SURVIVAL FACTORS HIGHWAY

ATTACHMENT 15

OFD ENGINE 67 INTERVIEWS

HWY15MH006

(20 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

METROLINK GRADE CROSSING ACCIDENT *

OXNARD, CALIFORNIA * Docket No.: HWY-15-MH-006

FEBRUARY 24, 2015 *

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Interview of: ENGINEER 1, CAPTAIN 1

and FF 1

Oxnard, California

Wednesday,

February 25, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1, Ph.D.

Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1, Ph.D., Survival Factors Investigator

National Transportation Safety Board

I N T E R V I E W

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: I'll have each of you say your name and what position you were on the truck, what your basic level of training is, like firefighter or EMT or paramedic or whatever it is you are; and then we would also like the number of years' experience in this job or in firefighting.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just total seniority firefighter experience.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: So, go ahead.

ENGINEER 1: I'm ENGINEER 1. I'm the engineer on Engine 67; it's a hazmat assignment. Prior to this, I was a paramedic for 8 years, so a total experience of roughly 22 years.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Okay.

CAPTAIN 1: CAPTAIN 1. I'm the captain, on Engine 67 as well.

FF 1: FF 1, a firefighter on Engine 67, and I've been here for 13 years.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Fifteen years?

FF 1: Thirteen.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Thirteen years, okay. All right. So, yeah, why don't we just -- what we'll do is kind of first go through each person and have you describe your experience, and then we can, like he said, you know, we can start -- it helps make the tape a little easier if we kind of keep it segmented to a certain degree, and then once we have your story, then if we need to talk across more, we can. And we'll give you guys an opportunity to ask questions of us if you have any.

So why don't we go ahead and start with you. Describe how you guys were dispatched, if you had any problems being dispatched or getting to the scene, and then what you did on scene.

INTERVIEW OF ENGINEER 1

ENGINEER 1: We were dispatched out. We were second --

CAPTAIN 1: Second alarm.

ENGINEER 1: I thought it was second alarm. No problem, I mean, as far as the traffic was light. We arrived on scene and they were just knocking down the fire.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: I'm just going to say your -- spell your name for the tape. It'sENGINEER 1, is that how you pronounce it?

ENGINEER 1: ENGINEER 1. It's --------,ENGINEER 1.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: --------. Got it.

ENGINEER 1: Yes.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Thank you.

ENGINEER 1: So, we -- initially we stopped on Rice, just north of the tracks, and we were going to -- we got out there, and ------ and ------ got on their breathing tanks and they headed into the scene. And then ------ directed me to move the engine in a little closer so I could put the lights on it.

So I came around. I went over the tracks. I made a left turn onto 5th, and then I got into a position where I was next to one of the overturned cars. And we have overhead lights that will extend up out that are, you know, bright.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Telescope posts?

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah.

ENGINEER 1: Yeah, telescoping. So I put those up and I tried to light up the scene as well as I could, and then I reconnected with them and we were assigned --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: So, which car was that being lit?

CAPTAIN 1: There's a photograph there.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Do you know which one you were lighting?

CAPTAIN 1: When we got there, the sun was rising, so I mean --

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Are you one of those engines?

CAPTAIN 1: -- it was just that initial, you know, fire, so --

ENGINEER 1: It must have been. Oh, it's either -- is that it right there?

FF 1: Yeah, that's our engine right there.

ENGINEER 1: Okay. I don't even see -- or maybe I put the lights down by then. Yeah, that was it right there.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Okay.

ENGINEER 1: Yeah, shining over there.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: So you were probably shining on 206?

ENGINEER 1: Yeah, one of these over here. I just remember getting -- pulling them out and then shining this way.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Okay.

ENGINEER 1: That's it. And then, let's see, I grabbed a backboard from -- oh, you had our backboard, and then I ended up grabbing another one, and then I just met them in -- at the back of one of the railcars and we started, you know, communicating on what the guys needed inside for the victims. And some of us were inside and some of us were outside, and we were starting to shuttle the people out of the cars.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Okay. So by the time you got there, the patients were mostly on backboards already and packaged?

ENGINEER 1: It was in process. No, we were --

CAPTAIN 1: When we got there, there was only one - it was just, it was the engineer was the only -- that car, when we went in there.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Okay, okay. And then -- so then after you -- what happened next?

