was -- when we were all out on the side there, it was not halfway engulfed, at least to the best of my recollection, in flames. Although, then there was one or two more smaller explosions in the SUV, I guess, or towards the front of the car.

Q. Okay.

A. And then the flames just seemed -- they seemed to be growing throughout the car. And then pretty much everybody just started to -- sticking together more or less, and just started to move towards the back of the train.

Q. Okay. So the fire didn't originate from one spot; is that correct?

A. No, it didn't seem to. I mean, as I said, really the only flames that I saw -- and, you know, I'm probably not the best eyewitness person there -- came out of like, way back on the right-hand side across from the restroom. That's where I saw flames for the first time.

Q. Okay.

A. But it was small. I just didn't see anything up front before I was out of the train. Then you could see the SUV really -- I mean, it turned out SUV -- was, you know, fully engulfed in flames.

Q. Yeah. Can you like describe, I guess, when you were still in the car what did you -- was there like any smells or anything that you remember?

A. No, I don't. I mean, just there was a little smoke in the car so there was the smell of that. But I don't really recall any prominent --

Q. Okay.

A. I remember breathing in some smoke, and you know, just choking a little bit, but not heavy smoke. Just I was -- I'm trying to recall, that was maybe when I was kneeling down with my face towards the -- and still in the seat just as we came to a halt.

Q. Okay. So there's no familiar smells, like of gasoline or anything like that?

A. No, not in the least.

Q. Okay.

A. No, no, I didn't smell gas. No, I did not at all that - no.

Q. Okay. Now, after you jumped out of the train through the window, could you describe what happened after that a little bit more? You said that you walked towards the cemetery; is that correct?

A. Well, there was an embankment there. So initially when we jumped down -- it's just sort of like the tracks were -- you know, there's a little embankment or whatever right below the tracks. So just to get away from the car, it seemed like the safest thing was to walk up directly away from it, you know, directly away from it, which was walk up the other side of the embankment and then you were on cemetery grounds.

So that's what I did. And about four other people did. The two people -- the two guys that had dragged the -- I said this guy had his hurt leg, I guess, or rib; they dragged him up in there too. And then so it must have been, I don't know, seven, eight people up -- six to seven people up there. And then we just -- I mean, there was -- you could look across the cemetery, and it didn't seem like there was -- you know, it was just long paths and deep snow, that that wasn't anyway to leave, so -- then everybody, just -- but generally people maybe in the second or third car started moving towards the back of the train just along the rail tracks. So everybody just started walking that way.

Q. Okay. When did you first notice first responders in your area? How long after you evacuated the train?

A. Well after. I didn't see -- I saw -- when I was in the -- maybe walking past the third or fourth car, I don't know which, there were definitely firemen in the -- the doors were open, like the passenger door, you know, the exit doors for the -- where you would get off on the platform. They were open on some of those latter cars, and there was definitely -- I don't know if it was the third or fourth, but there was a fireman standing in the door there, and he was just saying move back. I mean, I had no doubt - I was moving back anyway, to be honest.

Q. Okay.

A. But that was probably the first time I saw any. By the time -- and you could only see really right in front of you. I mean, I could see flashing lights, though, as I was moving back, as I was moving back toward the train. But it took a while to get to the, you know, to the eighth and ninth car, eighth car. By the time I cleared all the way to the back there, I mean, there was fire engines and police cars and lights blazing and ambulances, and what would have been to the -- on the other side of the train, all over, by the time I got to the back.

Q. Okay.

A. I didn't see (indiscernible) when I got out for sure. I only saw the one fireman. And maybe 10 minutes had gone by, but I have no idea the time.

Q. Okay.

A. But I was on -- again, I was on like as you're facing -- I was on the left side, the cemetery side. I think a lot of activity was on the other side of the train. I didn't see it. I mean, I guess that's how the engineer got out too, on the right-hand side of the car.

Q. Um-hum.

A. Yeah. So I didn't see any of that, or anybody that got out on the right-hand side. We, in the back, we all just jumped out that window we were able to get free.

Q. Okay. Did any of the first responders -- did you communicate with any of the first responders or did they come up to you and communicate with you?

A. Not until -- no, not really. I mean, they just -- well, they just said keep moving, keep moving. And by that time, you know, there was probably, you know, a couple hundred people moving on the ground. They just said keep moving away from the train, so -- and then the next time -- the only time -- then I went into this gym where there -- actually everything was kind of freezing there. So there was a rock place or something where people were going into up on a little hill. So we went in there and then a fellow offered me a ride back. So as we left, the police were in that front door of the rock place and they took a picture of my ID. So that's -- that's it. I mean, I wasn't hurt or physically --

Q. So the rock place is also the gym? Is that what you're saying?

A. Yeah. So, it was -- I mean, when I say rock place, I think it's like a rock climbing wall or something like that.

Q. Oh, okay.

A. I think it was called "The Rocks" or something.

Q. Okay, okay.

A. It was a big gym with a parking lot on top of like this little hill away from the railroad tracks.

Q. Can you estimate how many people were in the gym from the train?

A. It was packed. It was packed.

Q. Okay.

A. I mean, I was by the door. I would guess at least 100.

Q. Okay.

A. And there was some responders came in there too because there was a couple of people with cuts there, and I saw them come in and treat them. That time when we were in there, a lot of police were in the front of the door there. They were checking IDs as you were leaving and stuff.

Q. Yeah.

A. They were also directing anybody that was expecting to be picked to go down the road about a mile to an intersection where there was a commerce or something that people were there to, you know, pick up any relatives or passengers.

Q. Okay. Is there anything else that sticks out in your mind that we haven't talked about yet?

A. To be honest, no, not really. I guess if I thought about it or if I -- I think that curve is -- I mean, it really -- you didn't see where we were in the back of the train. I mean, no, I can't imagine what it was like in the front. You know, our vision was blocked. It would appear that -- it looked like a lot damage, as I said, on the right-hand side.

Q. Yeah.

A. I mean, I could be wrong about that. I mean, there was a lot of superficial damage. I know a fellow said that's a really sturdy car, so -- but it seemed like -- the thing that was sort of a surprise just to me was that it seemed like a lot of damage and it was not a -- you know, the hit was soft, really. You know, it was like we hit something and, you know, it couldn't have been good for that. So the car was -- whatever it was and -- but it seemed like a lot of damage given -- I mean, we didn't feel a sharp -- you know, it wasn't a sharp stop on the train at all. We just moved along and then we saw -- this surprised me too, that things were flying.

Q. Yeah.

A. Because it wasn't like -- it didn't stop and boom. You would expect everything to go flying if you stop on a dime, but --

Q. Yeah.

A. It was like it slid, but things were still flying. And then when I got up, there was just a lot of damage on the right-hand side that seemed -- it's just that this -- I mean, I didn't know what it was. It just seemed strange.

Q. Okay.

A. -- been in an accident, so I really don't know. That could be the norm. You know -- but again either. One's enough.

Q. Yeah.

A. So I don't know what to -- other than that, I mean, I guess now I look to see where all the emergencies are and I see that you actually can break and get those sliding doors to move, but we didn't -- no one even thought of that. We just saw the emergency window, so let's get out that way. Probably made more sense because it was lower, probably easier to get out of if we were able to open those doors. Whether they would have opened or not, I don't know. I mean, there was certainly no communication involved in the front car, you know, anybody telling you what to do. It was everybody on, you know, on your own thinking what's best to do.

Q. Okay. You said that this is your normal train. How long have you been taking it?

A. Well, I mean, I've been taking the Metro North for 20 years. I mean, this particular for -- since I moved to this job 2½ years ago. That's about 2½ years.

Q. Okay. I can't think of any other questions. But I was wondering if you have any questions for us?

A. No, I mean, I guess I -- I mean, I don't know. I mean, what I mean essentially -- not really. I mean, I really don't know what happens in the next step after you guys --

Q. Okay.

A. I guess it would be nice -- you know, good to know what happened. I mean, what happened, I'm sure you'll publish a report on what happened. I mean, since I've read all the papers, I mean, it's rare for anybody to get injured or -- I mean, you fatalities in the front car. But I'm sure that'll be published. I can't think of anything to ask other than wait for the -- I'm sure a report will come out on it.

Q. Yeah. What we'll do is -- it usually takes us about year to publish a report. It's not a sure thing that we'll publish something, but I think for this one, just because of how severe it was, we probably will publish one. And so what will happen is we'll complete our investigation. We'll go back home, we'll -- you know, we'll -- eventually, about 6 months from now, open a docket of information that we've gathered from our investigation. And the docket will probably also include some information that we've received from the parties we've been working with here, which include Metro North, the Federal Railroad Administration, and the New York DOT.

In about a year's time, we will take the report that we write to our Board. We have a five-member Board, and it's -- they actually are the ones that will decide whether to, you know, to accept the report. And once that's done, we'll publish it. The report will include the probable cause of the accident. It will also include some findings of ours and probably, most importantly, it will include some recommendations to people we believe will be helpful in making sure that something like this doesn't happen again.

A. Yeah. No, that's good. I mean, I have to (indiscernible) going to turn -- it was an engineer from railroad (indiscernible). And he was explaining, he said it's such an unusual series of events that happened that hopefully won't happen again. But whatever steps can be taken, that'd be great.

Q. Yeah, this was a pretty unique thing. You know, I don't think we've ever seen anything like it.

A. Yeah.

Q. But, anyway, I know you've got to go, but I hope that if it's possible, you know, if we have any more questions, we'd like to be able to get contact with you, if that's okay?

A. Sure, sure, that's fine. I mean, you asked me if I wanted to; I mean, I'm sure everybody would interview, right? I mean, if I can help, that's fine, absolutely.

Q. Okay. And it works the same way too, if you have any questions for us, please don't hesitate to call. We'd be happy to talk with you.

A. Okay.

Q. Okay. Well, thanks CAR 1 PASS 9, we really appreciate the time.

A. Oh, you're quite welcome. Good luck with your work.

Q. Thank you. Bye-bye.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:

METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN

CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK

FEBRUARY 3, 2015

Telephonic Interview of CAR 1 PASS 9

DOCKET NUMBER:

DCA-15-MR-006

PLACE:

Valhalla, New York

DATE:

February 10, 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.

Transcriber

First Train Car Passenger 10

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN	*	
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK		* Docket No.: DCA-15-MR-006
FEBRUARY 3, 2015	*	
		*

Telephonic Interview of: CAR 1 PASS 10

Valhalla, New York
 Wednesday,
 February 11, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: INTERVIEWER 1
 Railroad Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

INTERVIEWER 1, Railroad Accident Investigator
 National Transportation Safety Board

INTERVIEW
 (3:25 p.m.)

MR. INTERVIEWER 1: This is INTERVIEWER 1, investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board, recording an interview with?

MS. CAR 1 PASS 10: CAR 1 PASS 10.

MR. INTERVIEWER 1: CAR 1 PASS 10?

MS. CAR 1 PASS 10: Yes.

MR. INTERVIEWER 1: And that's -----?

MS. CAR 1 PASS 10: That's correct.

MR. INTERVIEWER 1: And today is February 11th, and it is approximately

3:25 p.m.

INTERVIEW OF CAR 1 PASS 10

BY MR: INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. So, CAR 1 PASS 10, part of this recording, I'd like you just more or less to tell me where you started your train trip and where you boarded the train and continue on from there.

A. I boarded the train at Grand Central at 5:44, heading to Croton Falls. I proceeded to the first car, which is the car that I normally ride. I was seated on the left-hand side in the three-seater, but closer to the main aisle.

It was a regular ride home until there was a -- it seemed like the train had hit something and it seemed like the brakes of the train were engaged because we just heard like the

screeching when the train was trying to stop. And it went on for a really long, long time, and it just got worse and worse. As the train went on you just heard more of the metal against metal. And all the seats seemed to be like collapsing, like just -- it was just a horrible noise and it just kept getting closer and closer to where I was sitting. We seemed to have gone for a very long time. Then I found myself, when it finally stopped, I was not in my seat, I was thrown against more towards my left of the window. There was another gentleman sitting on that seat.

When I looked up and looked at where I was sitting, and the train -- the rail had gone right through the seat that I was sitting at. And then there was a lot of smoke and people were trying to kick the windows because the doors never opened. And I'm sitting on the left and there was nowhere for me to get to the door because the tracks were right in the middle. And I was sitting in the seat, and right behind the window, the exit window. And the gentleman that was sitting with me, he kept telling me we had to get out. And I knew I had to get out, but I was so scared and -- you know, finally I gathered myself. I didn't have my jacket on at the time. I grabbed my jacket, and my knees were burned, and part of my jacket was burned. And the gentleman in front of me, his legs were broken, and he threw himself out the window, and then it was my turn.

There was a gentleman waiting for me at the bottom trying to grab me while I was hanging from the window. But before that, when I was climbing over the seats, there was a man on fire and there was (indiscernible) and he -- and he was dead. He was dead. He was -- just the smoke was coming in and it was just horrible. And it seemed like within seconds you just saw the front of the train, it just -- it's on fire and it was just getting closer and closer.

And when we jumped off, we saw that there was a car on the tracks. I didn't know how or why that car was there, because we didn't know exactly where we were. And then I know my ribs were pretty banged up and I was in pain. And then I was just screaming to try to get someone to come and help the gentleman that his legs were broken. And someone came back and (indiscernible) into the cemetery area, where we laid 45 more minutes until they could get to us.

Q. How long were you laying in the cemetery? I didn't quite hear that?

A. It seemed like it was for 45 minutes. It seemed like a long time, but maybe it wasn't. It just seemed like it was a while before they got to us.

Q. Okay. Okay. Now I'm going to go back a little bit. When you first started hearing the noise --

A. Yes.

Q. -- were the rail coming into the aisleway or was there rail up in the air first, that you noticed? Could you -- do you have any idea?

A. No. My head was down. My head was down. When I came up, I was covering my head because I just kept hearing the crunching, like the metal, like everything was kind of collapsing; that's how it felt. And when I was thrown into the gentleman that was sitting next to me, I was saying in my head, get down. I was trying to protect my head. And when the train stopped and I looked up -- I guess the crunching that I was hearing is the rail breaking through the train. When I sat back up, the rail was there already.

Q. Okay. Now, did you know the name of the gentleman that you were sitting next to?

A. No. No.

Q. Okay.

A. I don't know what happened to him after he caught me. The only other name that I found who he was, the gentleman that his leg was broken, his name was ----- . And then there was another gentleman that stood with me until help came; his name was ----- .

Q. Okay. And ---- and ---- were on the same car with you, on car number 1?

A. No.

Q. No?

A. ---- was with me. ---- was the one that jumped with his legs broken. And ----, he said he had been in the third car or something like that (indiscernible) because he said people were hurt.

Q. Okay. Okay, and then in your -- you say you were on the left-hand side of the car.

A. Yes.

Q. And you were in an aisle seat; is that what it is?

A. Well, there's three seats. I was closer to the aisle.

Q. Okay. You were closest to the aisle.

A. My seat was closest to the aisle, yes.

Q. Okay. And when you were sitting in the aisle -- now, I'm not familiar with the train the way it's set up. So is that like in the middle of the train, the back of the train, or the --

A. The middle, the middle.

Q. You were in the middle?

A. I was right in the middle.

Q. Okay. Now, is there a bathroom in the middle?

A. Yes. Yes, there is a bathroom -- not right in the middle, but a little bit behind from the middle.

Q. Okay. And you were in front of the bathroom or behind the bathroom?

A. In front.

Q. In front of the bathroom. Okay.

A. Yes.

Q. And then the emergency exit window was right behind you, then, behind your seat?

A. Behind my seat. Because I climbed over to the next seat.

Q. Okay. And then is there anything else you could recall? Now, you exited on the left-hand side then. That would be on the cemetery side --

A. Yes.

Q. -- then, that you exited?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Okay. Could you think of anything else that transpired? You said the one -- or the one rail, when you leaned over to that gentleman, pierced the seat that you were sitting in?

A. Yeah, the rail was right, right through the seat.

Q. Wow. Now, did it go through the seat in front of you also or --

A. I don't know. I don't know.

Q. Okay. Okay. All righty.

A. I just know that when I got up, the rail was there and I didn't know why the rail was there. And when I got to the hospital, I kept telling everybody that the train tracks were inside the train.

Q. Okay. When you saw smoke, did you also see fire anywhere?

A. In the front of the car. And the man that was closer to the front was on fire, and there was another people across trying to put the fire -- and the woman said he's dead, he's dead, and everybody was just -- there was panic, and people were just trying to get out because the doors never opened.

Q. Okay. Okay. Did you see any fire behind you too?

A. No, no.

- Q. No?
- A. Just smoke and the fire was all coming from the front of the train.
- Q. Okay. Now, when the fire was there, did the fire start when the train had already stopped or --
- A. Yes.
- Q. Okay. So --
- A. That's when -- yeah, that's when I saw it.
- Q. Okay. When the train was already stopped, that's when you observed the fire?
- A. Yeah. It was like -- it sounded like an explosion.
- Q. Okay.
- A. And that's when the black -- really thick, thick, black smoke just started coming in.
- Q. Okay. Now, do you have any questions of me on this or anything of that nature?
- A. I can't think of anything at all right now.
- Q. Okay, okay. Could you think of anything else? I mean, you know, just take your time. I know it's very traumatic, you know.
- A. No, everything -- you know, I've been riding the train for -- since '97, and you kind of know, you know when the thing -- you know, when they blow the horn or when they make announcements. There were no announcements made. There was nothing. It just -- everything just happened.
- Q. Okay. Okay. Well, could you tell me what injuries you sustained, what happened to you?
- A. My right side, it's bruised like on my legs. I had bumps on my head. My ribs -- and my lung, it was partially collapsed so there was like air bubble in my ribs that they're monitoring.
- Q. Okay. Do you know how that was sustained? Did the rail rub up against you when it came in?
- A. I don't know.
- Q. Okay.
- A. I don't know. It was just -- everything was -- I don't know. I have bumps that I don't know how they got there.
- Q. Okay. Okay.
- A. And it must have been when the rail came or -- I don't know.
- Q. Okay. When you -- you were helped out of the window. So you didn't fall down onto the ground or anything like that; you had help?
- A. No. Yes.
- Q. Okay. Well, I think that's just about everything that I need to know unless you have some more information that you could tell me?
- A. No.
- Q. No?
- A. Uh-uh.
- Q. Okay. Well, if you think of anything, I gave your husband my telephone number.
- A. Um-hum.
- Q. And please feel free to give me a call, you know, because sometimes after a while you might remember something.
- A. Um-hum.
- Q. And don't be afraid to give me a call.
- A. Okay.
- Q. Okay?

- A. Um-hum.
Q. Well, I hope, I hope you get to feel better soon --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- and take care of yourself.
A. Thank you.
Q. You're welcome. Bye now.
A. Bye.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK
FEBRUARY 3, 2015
Interview of CAR 1 PASS 10
DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-MR-006
PLACE: Valhalla, New York

DATE: February 11, 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.

Transcriber

First Train Car Passenger 11

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
		*
METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN		*
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK		* Docket No.: DCA-15-MR-006
FEBRUARY 3, 2015	*	
		*

Telephonic Interview of: CAR 1 PASS 11

Valhalla, New York

Thursday,
February 26, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: INTERVIEWER 1, Ph.D.
Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:
INTERVIEWER 1, Ph.D., Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N T E R V I E W

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay. So this is -- how do you, how do you pronounce your last name?

CAR 1 PASS 11: CAR 1 PASS 11.

INTERVIEWER 1: CAR 1 PASS 11, okay. So this is CAR 1 PASS 11.

Can you give me -- what's your birth date?

CAR 1 PASS 11: It's -----.

I N T E R V I E W O F C A R 1 P A S S 1 1

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. Okay. Yeah, so go ahead and just describe, what was the first -- when did you first realize that something was wrong with your -- with the trip?

A. Well, I actually -- believe it or not, I was asleep when the accident happened; I dozed off on the train. And I just remember like a really strong jolt and I heard like loud noises and I woke up to flames, like I could see them in front of me.

I was in the first car on the right-hand side in like the two-seater seats, sitting closest to the side of the train and there was no one seated next to me towards aisle. And I remember when I looked towards the center of the aisle I could see what I later found out was the rail coming through the center aisle.

Q. Okay.

A. And I didn't see anything in front of me except for some flames and smoke, and I do remember seeing some people who were injured across from me. Like I remember one man saying his leg was shattered. And then the man that was sitting directly behind me, and the man that was behind him, they both turned forward and they told me that they -- they introduced themselves and they said that they were going to help get me out of the car.

Q. Okay.

A. And so as far as I could tell, I couldn't go forward, because that's where I saw all the flames and chaos. So I turned backwards, and what I wound up doing was holding -- the man behind me, I was holding his hand and he was like helping me with my stuff, and I climbed over probably two or three seats.

Q. Okay.

A. And then with -- before I got there, the men had managed to open one of the emergency windows.

Q. Okay.

A. And so I saw like definitely a clean exit, no shattered glass or anything like that. And they somehow both got out the side of the car, and then they told me to basically turn around and face my chest to the side of the train and slide down the side, and then each one of them caught one of my legs. And then they were yelling to make sure that we didn't go near the third rail.

Q. Right.

A. Because they were very concerned about that. And so they carefully got me to safety, to the side where it was kind of just a bunch of snow at that point. And then we walked together with a bunch of other people who had gotten off the first car, and walked to, I guess, the road where we were able to cross and go to The Cliffs gym.

Q. Okay.

A. Where they -- they kept us there. I didn't -- and I can tell you that I called my boyfriend as soon as I got off the train, and he later found out exactly when the accident happened. And he was able to tell me that it was 6 minutes from when the train hit the car to when I called him. So I figured it probably took me, like, 2 minutes to find my phone once I got out. So I don't think I was really in the smoke or in any kind of danger for very long; we moved a lot quicker than I thought.