ENGINEER 1: We just -- well, I transitioned. I mean, a lot of what I was doing was, after they were C-spined and they were coming out of the railcars, I was carrying them over to the triage areas. Are you familiar with that those are?

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Yeah.

ENGINEER 1: Okay. So -- and I would just keep going back and forth, and then at one point I went into a car because one guy -- was that the engineer?

CAPTAIN 1: The one that was bad and stuff?

FF 1: The one we carried out of there.

ENGINEER 1: Yeah, ------- (ph.) had one hand and he was kind of struggling with --

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah.

FF 1: He had the broken arm and the back --

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah, that was the engineer, yeah.

ENGINEER 1: -- with, you know, the narrow space.

Okay, so I worked my way to the front of the car and then, you know, I helped him actually out of the car. And then after that I kept shuttling people and then, let's see, I went over to the triage area for a while after that, and then I helped treat a couple of the people.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: So after triage started to shut down, then you went over to treatment?

ENGINEER 1: Yes, I went to treatment. I went to the immediate area. Oh, that was with the engineer. I stayed there with him for a while. One of the medics came over, we discussed a few things about him. We put the monitor on him.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: So that's on the red tarp?

CAPTAIN 1: Yes.

ENGINEER 1: I got some blankets -- yeah, the red tarp.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Okay. Any -- on the engineer, what kinds of injuries did you see?

ENGINEER 1: His -- I think his right arm or his left arm. I think it's his right arm.

FF 1: Left arm.

CAPTAIN 1: No, his right arm.

FF 1: Are you sure?

ENGINEER 1: Yeah, he was moving his right arm.

CAPTAIN 1: Oh, no, it was his left arm. We carried him out head first.

FF 1: Yeah.

ENGINEER 1: His left arm he was really guarding, really guarding with his left arm.

CAPTAIN 1: It was his left arm.

ENGINEER 1: His left arm and I think his chest, and he was starting to feel short of breath, and he looked pretty pale. He looked bad.

CAPTAIN 1: He looked bad.

ENGINEER 1: He didn't look good, so, I just tried to talk to him a little bit and say, hey, you know, you're almost out, we're going to get you to the hospital and so on.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Okay. All right. I guess we'll move on to you, then.

INTERVIEW OF CAPTAIN 1

CAPTAIN 1: Sure. Like ------- said, we got responded out and then --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Wait. I just want to make your name, and that's Donavan?

CAPTAIN 1: ----------. It's CAPTAIN 1.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: CAPTAIN 1, okay.

CAPTAIN 1: Anyway, we responded out. We responded -- we went down, we went south on Rice, so we approached the north side of the scene. Just with the radio traffic, we weren't, you know, we weren't -- we didn't get specific instructions on where to go or whatever, but we figured that if -- we didn't know exactly where this thing was on the tracks and thought we were one of the units that could be up on the north side if they needed us. So we figured we could always walk around if we have to and stuff. So, we staged behind, I think it was Engine 64 initially; I think they were in front of us, right?

ENGINEER 1: Yeah.

CAPTAIN 1: And then we got assigned to assist with the rescue group, which was Truck 68, the captain on Truck 68. And at that point we saw -- we didn't -- you know, we just kind of tried to take in what we were seeing and we didn't know what was on fire and what wasn't necessarily at that point. So ------- and I got off, grabbed a backboard, and grabbed our breathers because we just didn't know what we were going to go walk into. And then as we cleared that, we realized, oh, we can drive around, and that's when I gave ------- the instructions saying, you know, come around on 5th Street and get closer. And then ------- and I went in, we got assigned to the, I guess, the front car, which I don't even know what number it was.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: 645.

CAPTAIN 1: 645, yeah. So we got assigned into 645. And so ------- and I made our way in there, and I think inside there we had -- when we first got in there, there was I think two police officers and then one of them left quickly after we got there. And then we had the firefighter from Engine 65, and the engineer from Truck 68, which were attending to the engineer at that point. Just kind of helped assist them with what they were doing. I think ------- kind of helped that and then I verified if they had done a secondary search, and that hadn't been completed.