I didn't hear anything over the PA system as far as what to do or anything like that. I had thought maybe that was not functioning. I didn't see any of the staff from the train. I just got -- basically I got my stuff -- we were told to make our way across the street once the first responders arrived. And then we spent some time at the gym, and no one asked for my information or anything like that, and I wasn't examined or anything, but I felt okay. I just felt some -- you know, I felt the smoke in my lungs. But the gym was giving out water. And then they said that they were going to arrange for buses to come and bring us to the -- to like bring us to where we needed to go. And it was actually at that point that I talked to ----, who was the man who gave you my contact information.

Q. Right.

A. And his wife was coming to pick him up to bring him to where he needed to be, which was right near where I was going, so he offered me a ride there. And so he had my contact information in case his wife needed to reach us and his cell phone died. So, I didn't even know his last name or anything, but -- so that was basically the experience.

Q. Okay. That was a -- that's great -- thanks, that's a really great synopsis. You have a lot of good detail in there without me having to ask.

A. Oh, thank you.

Q. But I wanted to -- and you thought of it even better than -- one of the, basically, usually the first questions I ask is to describe exactly where you were seated. So you were in the first car --

A. Um-hum.

Q. -- and you were -- where did you say in the first car, towards the front or towards the back?

A. It was actually, I would say, in the middle.

Q. Okay.

A. Because -- but more towards the front than the back, because it would take -- it would have taken longer to get to the rear doors than to get to the front doors.

Q. Okay.

A. But the reason I went back a couple of seats was because of the flames coming from the front.

Q. Right. And you were in the window or the aisle seat?

A. The window seat.

Q. And on the left or right side of the car? Or as the car's going forwards it's --

A. I was -- so if I'm facing forward, I was on the right side of the car, so in the space with two-seaters, to the left. I'm sorry, go ahead.

Q. Yeah, so you were on the -- as the car -- as the train is moving forward, you were on the right side window seat.

A. Um-hum.

Q. And were you in a seat that facing forward or backward?

A. I was in a seat that was facing forward.

Q. Okay.

A. Because I turned, I turned around to exit.

Q. And did you say that you were in, like, one of the areas where there was like a lounge area where there's -- across from you is an aft-facing seat?

A. No, I was just in a two-seater behind another forward, forward facing two-seater.

Q. Okay. And do you remember if there people -- there was nobody sitting next to you, right?

A. No. And I think that was one of the reasons I was able to get out safely, to be honest. Because a lot of -- most of the chaos, from what I could see, was from the center aisle and then going left.

Q. Correct, yeah.

A. And it -- yeah, it seemed like the people who were screaming, who were injured, were on the left-hand side. And the rail -- like the center aisle, there was no way I could cross it.

Q. Yeah. And did -- like what height --

A. Till I saw that the seats were like torn off.

Q. And that rail -- the rail that was in that center aisle, like, was it near the floor, was it in the middle, or was it near the ceiling?

A. From what I remember, it was like midway.

Q. Okay.

A. So like I could see over across to another man, someone I remember who was saying his leg had been shattered. And he -- I could see that the seats in front of him had kind of crushed backwards. So, like --

Q. Yep.

A. I'm trying to think of how to describe it.

Q. No, I know what you mean.

A. The seats -- yeah, the seats swept backwards on to him because of the collision.

Q. And he was seated directly across from you?

A. Maybe like one seat behind and then across.

Q. Okay. And were there people seated either directly in front of you or directly behind you?

A. Well, the man -- the two men that helped me were the two seats immediately behind me.

Q. Okay.

A. And then, unfortunately, when I was climbing over the seats, I did see that there was one person whose legs were like on the aisle seat and their -- I couldn't see their torso at all. So I'm not sure if they were one of the people that didn't make it from -- like, that passed away from the accident. But, yeah, I have no way of knowing the status of that person, but I know that the men that were helping me out were telling me not to look down, and it was a complete accident that I did. But it's possible that someone behind me was injured. Because from what I could see, I thought it was people in front of me.

Q. Right.

A. But then what I was hearing --

Q. Yeah, that's helpful.

A. -- what I was hearing when I got off was that it was like the majority of people who were severely injured were in front of me.

Q. Okay.

A. And mostly to the left.

Q. Right. Okay. Yeah, that was really helpful.

So when you went to move out of the train car, you climbed over a couple of seats towards the rear of the car, right, and you exited out a window that had been opened by those men that helped you. Can you describe -- did you see them opening the exit window? Can you describe how they opened it?

A. Unfortunately, I didn't see them open it. I was more focused on climbing over the seats at the time, that by the time I had got there it had already been open.

Q. Okay.

A. But given the time frame and the fact that it was open so quickly, I think that it must have opened easily for them to be able to get out and help me get out within a matter of minutes.

Q. Right. Yeah, and you did a good job of describing how you got out. So did you -- you found it pretty -- did you find it difficult to get yourself out the window?

A. Yeah. Well, I'm actually only 5, like around 5 feet, so I'm not very tall. So that was challenging. And I'm not -- I don't have a lot of upper body strength, so it was challenging for me to like get over the seats and then hang from the side. But I was very fortunate that those men caught me, because had I had to make that jump on my own, it would have been a lot more dangerous.

Q. Right. Okay. Yeah, that's helpful.

And then the other question, I remember from what you described was, you said when you got to the -- you walked over to the gym and you said nobody ever checked on you or asked for your name or contact information or anything. How long -- so nobody ever checked on you? And then -- I just want to confirm that. And then how long were you there before you decided to leave?

A. Well, I can definitely confirm that no one took my name and no one checked on me. And I was there -- I'm trying to think back. I know a lot of people were there a lot longer than I was, so maybe I was there like a half hour, 45 minutes, and then I know that the people at The Cliffs made an announcement saying that we could walk to a certain road crossing and that

we could be picked up from there. So it was like a half mile walk, and it was at that time that I left. So I'm not sure if the people from there would know when they made that announcement better than I would, but I don't feel like I was sitting there for too long.

Q. Okay.

A. And I did see the people who were working at The Cliffs do some first aid on some of the people who had made it across the street. But the people -- but I think -- I mean, from what I could tell like, if you made it across the street, there was really like no one checking on you.

Q. Okay. And then so what first response, first responder activities did you see? It doesn't sound like you talked to anybody at the gym. But like when you got out of the car were first responders already around or did you see any first responders on scene?

A. It took -- it was -- it took a little while, but it was like by the time I -- so we had to walk down basically towards the end of the train to get to where we could stand out of the snow, and I think it was -- unfortunately, I don't know the exact amount of time, but it was relatively soon afterwards. But, of course, all of us who were on the first car were very impatient and hoping that people got there as soon as possible, knowing that there were other passengers in the front of the car, so it seems to me a little bit like it was in slow motion. But then I definitely saw the first responders arrive and the roads were shut down in both directions and there were ambulances and police officers.

Q. And was this before -- when you first saw the -- when you saw the first responders, was this before you went to the gym or only after?

A. It was before.

Q. Okay.

A. They were the ones that told us to go across the street.

Q. Okay. Got it.

A. So I would say maybe like 5 to 10 minutes after I got out they arrived.

Q. And then -- so then when -- so you walked with ---, whatever, I forget now.

A. Yeah, --. He told his name was ---, so we'll (indiscernible). Yeah, I actually didn't meet --- until I got to The Cliffs. I walked over --

Q. Oh, so he's not one of the men who helped you out of the car; he was a different person?

A. No. He was seated -- he probably told you, he was much further forward in the train.

Q. Okay. Yeah, I -- it's just been -- a lot has happened since I spoke to him. So I --

A. Yeah. I know, I figured.

Q. And so -- so when you guys walked -- so you walked down the length of the train to the grade crossing where they had -- I think you walked towards the back of the train, right?

A. Yeah. I don't know exactly if it was the last car, but we walked a pretty significant length and then waited there. And I would say maybe like -- I don't -- unfortunately, my memory of the first responders getting there is not as clear. I think I saw some activity by the time we got there; it's just that the responders were only sort of making their way to their front car at that -- like I don't think they were at the front car --

Q. Right.

A. -- until I was already to the back of the train, so --

Q. Okay. So when you -- and you mean to the back of the train -- oh, right, okay, so -- and then --

A. To where we crossed.

Q. To where you crossed the road to go to the gym?

A. Um-hum.

Q. Okay. And so then when you left the gym, how did you get to -- did ---- wife come to pick you up or something, or how did you get a car from the gym?

A. Yeah. So --- and I walked a half a mile to the -- to this road crossing where The Cliffs' staff had announced we could get picked up, and there were cops all over there kind of guiding traffic and blocking the roads. And then his wife picked us up and drove us to Goldens Bridge, and then I got picked up from there, because I usually commute to Brewster.

Q. Right. Okay. Okay. And did you -- were you injured at all?

A. I just had -- so I felt the smoke that night, but then the next morning I felt completely fine. And then I was okay the next day, but then I had some bruises on my legs and on my arms, and I think that's just from climbing the seats and going out the side. But other than that, that was all.

Q. And so the bruises weren't concentrated on like one side of your body or in one area, it was kind of just generally around your -- both arms, both legs?

A. It was actually the worst on -- let's see -- the left side of my body. So my left outer thigh and the outside of my left arm.

Q. Okay.

A. And then I could feel like I was really sore in my upper arms, and I think that was just because of the way I exited.

Q. You were hanging?

A. Yeah, hanging there. I can't do a pull-up, so I wasn't able to do that.

Q. Okay. Okay. Yeah, that's helpful. Okay. Is there -- I think that's all my regular questions. Is there anything that maybe I didn't think to ask you that you feel is important, or can you think of anything else that you want to talk about?

A. No, I think we covered everything. I really just tried to tell you everything I could remember.

Q. Yeah, that's great.

A. I mean, I just feel very lucky that those people behind me were able to help me out. So --

Q. And did you feel their help was in -- because just you were just kind of shocked from the accident and disoriented, or because you had difficulty getting over the seats, or what was the main, you know, reason that you felt that they were so helpful?

A. I think because -- well, like I said, I had dozed off so I was a little bit disoriented and I think -- I didn't see any people really in front of me, and so I think I turned behind me and I think it was just they were trying to help me out and they told me that they recognized me, that I was always on the first car of that train. That was the train -- that's still the train that I take every day.

Q. Okay.

A. So they recognized my face, which I couldn't believe, and I think they were just -- you know, it was everyone for -- everyone was trying to help someone else and do what they could to --

Q. Right.

A. -- get as many people out safely. So I was telling them afterwards I didn't know if I could have done it without them and they said they thought I would have found a way, but I think it would have been a lot more scary, so --

Q. Right. Well, that's good.

A. And, I mean, I know their first names but I don't know their full names. So I'm hoping maybe I'll find them someday on the train.

Q. Okay. Okay. And do you have any questions for me?

A. No, I think I'm all set for right now. Thanks.

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay. I'm going to stop the interview.
(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK
FEBRUARY 3, 2015
Telephonic Interview of CAR 1 PASS 11

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-MR-006

PLACE: Valhalla, New York

DATE: February 26, 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.

Transcriber

First Train Car Passenger 12

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
		*
METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN	*	
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK	*	* Docket No.: DCA-15-MR-006
FEBRUARY 3, 2015	*	
		*

Telephonic Interview of: CAR 1 PASS 13
Valhalla, New York

Thursday,
February 12, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: INTERVIEWER 1, Ph.D.
Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:

INTERVIEWER 1, Ph.D., Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

Telephonic Interview of CAR 1 PASS 12:

By INTERVIEWER 1 4

By INTERVIEWER 2 43

I N T E R V I E W

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay. So, I can give you a quick background of what's going on. We are interviewing passengers from the first car. We've also interviewed some others from other parts of the train. But really, we're conducting -- the investigation of course has people working on all different aspects of it. I'm looking at the survivability -- the survival factors for this investigation.

And so, of course, I'm trying to understand what the experience was for the passengers on the train, how they might have been injured, how, you know, you were able to evacuate the train, what kind of emergency response you either saw happening, or what kind of treatment you got from the responders on scene, that sort of thing.

CAR 1 PASS 12: Right.

INTERVIEW OF CAR 1 PASS 12

BY INTERVIEWER 1:

Q. So why don't you go ahead and just describe when you first realized something was not normal, and then what happened -- you know, what you did?

A. All right. So I was extremely fortunate, I think I would say, in the fact that I was asleep. So, you know, up until the moment of impact, or shortly thereafter, you know, I -- I woke up to essentially I think the aftermath, you know, of the accident in the car.

I was sitting in the very middle of the car, basically, on the east side of the car in the two-seaters. I was not in -- I was in a rear facing two-seater, so approximately the middle of the car right there. I think there was one two-seater behind. And so --

Q. And were you --

A. -- I was --

Q. Were you seated in the -- towards the window or towards the aisle?

A. Yes. Yes, I was seated in the window and I had my backpack on the seat next to me on the aisle side. You know, I had taken my coats off and put them up on the rack above me and, you know, proceeded to fall asleep after we came out of the tunnel, and I texted my wife, et cetera. So, I mean, I don't how interested in the story you are, but I understand, you know, that it's probably not all germane to your investigation. So I'm just trying to keep it, I guess, more to the point here.

So I was seated there. I heard some fairly loud noises, you know, bang, crash type thing. Then some strange -- you know, like some popping sounds, you know. There were definitely electrical sparks. I mean, you know, to put it back into a story context, basically I stood up -- you know, I had just woken up, so I didn't even realize where I was. It didn't look like anything, you know, that I think I should have been in the middle of type of thing.

And so I was kind of regaining consciousness. You know, I don't think I was unconscious for any part of it other than just being asleep.

Q. Right.

A. But stood up, looked around, realized -- I mean, the lights were still on in the car.

Q. Was the train -- do you remember when you, when you kind of recognized at this point that -- you know, and you stood up, was the train still coming to a stop or had it completely come to a stop?

A. It had completely come to a stop. In fact -- I mean, I would guess, you know, if I had to that I was sort of woken by, you know, whatever -- them coming to a stop or rest. I mean, I'm amazed, you know, and that the noise and everything before that didn't wake me up. But be that as it may, the train was not moving when I woke up. I stood up and the train was already at a complete stop.

Q. Okay.

A. I stood up. I looked -- you know, in front of me would have been -- so, directly south, right, back toward the back half of the car --

Q. Right.

A. -- and saw a body in sort of the vestibule area. So where I was sitting, you know, looking in that direction, the bathroom would have been on my right.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. And I could see sort of through into the vestibule area that there was a person, you know, or a body, rather, sort of in that area, with the shoes pointed toward me what would have been, you know, on their front, prone, or whatever you'd say. And I sort of started to realize -- like, it started to occur to me that I was on the train because I saw rails next to me, right. So it was kind of like my first indication that, you know, I started to realize where I was because I saw train rails.

And I remember distinctly thinking, like, you know, what the hell are train rails doing in -- well, first, I'm on the train. Okay, that's -- but why are there rails in the car, right?

Q. Right.

A. So, like, what's going on here?

Q. Yeah that would be a little -- that'd be a little surprising.

A. Yeah, you know, like, those don't belong there, right? So they were -- you know, and so, when I was standing up, I guess I -- you know, I'm kind of right in the seats there, but I'm turning now to my right, you know, kind of like looking through the rest of the car, you know, starting to notice that the car is filling with -- I wouldn't even call it smoke. It was kind of like a milky haze of probably whatever was already on fire. I saw that there was a relatively small fire, I would say, like sort of up in the ceiling towards the front of the car.

You know, so the front left corner of the train car there was sparks coming down from the ceiling. The lights were still on.

Q. Um-hum.

A. I made out, you know, some more carnage or, you know, death to my right, that way towards the front of the car.

Q. On the, on the --

A. And, you know, again --

Q. -- which side? The east or west side of the train?

A. So, again, sort of in like that vestibule area, so I would say the -- you know, if I had to say, the east. But, you know, the body was -- it was kind of up ended. It was in a very strange position, you know, which I'll never forget. And, you know, the hands weren't where you would expect hands -- the way the hands should be, you know. The torso essentially was -- you know, the shoulders were straight down on the floor.

I fortunately couldn't tell -- the individual could have been decapitated, but certainly there wasn't a head at the bottom -- you know, at the top of the torso. But there was also, like, plastic or metal or something covering that sort of from my view.

Q. Okay.

A. So I couldn't necessarily see, you know, if the person, again, was decapitated or not. I just -- you know, his torso was up ended and the body was sort of upside down in a strange position. You know, I remember distinctly a sweater vest and, you know, the button-down shirt underneath of it, but --

Q. And that was on the --

A. And then --

Q. And that was on the east side of the train you said?

A. Yeah, I mean, I would say towards the middle, but if I had to call it one half or the other, I would say the east side, and sort of, again --

Q. Okay.

A. -- you know, maybe not quite in that vestibule area. Like maybe where the six-seater is, you know, the --

Q. Yep.

A. -- or on my side it would have been the four-seater, you know, where they're the two facing each other. So like right before the vestibule, like maybe right around there.

Q. Okay.

A. So, you know, I -- again, so now I've scanned sort of to the right. I saw what I saw when I first stood up to my -- which was ahead of me, which was south. So now, I've looked north and I've sort of taken in that scene. I have to admit, I don't know whether I've blocked out or just couldn't see based on sort of like the -- you know, it seemed like the plastic liner, if you will, like the inside of the car had come down. You know, I don't know if that was sort of peeled off. Now, when I think about it, you know, if the tracks came up at an angle, you know, maybe they just kind of peeled that off in the inside of the car.

But that that was -- some of that was actually underneath some of the tracks. So, you know, I distinctly remember seeing two tracks. I may have seen more than one -- more than two, but there was definitely plastic and things intermingled in there. And the whole section sort of directly to my west -- so, like, the other side of the train car, is not something that I see very clearly in my memory, so --

Q. Right.

A. -- you know, I don't know -- again, maybe that's, you know, some psycho-physiological response I've blocked out what I saw there, or, you know, for all I know, there's something right in front of me that I'm not remembering seeing, or --

Q. I can provide you -- I can provide a little bit of information about that after the interview, so --

A. Okay.

Q. Yeah.

A. I would appreciate that because part of me, you know, is a little bit like, you know, I don't know whether there was more to that, you know. And, I mean, you know, I want to know, of course, but obviously there was not much I could do.

So, I mean, and I guess I should also say that, like, when -- you know, there was a lot of -- there was, like, you know, a lot of cursing. I mean, I don't have to mince words here, right? So there was a lot of F bombs and a lot of like holy shit and a lot of, you know, just extreme exclamation.

Q. Right.

A. But I would say that there wasn't a lot of screaming.

Q. Okay.

A. And I remember thinking, whoa, you know, this is just -- it's surreal, right. So, like, I had just woken up. I didn't really know whether I was dreaming this or -- I mean, it was clearly like just surreal.

At this point I think is when I realized -- oh, so, like the -- again, the white plastic or the -- sort of like the liner, I guess, the siding, if you will?

Q. Yeah.

A. I don't know what it would be called technically, but -- so that being sort of down over the seats. Maybe that's why I don't see in my head like the other side of the train very well, or the -- you know, it also seems like there were things under the rails, but that they were also covered by this white stuff so that like, it -- and I don't know how to say this, but I guess it wasn't terribly messy, you know. I mean, it was messy in the sense that there were things all over the place, but like in terms of, you know --

Q. Yeah.

A. -- I don't have images of, you know, gore splattered all over. I have the very strange sights, you know, that I saw in those -- sort of at the end of the car and something in the middle of the car, but --

Q. Okay.

A. So, and I guess -- I don't know if I said, but the body that was towards the south vestibule --

Q. Yeah?

A. -- clearly it was underneath one of the pieces of steel, or had been -- you know, I don't know if the steel was going through them, but like, you know, there's not movement going on, right? So, we know that people have perished, right? And so at this point I'm starting to, like, gather my senses and realize that like we got to get out of here, you know. It's getting hard to breathe and the smoke -- you know, I have some experience with some chemical smells and things from some types of work that I used to do before, so, like, you know, I know what certain

solvents smell like. Not necessarily burning, but what they -- you know, the fruity and the flavorful things that, you know --

Q. Right.

A. -- PC and things like that'll have. But like this was, you know, a very acrid, a very, you know, plastic, a very, you know, just noxious odor like you knew, you know, this is not

-- you can't live here, so --

Q. Did you smell any --

A. The person --

Q. Did you smell any gasoline?

A. You know, to be honest with you, I was overtaken by like that noxiousness, not necessarily gasoline.

Q. Okay. More --

A. Yeah, so --

Q. -- just more plastic and acrid?

A. Yeah, just -- I mean the acridness was like, you know, stunning. Like I don't think I've ever smelled any -- you know, well, clearly I've never been through this type of thing before, so why would I know what that smells like. But, you know, I've soddered before, right? So we've all kind of like smelled some of those unusual smells or whatever.

Q. Right.

A. But it was really, really intense. And again, like, at this point there's like a haze inside the car that to me is almost like -- it's almost like a mirage haze that you can't -- you know, it doesn't have a lot of opacity to it, but it's just funky. Like you can't really see through at all.

Q. Okay.

A. At this point I realized that the guy who was sitting behind me is kicking at the window that we're sitting next to. And I -- you know, again, I'm not totally awake here. I start -- I just pick up my foot and start kicking at the window too. And then, I realize somebody behind him, you know, basically instructs or yells, no not that one, that one. You know, the one in front of me -- excuse me -- so further back on the train the -- one more window was the emergency exit window.

And when I looked at that window there were already, I don't know, either two or four people -- I mean, there were multiple hands on the handles.

Q. Right.

A. So, you know, I thought to myself, well, you know, I'm not going to help getting in the middle of that mix because they were like prying the handles off, and they were having a little bit of difficulty. And, you know, I kind of was like, you know, we're just going to mess each other up, like, somebody had got to get that open, right? And so my wallet was in my backpack, so I turned to pick my backpack up and also -- you know, when I got on the train, I took my coats off and I'm so basically just in a polo shirt and jeans.

So I reached up to get my coats, and there was no up. And I remember thinking, you know, like, what the fuck, like where did the rack go? And to this day, I don't remember seeing the rack. Like I don't know if it was right next to me. I don't know if it was still on -- up on the wall, but my coats were somehow just on the seat where I had been sitting. So I just --

Q. Okay.

A. -- grabbed them. While I'm grabbing my backpack and my coats, this fellow behind me who had been kicking, you know, kind of hopped over the seat and went out the window. So in that time, like when I turned around, you know, the two or three people had gotten that emergency exit window open and gotten out. And so then he got out, then I got out. And I remember thinking to myself, this is really high. Like, you know, and it was probably,

what, 7 feet from the ground to the bottom of that windowsill. And I remember being kind of surprised at how high up we were.

Q. Can you describe how you -- can you describe physically how you got yourself --

A. Sure.

Q. -- positioned on the window and how you jumped out?

A. Sure. Sure. So, again, this is the part where like I can't figure out where the rack was, if it was still attached above us because I didn't -- so we were standing on the seats, right? No one's really going anywhere near the floor. I stepped onto the seat -- so I stepped over a seat, right, over a seatback onto the seats to be right next to the window. I bent down and threw my things out. I, you know, sort of bent down, I guess -- so now, I'm now still -- I'm facing south and I'm standing on the seats.

And I put my left leg out the window and then my right leg out the window and sort of like put my stomach on the rail, you know, the sill of the window. And then I kind of inched myself and then kind of pushed off, like, you know, you're pushing off into a pool or something. And, again, like I say, I remember thinking, wow, this is -- it was a lot higher than I expected. So when I hit the ground, I actually lost my balance and reached out with my right hand. And so I'm sort of facing forwards now. I'm sort of facing north.

As I'm landing, I'm slipping on the ground, and I put my right hand onto something. And I look over and I think holy shit to myself, like, that's the third rail. Like I've just put my hand on the cover for the third rail for the set adjacent to us. And, you know, I mean, it's like staring a pit viper in the face, right? I just retracted my hand just as quickly as I could --

Q. Right.

A. -- like, I can't believe I didn't just get electrocuted, you know. It's like I've just jumped out of this and -- you know, out of the frying pan into the fire or whatever, so --

Q. Right.

A. So, again, I'm sort of like still trying to process this. Now, the scene outside, I was surprised by how many people were already out, to be honest with you. I mean, so, like, again, I don't know, you know, how many exits were utilized. Like, so I went through one that at least four people, I think, went through, you know?

Q. Okay.

A. But at that point I don't think I could even see that the front door was open from where I was, sort of like the angle I was. I was on the ground now. And I remember thinking, you know, wow, there's like eight people out here already. How the hell did they get out here so fast? And there was a woman --

Q. You said there was about how many people out there?

A. I would say probably eight.

Q. Eight? Okay.

A. I mean, so -- yeah, so I've done the math, you know, a couple times trying to figure some of this out. And there was some -- 4, 5 -- yeah, probably 8 to 10.

Q. Okay. How many people would you, how many people would you guess were in the -- in that front car total?

A. Yeah. Yeah, and I've done that too. So I figure about 2 dozen.

Q. Okay.

A. Maybe a little bit less. I mean, you know, somewhere in that like 18 to 24 range. Because, you know, it's the front car; it's the quiet car. A lot of us go there to sleep. You know, we don't -- you don't expect it to get full, and it really depends on which -- like this isn't my normal train. So I remember -- there are a couple parts to this story -- I don't know how much detail you want me to go into, you know. I'm giving you a lot of detail sort of after, but I mean there are parts that I -- you know, I distinctly remember getting on the -- not my normal train

thinking to myself, you know, well, somebody's already in my seat, right, like the seat -- the last rear facing seat on that side is the seat that I like to take because at Goldens Bridge, which is the stop that I get off, I'm in the overflow lot, which is on the east side of 684. So I've got to go up a set of stairs, over the highway, and back down a set of stairs, like (indiscernible) stairs on each set. And, you know, but that's at the very front of the platform.

Q. Right.

A. So, like, if you get off --

Q. So you like to be at that spot, yeah.

A. Yeah, commuters, you know, we're shaving any minute off of our time that we can, right? So it's already, you know, a 2-hour commute door to door, so I want to make it as short as possible, whatever. So, I mean, you know, long story short, I looked around, you know, and he was in that seat already. If you sit on the two side, you kind of put your backpack down thinking, you know, like, hey, I hope nobody tries to -- you know, if we don't crowded and I get the seat to myself, I can take a nap, right?

Q. Right.

A. But I remember -- so like while I'm taking off my jackets, I throw my backpack down on the seat. And I'm generally facing forward and kind of looking around and seeing who I see. And again, the fellow behind me I think takes the same -- gets off at the same stop as me. I sort of recognized him and recognized maybe one or two others. But I remember thinking, like, wow, I don't recognize -- and I was like, oh yeah, I'm not usually on the 5:44. So this was like a different train for me, so --

Q. Right.

A. But I would say, you know, like on the triples, you know, it's usually somebody in the window and somebody in the aisle, and, you know, if you -- I don't know, just kind of doing the math, I'm up to about, you know, general 20-ish people that I can think of in my head.

Q. Okay.

A. You know, there may have been more.

Q. Yeah.

A. I don't -- you know, the part that I don't remember as clearly, like how many people were in the -- you know, in front of the vestibule, so between the driver and the emergency doors or the exit doors there. I don't remember how many people were there already seated, so --

Q. Okay. No problem.

A. -- I'd be -- I'm guessing that that's where, you know, most of the deceased were sitting, but I don't know that for a fact, right.

Q. Right.

A. So --

Q. Can you describe -- just real quickly describe who you remember like in the seats in front of you and, like on one -- each side of you and across the aisle from you, if they were occupied or not. And like, you know, there was -- like, for example, was there a man or a woman in the seat --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- right in front of you? Or in which seat --

A. Right, right, right.

Q. -- that kind of thing?

A. There's a man -- I think there's a man in the seat right behind me. And that's the fellow that I think I recognized from being actually a Goldens Bridge stopper, you know, and --

Q. And behind you would be forward on the train because you're facing --

A. Yes, correct. Right.

Q. Gotcha. Gotcha.

A. Correct. So he was in like the very last, you know, rear facing seat on that side. So I'm trying to remember -- I think that there was a man -- I think that there was, I think that there was a woman in the seat in front of me. So like the, you know, the double rear facing, I think.

Q. Okay.

A. There was somebody -- but I think she was like a late arrival. Like I think I was already seated when she kind of came in and sat down. And, you know, I think she was like on the shorter side. When I was taking my coats off, there was a woman who came in with dark black curly hair, I remember, you know, because I didn't see her face, right. So she kind of like walked past me, and she took a seat in the aisle of the very middle -- you know, the first set of front facing triples.

Q. Okay.

A. You know, so it would have been like my immediate, like, front left. You know, I could have almost reached out. So she was there, and there was somebody already in the window of that seat; I think it was a man. And I just think that there was a man seated at the window of the triple, like my row.

Q. Okay. Across from -- across the aisle?

A. Yeah, across the aisle, like, all the way the opposite side of the train, but I don't think there was anyone in the aisle seat on that triple.

Q. Okay.

A. And I'm not -- you know, I think there were at least one or two people somewhere between there and the bathroom. There's like, you know, there's another set of facing triples on the -- like, right at the bathroom there. I think there was at least one person there, and I think there was one person sort of between my row and that row, so -- but, you know, I'm having trouble --

Q. Okay.

A. -- kind of placing the exact --

Q. That's fine.

A. -- spots.

Q. Yeah, that just helps us. I mean, we're talking to the different passengers and kind of getting what they remember, and we'll kind piece together based on all the interviews, you know, where we -- you know, we'll get a good idea of where people were seated, so --

A. Right. No, I appreciate that. Right. So, you know, I'm trying to give you as much detail as I can. But let me know if I'm giving you too much detail. I don't know.

Q. No, that's okay. Okay. So then --

A. Okay.

Q. So you got outside and then what happened?

A. So, I'm outside, so I'm outside and I had put my hand on the third rail cover, you know, kind of scared the crap out of myself figuring like, you know, I'm not dead yet; how did I just, you know, survive electrocution? And, you know, again, like I said, I think on my way out I was thinking, oh holy crap, there's like four people dead, right? So somewhere I was thinking, you know, it's three to five or whatever based on, you know, the sum of the parts that I was seeing that, you know, there had been fatalities, right.

There were people -- you know, again, there were people cursing and things, but no one was really screaming help, you know, as if they were like trapped or pinned or anything. So I've taken my hand off the third rail cover, and there's a woman, you know, white down, you know, puffy jacket, blonde curly hair, who is screaming I need another belt. And I remember

thinking, you know, another belt? Like, like, what do you mean another? You know, like, and I -- I don't even have a belt on because I didn't even need to wear a belt (indiscernible).

So I'm thinking, like, I'm about to rip off -- so I think I put on my coat, and so I think I'm about to rip off my coat so she can use it. And another passenger who was wearing, I guess, like a suit, and he had like a white, you know, button-down shirt on, he rips off his belt and hands it to her. And she's tourniqueting --- left leg. His right leg has already been tourniqueted. He's wrapped up in down coats and like jackets, and all bundled. So, like, to be honest with you, I don't even know if he had his arms on. You know, he's -- she's working him sort of medically, you know, really just trying to take care of him. And the, you know, the most memorable thing about Joe is that his feet aren't attached, so --

Q. Now, did you know -- did you get his name from news reports and stuff, or did you know him prior?

A. Oh, no, no. I did not know him prior and I did not get his name from news reports. I got his name from talking to him.

Q. Okay.

A. So, we -- so, she, you know, started to work on him, and I thought to myself, like, how the hell did he get out here? Like, how, you know -- at this point, like, I don't think anybody's been thrown from the train, like, we didn't stop -- you know, I thought there'd be much more injury, like -- because there's like two or three people out, you know, who are on the phone. I think at this -- you know, somewhere in here I've yelled, like, has anybody called 9-1-1? And, you know, a bunch of people have said yes.

Some people are on the phone just kind of like in shock and describing the scene. Somebody said an SUV was on fire. And so, like, at this point, you know, I look up. --- is not far from -- like, I think he's in that second set of tracks, right, the east set of tracks, and he is not far from the exit door.

Q. Okay.

A. But his head is pointed south, and he's on his back. His head is south, his feet are -- you know, his legs are pointed north, and she is putting the tourniquet on, and, you know, somebody says it's an SUV on fire. And then, I look up and there's three other guys that are closer to the front of the train even than that, and I'm thinking, you know -- but they're all the way on the side. Like, they're a little bit more sort of south -- excuse me -- northeast, if you will, in my picture in my head.

And they -- you know, the one guy is injured and two guys are carrying him. One man has -- it's like underneath his armpits, his shoulders, and the other individual is under his right leg, and sort of his lower back. And they're walking with him, like moving him back south along the tracks. Somebody yells that it's an SUV. And, you know, after I've just been -- I was yelling about like the third rail and electrical safety or whatever because I work for ConEd and I was mentioning, you know, like I just put my hand on that, like, I can't believe -- you know, so we all got to watch out for this.

When somebody said that it was an SUV that was on fire, I think it was like, you know, holy crap, it's going to blow, you know, we need to start moving. But at some point in here -- so I saw that when she -- this woman is working on --- who was lying on the ground, and the other guy's being carried. I turned my attention back to the exit because there were people still making their way towards the window that I just came out of.

So, I took, you know, two ladies' handbags and sort of threw them and turned back around, and the guy I think that took off his belt and I kind of acted to help get those -- lower those people to the ground. Because like I said, I think one of the women was much shorter, and it was like, you know, it was a pretty big drop or whatever for her to come out the window.

Q. So you helped a couple ladies --

A. So, I think we helped --

Q. -- get out? Yeah.

A. Yeah, so I think we helped like, you know, like lower them to the ground basically, right? I mean, it wasn't pretty. You know, it wasn't like a planned list or anything and, you know, we just -- we got them out. But, you know, I thought to myself, like, you know, I hope that no one's stuck in there because I don't know if I could even get back into the car because it's so high up. And at this point, like, I didn't even realize the doors were open, you know.

Q. Okay.

A. So at this point, also, which I thought was unusual, that the lights were still on inside the train, right? So, like, we're helping people down and it's not like they're coming down from the dark. They were coming down out of the light now. There's -- you know, the fire and the smoke probably is building inside the car. I don't remember that -- all those, you know, minor details, but there was definitely that haze, you know, and that smell, right.

So we get probably three or four people down out of that window, and we get them over the third rail, you know, like over the set of tracks. And then, we all started talking, you know, like the car's going to blow, we got to move. And so, about six of us, probably, maybe four to six of us -- I would say five or six, pick Joe up, and someone had his boots, you know, on his feet, and we carried him, you know, back to probably the middle of the second car. I mean, I -- you know, I don't know, I think it's somewhere in the neighborhood of 50 to 65 feet, or whatever.

We tried. Well, we tried. Maybe we didn't make it that far, but we knew we got him back away from the first car. And on the way past, I noticed that the south set of exit doors were partially open. They weren't fully opened, and I saw the shoes, you know, confirmed sort of that there was a body there in that neighborhood that I had seen from the inside, right. So I didn't necessarily see it in more detail. I just was, you know, reminded --

Q. Can you tell me what --

A. -- of what I saw.

Q. So just to be clear, which door -- so that was on the -- that was the east side of the train on the rear door of the --

A. Yep.

Q. -- front car?

A. Yep, correct.

Q. Okay.

A. And it was not fully open, so it was open toward -- I guess it was opening towards the back of the train. So, like, the door -- I mean, I think, you know, the pictures -- it's definitely the way I saw on the news the next day, you know, like the door was partially open.

Q. Okay.

A. You know, probably, whatever, 60 percent open, right. It was more than halfway, but it was not fully open. But, I mean, to me it was just -- at that point it was confirmation that, again, I saw something and I saw something long in there, but I don't think I could have made out whether it was, you know, a rail or it was just a large object. I mean, I saw the shoes that I saw inside.

And after we put Joe down on the ground, and, you know, we're kind of -- I mean, he was conscious and he was talking. And so, we were trying to keep him talking thinking, you know, if we - if he stops talking, we're going to lose him. I turned and went back for the guys, the two guys that were carrying the other individual, and I made a mistake. I mean, I ran up, and

he's being carried so that he's facing north, you know, and everybody's kind of looking at things as they walk away from it. And then, somewhere in here the car did explode, like there was a large explosion, and then there was a smaller explosion sometime later.

But I made the mistake -- you know, I'm trying to help out, and I grabbed sort of under his left hamstring, you know, like his left thigh, and sort of under his -- in his rear. And I tried to pick him up, and he starts screaming in pain because I didn't realize it, but like, you know, from below his knee on his left leg was, you know, a meat grinder. It was pretty well mangled and stuff. I mean --

Q. Right.

A. -- you know, things appeared to be attached, but it wasn't pretty. And, you know, it was dark, so it's hard to see any of that stuff. And to be honest, you know, I just came running up thinking I could help carry the guy because the other two guys looked like they were struggling to carry him, so --

Q. Right. Okay.

A. You know, I apologized to him. You know, he strong-armed -- you know, he put his arm out straight and then -- and I held up against his arm so we could move him further. So I think we actually got him further back than we did the other guy.

Q. Okay.

A. I never got the leg injury fellow's name, but I went back to help the woman with --. And at that point, I think she's got him on the phone -- or she got his wife on the phone, right. Like she got his cell phone number out of it, and dialed it, and she's holding the phone up to him, and, you know, there's four of us standing there and trying to figure out, like, how do we -- what do we do next with him? And trying to keep him warm and whatever and conscious, and, you know, he was talking about, you know, they tell me I'm going to be fine, you know, yes, I've been in an accident. I mean, he was incredibly coherent, you know. So, it was like --

Q. Right.

A. -- again, the whole thing is surreal, right, because you're like -- you expect him to be just in complete shock and pain, and he's not, you know. He's just --

Q. Um-hum.

A. -- he's (indiscernible) or whatever. So then, he gets off the phone, and we start -- we continue talking to him. And he told me about his son, his daughter, excuse me. You know, and I have a nd ---year-old daughter, so, you know, we were kind of talking. And at some point I think I looked back and the entire train car is engulfed in flames, and, I mean, you know, not to be, like, dramatic about it, but it was like -- it was just unbelievably quiet and serene, you know, and like just eerie.

The whole -- you know, I mean, death, destruction, carnage, whatever, and then the fact that you just have flames flying out of this train car, out of every window of the train car and, you know, there's like 8 or 10 of us standing there, like, you know, in complete shock and disbelief.

Q. Okay.

A. The fellow with the leg injury, when we put him down on the ground, he's -- you know, he never really screamed. He just continued to kind of like grunt (makes sound), you know, like lots of expressions and things. But, you know --

Q. Okay. And then --

A. So once --

Q. So then what did you guys do? How did you get off -- or what happened next?

A. Yeah. So somewhere in there, I think I mentioned that the car blew up like sort of a second time, but a much smaller explosion. Like the first one was definitely a big explosion

and, you know, things flew. And the second one was sort of like a, you know, just like an extra explosion or whatever, but --

Q. Okay.

A. So the train car's on fire, and I mean, you know, this is all probably 14 minutes, and I think, you know, it felt like 14 years of my life, right?

Q. Right.

A. So, it -- I just remember thinking like where's the help? You know, like, how -- I mean, you know, I think I asked somebody again if everyone's -- I mean, actually, you know, somewhere when I first got out, when we asked if someone called 9-1-1 and they said yes, I think the questions were starting to be like, you know, where the hell are we? Like, we needed to know where there's no indication in the dark. There wasn't really any traffic on the road at all next to us, you know, because, I guess, the earlier accident it was shut down. And, you know, it was just unbelievably quiet. And I remember thinking, you know, when is the help going to get here, and, like, what are we going to do?

Q. Okay.

A. How are we going to get through this? I think there was an -- there were two individuals before like medical first response, I would say. One person struck me as a bit odd. He was kind of dressed in like plain street clothes. He had jeans on and a brown leather jacket, dark hair, and he was walking up the tracks in the middle of the second set of tracks and yelling at everyone to stay away from the third rail. And we're like we know, we know. And he kind of -- when he got to the front car was kind of like taking in the scene and seemed to be like trying to survey, like, get his mind around what was going on, right? So, I don't know who he was or what his role was in anything.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. But he was definitely trying to direct, you know, some safety away from the third rail. And then the second individual that came along was wearing like a -- I think it was like a yellow -- you know, had a hardhat on, a light -- you know, like a utility type worker. I work at ConEd, so it looked like one of our guys only he had a different hardhat on. And he was walking briskly up those rails as well, but sort of -- I think he's like -- it seemed like his job would be to confirm that the third rail was not live --

Q. Right.

A. -- you know, or something. But I don't think they -- you know, it was, again, like I think when they got to the front car it was like, oh. Like, it was not, you know, anything they were really anticipating seeing. And, you know, at that point I think right around then or shortly after that, a young first responder showed up with maybe like his go-bag. He didn't have many supplies at all. I mean, he looked like, you know, I'm sure like we looked like. He was in just complete shock at what he was seeing and like -- I mean, he saw that -- this woman that was working with -- and I don't even know -- last name or where he lives, you know. And so, like to this day -- you know, I'm hoping maybe at the end of this you can tell me that he's -- you know, he's probably still in the hospital, given the extent of his injuries. I hope he's not, you know -- they're not life threatening, but they're certainly life altering.

Q. Right.

A. He -- you know, I think this first responder kind of looked at this woman and the three of us, like, over by --- and thought like we kind of had that situation under control. I remember yelling at him like do you have a space blanket, you know, or something, because --- was starting to complain about being cold, you know, so I'm sure he was going further into shock or whatever. And he was just -- like he had nothing, almost nothing with him, and he kind of like -- he turned and went to address the fellow with the cut leg --

Q. Yeah.

A. -- at the same time that another responder arrived with a neck brace and a backboard. And this wasn't FDNY. These are like EMS guys, right? Like, so they have like blue, navy blue vests on or down vests on. And he kind of threw me for a loop because his first questions were where are the limbs? And, you know, part of me was like, you know, shut up because I don't think he knows that he doesn't have them all attached. And the second part of me was like, you know, I don't -- I can't answer you. I was like I don't know, you know, because to me, I didn't know what was underneath the blanket.

Q. Right.

A. So I don't know whether his arms were also missing, you know, and he -- you know, or whether he's just -- he was bundled up. So long story short -- you know, this isn't short at all, but the -- when the lights started to arrive -- so, like, those were the first two guys there. And then at some point, you know, FD arrived and by a boom or whatever got lights on everything and they started extinguishing the car fire from -- across from on the road side, you know, sweeping all the way across.

And so while the fire is being put out, I mean, just an army of fire departments showed up with headlamps and flashlights and everything. And when they showed up, you know, it was like -- it cut through the whole serenity and the surrealness of the scene, and it was like stark reality. And, you know, I now could see some of the things I hadn't really made out that well in the dark, you know. And so, like I started to -- you know, I started to think of myself as not really being helpful anymore at that point too, right? Because it was like, oh, the professionals are here, so help has finally arrived. I don't know what to do, but, like, I got to get out of here because I couldn't stand the smell of the smoke any longer, you know?

Q. Right.

A. I've been breathing this. It's in my nose. My lungs hurt me -- and I wanted to get out of there. And so, I literally walked away. I mean, I walked back along the train -- so I'm east of -- I'm between the brook and the east set of the tracks, you know --

Q. Right.

A. -- and in probably like knee-deep snow, and I just kind of trudge my way back. And I remember trying to throw up, trying to vomit, because thinking like I would rather smell, you know, whatever is in my stomach than to smell and taste this that's in my mouth and my nose right now, but I couldn't get sick. And I also remember looking at -- you know, in the -- I mean, maybe not the second car, but by like the third or the fourth car, you know, the lights are on, people are just packed in there and they're on their way out. But they're looking at it, and I'm thinking to myself, like they don't have any idea what just happened, you know, two cars ahead of them.

Q. Right.

A. I mean, honestly thinking to myself, like, holy shit, if I were in a different part of this train, I would have just been inconvenienced on my way home.

Q. Right.

A. You know?

Q. Right.

A. And that's not, not the experience that I had, you know, at all. And it was, like, I also --

Q. Exactly.

A. -- started to --

Q. Right.

A. I also started to wonder, like, how is this possible that I don't have a scratch on me? So, I start freaking out a little bit, like, what if I'm actually -- you know, broken bones and things and like I don't even know it, you know, because the adrenalin has not really worn off yet.

So when I got back to the crossing, I can hear the announcer on the train, something about there being -- you know, we've been in an accident and there were two trains on -- two cars on the tracks. And at the point I think, you know, there was a thought that there was more than one. And then, you know, please proceed in an orderly fashion. Everyone will be, you know, evacuated. And, you know, I'm thinking like this is just unbelievable, like, what's going on here compared to what's going on, you know, 120 feet away or whatever.

Or it turns out to be more like 400 feet, but -- I asked the fireman, the first fireman I came to who wasn't like rushing towards the fire -- you know, at this point the fire's out, I think, by the time I make it back this way. I said, do I look all right? You know, do I have anything sticking out of me? Like, and I'm waiting for him to tell me, like, there's a shard of metal in me or something, you know, because I can't believe that I'm like untouched.

Q. Right.

A. And he said, you look fine, and if you'd like to go to the hospital to be checked out, you know, you can have a seat in this ambulance right here and we'll take you to the hospital. I looked, there were probably three people sitting on the bench in that ambulance, one of which had like arm bandages on. And I remember thinking to myself, well, that's funny. I don't remember seeing anyone with any arm injuries, right?

So, like, that part didn't make sense. And then I was like, no, no, I just -- I didn't want to smell the smell any more. I didn't want to deal with, you know, the lights and everything, and I was like, no, I just want to get out of here. So, I'm like where do we go? And he directed me, and I was going across the street with everyone else.

But, you know, all cards on the table here, being honest, you know, I had a couple of episodes, I'll call them, or whatever, on my way across the street even, you know, breaking down sort of in the middle of the street and kind of losing my mind. And I remember thinking, like, these people are looking at me like I'm nuts and like am I really -- you know, did I really just go through what I think I just went through. Made it to the gym. Saw the fellow with the white shirt who had taken off his belt.

Q. Yeah.

A. He had some blood on his shirt and, you know, not his own, right? So from, you know, wiping his hands or something on -- but I asked him if he knew what happened to Joe, and he said that, you know, that guy is a fighter, Joe is a trooper, he's going to make it. And he was going out of the bathroom while I was going in to sort of like, you know, splash some water on my face or whatever. But the gym was just -- I mean, it was full of those people who were like, like I said, kind of like inconvenienced on their way home, and I was like this is just too much. I can't -- it was -- you know, it's too hot, and I wanted to get out. I couldn't -- when I got outside, I smell a lot of smoke and things. You know, to put the period on the end of the story, it turns out that a friend, a family friend of ours was on like the last car of the train, and his wife was going to come and get him from Hawthorne. I asked if they'd given him any information. I called him when I was outside the gym, and it turns out he was just walking up the hill towards me. So I don't know if he was on the -- I think he was on the second to last car, not the last car, but --

Q. Um-hum.

A. I can find that out for you, if you want. But I remember thinking how did I get over here before him, you know?

Q. Right.

A. It was kind of odd. If he's in -- if he's that far back in the train and they just started getting people out of the train, like, wow. No one in the gym really had any information for us. I told him I didn't want to be anywhere near the smell, I wanted to go home. I needed to get out of there. So we walked down the driveway of the gym there, and there was a woman

who seemed to have, like, knowledge of what was going on. She wasn't wearing anything official or anything, other than she was kind of speaking with authority.

And I asked her, you know, what was the plan? What was next? And she said the county has been notified, you know, buses are on the way. They'd probably be there in about 3 to 4 hours. You know, at which point I just said, like, yeah, no, I'm not going to stay here for -- I mean, I couldn't stand the smell. I mean, whether the wind was actually blowing the smoke directly across the road at us or not, that was what it felt like. You know what I mean? Like I just smelled it everywhere and I wanted to get away.

And -----, my buddy was like, you know, ----- is going come -- my wife's going to come meet us at Hawthorne, if you want to walk. I'm like, well, how far is it? You know, it's three-quarters of a mile or something like that. I'm like, yeah, I'd rather walk. I've got to keep, you know, moving. And at this point I'm starting to get cold because I think, you know, I've been sweating with the adrenalin and now I'm in the snow or whatnot.

But the funny part was there was a woman who asked if she could walk with us, and she turned out to be a former 9-1-1 dispatcher in Philadelphia or something. So I started to tell, like, some of the things that I -- you know, I didn't go through the whole story from start to finish. But I definitely broke down sort of a couple times on that walk, and I remember thinking, like, holy crap, how many helicopters are there? Because there were like, you know, what seemed to be like three or four helicopters on the scene.

But the part -- you know, like I didn't know if I was supposed to walk away or not. And I guess the part that you're trying to get to in terms of, you know, like a plan or what is the response to the thing, like, I don't know, I mean, it just seemed like no one knew anything, you know?

Q. Right. Okay.

A. And I mean, so the part -- you know, I mean, whatever. I'm not trying to make this a therapy session, but for me it was a bit surreal because I remember seeing more than one rail in the car. And the first report on the news and everything was that there was a rail in the car, right? So I started to like totally question a lot of the things that I had seen.

Q. Right.

A. And then it came out that, you know, there were like 15 sections or whatever the facts are. I mean, you guys know better than me, but, you know -- and it's like just astounding to me that there was not -- I mean, like, I -- you talk about survivability, I don't know. I mean, I don't know how -- you know, I mean, I get it sort of -- I could probably say this. I'm geologist by trade or whatever, so, like, I get the physics of the situation. If the track, you know, came up at an angle and the connectors between the third rails weren't strong enough to hold their own weight, they collapsed and fell into the car. But for that to happen 15 times and basically just fall in on top of each other, you know what I mean? It's like --

Q. Right. Well, let me just finish -- let me just make sure I understand what happened to you, and then we can talk about that. So --

A. Okay.

Q. So you got a ride home with your -- you got a ride home with your friend whose wife picked him up, right?

A. Yep.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah, so -- yeah, so I made it home and then, you know, immediately had -- I mean, I knew that I needed to see somebody. So, I think, you know, I made a -- whatever. My wife, you know, started -- we started making plans. I went to my doctor the next day. You

know, basically, he prescribed some physical therapy for like a whiplash injury. You know, he didn't see any acute anything just, you know, an incredible soreness in my neck and on my upper back, shoulders type muscles. And started seeing, you know, someone who had like 37 years of PTSD working with the VA and (indiscernible) things. So this guy has been, you know, I mean my lifeline, right, is --

Q. Right.

A. -- being able to undo all that crap, so --

Q. Okay.

A. You know, I think strangely enough, I mean, you know, to put the period on this sentence, again, is like I drove myself home. So I remember them saying like do you want us to take you to your house or to your car at Goldens Bridge? And I was just like -- to be honest with you, I think it was one of those things where I just wanted to get like all of me home.

Q. Right.

A. And, like, everything home. So, like, I actually asked them to drop me off at my car, which was probably -- you know, in hindsight, I don't know what I was thinking, right? But, like --

Q. Right. It's understandable.

A. -- to drive myself. And, you know, again, so like then as the facts came out, it was sort of like I felt like, okay, this actually did happen. I actually sort of felt a little vindicated or whatever you'd say, like, you know.

Q. Right.

A. I mean, the weird part about this is there's no passenger list, right? There's no seating chart. There's no -- they didn't know who was in which seat. They don't know, you know -- then you don't know these things. And, you know, so it's kind of -- like the whole thing is just surreal. I mean, it's hard --

Q. Right.

A. -- to put it together.

Q. Okay. Well, that's a good account. I appreciate, I appreciate the detail and everything. It sounds like you remember a lot.

INTERVIEWER 2, do you have any questions that you want to ask?

BY INTERVIEWER 2:

Q. Yeah, CAR 1 PASS 12, I'm just trying to get a clearer understanding of exactly where you were in the car.

A. Um-hum.

Q. You had mentioned that -- and you're familiar with the cars. You know that there's the split in the center and there's forward facing and rear facing.

A. Um-hum.

Q. Now, you said that you were on the right-hand side of the car, on the east side of the car.

A. Yep.

Q. And you normally sit where it splits, but --

A. That's right.

Q. -- not this day. On this day -- how many rows from the split --

A. Oh, just one.

Q. -- south?

A. Just one row from the split. So my normal seat is that last rear facing -- you know, as you're walk forward in the train, the very last middle seat, right, that's my normal spot. And since this -- there was a fellow in that seat, I took the one right in front of him, so the one further south.

Q. Okay.

A. So, and I can -- I mean, so there's a picture -- and I think I got off like lohud.com or something. There's an aerial picture with the helicopter that -- I mean, I guess I can e-mail it to you -- that I was (indiscernible) -- there's a melted out window, right? So there's a car number 4333 on the side of the car, about the middle of the car. It seems to me that that melted window just south of that, like, right next to the number 4 is right about where I was sitting, right? Or that was the seat that I was sitting in, and the one -- the window just south of that is the exit window.

And the reason why I know it is because I see my orange water bottle on the grass next to the third rail in the photo. So, I lost, you know, a jacket -- I had three jackets. I only came home with two. One of them I never got out of the train. And then, I -- or maybe I added to the collection that was bundled on ---. I really don't remember that part, but -- and this water bottle. You know, and I was kind of joking with my wife, like, maybe before they move everything I should go back and ask for the water bottle back, but obviously that's replaceable.

Q. When you stood up and you were looking around, and you were very detailed about what you had saw, did you see anyone on the floor or looked like they were fatally injured behind you? You know, as you were facing --

A. Yes.

Q. -- as you were facing south.

A. Yes.

Q. Anyone north of you?

A. Yes. So that's where I saw the torso that I'm describing where -- you know, like to be honest with you, in my mind I don't remember anything from the waist down. So that's where I saw the torso sort of just up -- and when I say up ended, right, so like the shoulders are on the floor of the train, the arms sort of out to its side, and the backs of its hands are -- his, right, because we know they were all males. So the backs of his hands sort of against the floor, and I don't remember where the legs were positioned. But this is the sweater vest that I was describing, and also like --

Q. Like where would that be in relation to the split in the car?

A. To the -- I'm sorry, to the what in the car?

Q. The split, between the facing -- front facing and rear facing?

A. Way towards the front. So, like to me, I'm picturing that towards the vestibule, or like -- or in the vestibule, you know, that area. Or maybe it was in the seats that face each other near the vestibule. But north, far north of where I was sitting. I mean, and this is the part, maybe, you're going to tell me that that was not that far away from me. But, you know, I don't --

Q. Yeah. No, you know, I mean, it's a difficult situation just to remember, and it's so chaotic, you know, just to get a glimmer of everything and to remember it.

A. Right. Right. But that was definitely north of me, so I didn't see that until I turned north.

Q. Gotcha.

A. And the other individual had like the rail on their back. And, really, again, there all I could see is sort of the lower half because they were lying prone, but facing away from me. And so, I kind of saw the pants, you know, down to the shoes, and the rail either on top of them or through, you know, through -- I don't know if it was through them or not. I honestly don't know, but on them at least, you know.

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay.

BY INTERVIEWER 2:

Q. And you went south to go out the window, right?

A. Yes, I went one window south of me. So, like, I went over one set of seats to get out that window.

Q. Gotcha. Okay. Gotcha. Okay. Thank you very much.

INTERVIEWER 1: Okay. I don't think I have any other questions at this time. I'm going to turn off the recording.

CAR 1 PASS 12: Okay.

INTERVIEWER 1: And just to clarify, so this is the interview with CAR 1 PASS 12 on the 12th of February. Okay. Ending the interview now.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK
FEBRUARY 3, 2015
Telephonic Interview of CAR 1 PASS 12

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-MR-006

PLACE: Valhalla, New York

DATE: February 12, 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.

Transcriber

Third Train Car Passenger 1 February 6, 2015

The train passenger seated in the first train car provided a written statement by email on February 6, 2015.

From: CAR 3 PASS 1
Date: Fri, Feb 6, 2015 at 1:49 PM
Subject: 5:44 MTA crash CAR 3 PASS 1 recount
To: "witness@ntsb.com" <witness@ntsb.com>
This is to the best of my recollection.

I was on the 5:44 train that crashed Tuesday. My name is CAR 3 PASS 1. I am a 51 year old Bedford resident. I live at -----. I was sitting in the front of the 3rd car when the train struck the car. I heard a loud CRACK and then the train stopped about 15 seconds later. I knew we hit a car. My first thought was that it's a crime scene and we will be there for a long time. About a year ago I was on the train that hit a person standing on the tracks on the way into work, from Bed Hills to GCT and we were delayed about 2 hours. So I assumed it would take as long if not more to get us off the train. You could smell gas and smoke immediately. I then waited for an announcement. About 60 seconds later it was announced that we hit a car. About 30 seconds after that, passengers from the 2nd car started entering our 3rd car. A man or 2 were yelling to "keep moving back, the train is on fire, move back, get moving, there's a fire, the car is filling up with smoke". He also said that the train was going to explode. I was sitting on the right side of the car and someone reached over me and took out the window. The woman sitting next to me started to get nervous. I told her that we would be ok and that electric trains do not explode. After most of the passengers from the 2nd car headed back through the 3rd car, I told the woman next to me to walk to the back of the train and that I was going to the front to see if anyone needed help. I then started to walk towards the front of the train through the 2nd car. The 2nd car was empty and there was no smoke in the 2nd car at that time. A woman told me there's no way to get out at that end and the door to the 1st car wouldn't open so I turned around and helped a woman off the rear of the 2nd car on the cemetery side of the train. My only concern was about the 3rd rail. We exited through the door at the back of the 2nd car. I told her to walk to the back of the train through the cemetery. I didn't know her nor did I see her again. I then walked to the front of the train (cemetery side) alongside of the 2nd car to see if someone needed help. I assumed there would be passengers in the 1st car trying to get out on this side through a window or a doorway of the train like we did in the 2nd car. I was thinking I might have to catch them if they jumped or help them climb down from the windows.

As I walked along the 2nd and 1st cars I heard someone say that people were hurt up in the cemetery. I ran up through the ditch and up the hill where I found 2 people that were hurt. I have no idea how they got that far from the train nor do I know if anyone helped them get there. PERSON 1 from Bedford was laying on his back in the snow with a broken left leg and PERSON 2 from Mahopac was sitting next to him complaining of her ribs and her head. Then another man came up to us and asked what was going on. I asked him if he was a Dr. or a nurse. He said no that he was an EMT helper at one point. I said you stay here, you know what you are doing I'm going for help. I then ran to the front of the train and started waving my arms and yelling to the firemen across the tracks up on the highway. I was worried about the 3rd rail and the car exploding because it was 100% on fire. After 10 seconds no one was noticing me and I assumed they couldn't see me up on the hill, I then saw and heard the car explode in a fire burst.

I thought, I have to get closer for someone to see me. I also knew that the car wasn't going to explode again, so I ran down to tracks in front of the burning car. I was standing on the tracks about 20 feet from the front of the burning car then I heard more loud cracks, like gun fire or mini explosions. I figured they were windows blowing out. A fireman then noticed me and I screamed we needed some help back here. He asked what were the injuries and where were they. I said a broken leg and broken ribs in the cemetery. I think the entire 1st car was smoke filled and or in flames by then.

I then ran back to help PERSON 1 and PERSON 2. A fireman called ----, I think, arrived and he took charge. He was AMAZING. He asked PERSON 1 if he was hurt anywhere else except his leg. Injured PERSON 1 said no. He asked PERSON 2 what hurt on a scale of 1-10 and where. She said 5 and her ribs and head. He asked if it hurt to take a deep breath and she said yes. He told her to calm down and take small breaths. I asked him what I should do and he said to stay here with PERSON 2 and try and calm her down. He then got on the radio and was telling someone not to spray us with water. We were on the other side of the train. Jamie was with injured PERSON 1 talking to him. Injured PERSON 1 was very calm the entire time and kept saying I'm ok but there are people in the 1st car that are not, at least I'm alive. Injured PERSON 1 was lying in the snow and we put a jacket on him to keep him warm. I gave him my gloves and hat to wear. PERSON 2 kept saying the rail came up through the car, over and over. I couldn't believe that was true and just thought it was something else. PERSON 1 said a seat broke his leg. PERSON 1 called his wife a second time to tell her he was ok. I put my arm around PERSON 2 and calmed her down the best I could. We did a lot of yoga breathing in and out, while telling her she was going to be fine. She was out of the train and was going to be OK.. I had her call her husband again with the hopes it would help her to calm down. she finally calmed down after speaking to her husband the second time. She told me her husband is a cop. I had her put her gloves on and then a Spanish man gave her his jacket to wear.

Fireman then ran back to get help. While he was gone, the 1st car had a lot of smoke shooting out past our position. I was worried that if the 2nd car was going to burn that we were going to be overcome with deadly smoke. I asked if we should move them away from the smoke and ---- said it was steam, not smoke. We decide to stay put. Fireman came back to us and he was radioing to get 2 baskets back here. Then about 4 other firemen arrived with one basket. PERSON 1 asked "where is the 2nd basket"? The fireman said we only have this one. PERSON 1 said to load PERSON 2 up first she may have internal injuries, she's the priority. PERSON 1 was not life threatening. He said load her up and hurry back. When they took out the flat-board PERSON 1 said "wait, put PERSON 2 in the basket and we will strap PERSON 1 to the board. I helped PERSON 2 in the basket and gave her, her purse. They strapped PERSON 1 to the board

Third Train Car Passenger 2

The passenger on the third train car emailed her statement to the NTSB on February 9, 2015.

Thank you so much for taking the time to address this issue. I'm sure you've gotten an earful on the Metro North disaster on Tuesday from concerned constituents. I was on the train Tuesday evening. It was a very horrific experience. Those poor people.

I have been a commuter from North Salem / Purdy's station for over 25 years and the service and travel time have gotten progressively worse. I am generally late for work at least 2-3 mornings a week due to delays.

Until recently, the 5:44 pm has been my regular train. I've just accepted a full time position at Estee Lauder and as a result my travel time fluctuates. I happened to have been on the 5:44 on Tuesday evening. I always sit in the same seat – at the rear of the 3rd car as it lets you out close to the stairway at Purdy's.

The train was going at a normal speed and about 6:20 it stopped abruptly – lurched forward and stopped again. The power shut off – other than the lights -which remained on. I commented to the gentleman sitting next to me “that doesn't sound good.”

Within 5 minutes an announcement was made that we had hit a car and we were told to remain in our seats. Having been on a train in the past that had hit a car – I made nothing of it. Usually we are delayed for a period time while the accident is attended to and then the train is backed up to the closest station and we get on a replacement train. I called my husband and told him that I would be late. Everyone was perfectly calm – as I said – this has happened before.

Several minutes later a conductor / or officer (not sure) came through the car asking if there were any injuries. He seemed pretty uptight and I thought it was odd given that the train didn't stop with the type of impact that would have caused an injury. Again we sat for a period of time and then passengers from the car ahead of us started coming through the aisles telling us to move back in the train. They did not seem particularly stressed so we waited and finally the people in my vicinity got up and we calmly moved back.

When we reached to the back of the 6th car, I saw a friend I hadn't seen in a while and sat with her. Everyone was still calm and making normal conversation. We discussed our jobs and the Super Bowl – again totally unaware of what was happening in the front of the train. I called my husband and said I didn't know what was going on but would keep him posted.

Obviously we could see that there were lots of fire trucks and police units but it seemed perfectly normal given the train had hit a car.

Eventually we heard voices on the left side of the train (if you were facing forward) telling us to get off the train. Someone said it was a bunch of punk kids. One guy opened the car door facing the southbound tracks and a fireman quickly told him to shut the door and stay inside.

A few minutes later, someone (a passenger?) said we need to evacuate the train – we still had no idea what was going on - and they opened the door near where we were sitting on the side of the tracks where the voices were coming from. It was determined that the ledge there was too

narrow to jump so they closed the door and the door at the front of the car was opened. Someone instructed us to walk to that door and jump. It was about a 5 or 6 foot drop at that point. Two men – who I assumed were first responders – assured us they would catch us and so one by one the entire car jumped into their arms. I later learned they were passengers who evacuated the car.

After we jumped – we could see billowing smoke from the front of the train and assumed the car was on fire. The snow was pretty deep and we made our way single file along the side of the train. The path was quite narrow and dropped off into the river below. It had become icy with all the foot traffic and we were leaning towards the train so as not to slip. It's a miracle that someone didn't fall into the river below us. Everyone was still calm. We walked south just past the end of the train to the next intersection (almost a mile?) – walked across the tracks – again guided by other passengers and then began to walk north. Still no emergency responders!

It was then we could see that the train was on fire and heard an explosion. A few hundred people gathered in what seemed like a parking lot – although I am not sure where we were exactly. There was no one in an official capacity checking to see if everyone was okay or providing any information or helping us figure out what to do.

I started talking to a guy who told me he was in the second car and that the third rail had gone through the car floor and there were casualties. He said that he and some other passengers tried to open the door to help rescue people and at first they couldn't get it open and when they did open it – it was too late. The fire had consumed the car – he did say – he would never forget what he saw.

Pretty soon 2 women started talking to the group and they said they were from the rocking climbing gym just above us and that people should come up to stay warm and use the bathrooms.

Other passengers said they were going to walk north to Hawthorne train station as it would be easier to be picked up. My friend, another young women and I joined them and we walked almost 2 miles. I heard someone say there was a bar named Gordo's just past the train station – he was giving someone on his cell the address so I called my husband and told him to pick us up there. He was able to reach us by 9:00.

We really must do something about this rail system. It's a disgrace that in the New York metropolitan area the primary commuter railroad is so archaic and dangerous. And while the fire and police were justifiably focused on the horror in the front of the train, the remainder of the train was uninformed, unattended to and self-evacuated. There was no plan on Metro North's end and fortunately there were no additional injuries.

In addition, my husband and I had dinner with some friends who are members of the Croton Falls (North Salem) fire department. They told us – that first responders are given no training in train accidents – despite the fact that many communities are in such close proximity to the stations. This is unacceptable as well.