So I just kind of took off on my own and did a quick secondary search to look for other victims and, you know open doors and make sure there wasn't anybody anywhere, and cleared that. Reported that we -- you know, secondary search complete. And then from there we went back to packaging the engineer and transporting him out.

After that we -- it's like everybody wants -- I think he was the final victim that was removed from the railcars, and then we went right into the treatment area. And then from there it was just kind of just start treating, you know, what you see and what you can do. And just trying to take care of the people and started just helping trying to coordinate, you know, who was going where and what, and just kind of helping that process out with the citizens and stuff like that, so --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Okay.

DR. McKAY: Was it dark when you were entering the train cars?

CAPTAIN 1: No. No, because it was -- actually the sun was coming up.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Dusk, yeah.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah. So, it wasn't dark. It did seem like that, on that with the -- I don't know, the front gong or the bell, or the car was still going off. It was like, it was almost like -- it was like the car was trying to cycle itself on and off. It would go on and then it would go off, go on and go off. And at that point I think we were just focused on him and not really really worrying about shutting it off or anything like that. And --

ENGINEER 1: Yeah, the lights were coming on for 30 seconds and then going off for 30 seconds, coming on and going off.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah. Yeah, so we could hear that, that operating. But at that point I don't think any of us were thinking about what -- you know, we've only trained on these things when they're on the track, and you're like, oh, shit, I don't know what side that disconnects even at, at that point. And it wasn't a hazard that we were worried about in that car really at that point. And it wasn't like we had electricity or anything like that, that was preventing us from going anywhere.

But the time of day at that point, it didn't -- we didn't really need flashlights or anything like that in there. But like he said, the power was -- it was like, what, 15, 20 second cycles, it seemed like?

ENGINEER 1: Yeah, yeah, going on and off.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah, so.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: How did you get the engineer out? What direction did you take him?

CAPTAIN 1: That was a little difficult, just the angle, the way the railcar was laying. We put him on a backboard, and I think at the time, you know, thinking about it now, I can think of probably another way or two to get him out. But we weren't sure, you know, the -- there's no aisleway and we were really walking like kind of on -- above the seat, kind of where the window

would meet the roof right there. And so we were kind of walking on the windows, and some of them were broken out or some of them, you know, some of them weren't.

And then you had --you know, just -- it was a really weird foot placement. And it got a curve, a curvature for your foot and then it was really -- it was too narrow for a backboard. It was really narrow on a backboard. It was really a weird design, and he was a pretty big guy. And so it was two of us were trying to carry him out because that was all we could fit, because we hit every row. So it wasn't like we could shovel him out or have someone to the side and -- so that proved to be really difficult and that was pretty labor intensive. I think we got probably like three-quarters of the way down and we had to stop and put him on the ground, and that was not good for him because we just -- we were tweaked.

But I think something that we thought of later was, maybe not on a backboard, but if we had like maybe like a Stokes, you know, like a Stokes rescue basket is more of a metal, like encaged backboard.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Right.

CAPTAIN 1: Something like that might have worked across the railing on top of the chairs -- on top of the chairs, that might have helped slide him out a little easier the way that -- I think it's the way the railcar was laying. I don't know if that makes sense or not.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Yeah, it makes sense.

CAPTAIN 1: Okay. So -- I don't know that it would have worked on a backboard, but there was so much radio traffic and we were tapped out of resources, it was like, no, we're not -- we're going to get him out. And so -- but if we would have had multiple victims in there, I think that would have been something we would have probably set up and done, so --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: The Stokes baskets, you're saying, or you're saying if there would have been more victims you probably would have set up a more organized way to get people out of there --

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah, for sure.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: -- like Stokes baskets or something to slide on the seats or something like that?

CAPTAIN 1: Something, yeah, yeah.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Okay.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah. And then I think after that we just went out to treatment and -- we did go back into the cars at one point to assist some -- a lot of the walking wounded were inquiring about their personal belongings, so we just went in -- I think we just went back into that car, right?

ENGINEER 1: Yeah.

FF 1: Yeah.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah. And we just grabbed what we could just kind of -- it wasn't a lot. I think we went up in the engineer's compartment and grabbed his personal belongings and stuff like that, and we just retrieved what was easy and accessible to grab and brought it outside, so --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Okay.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: All right. On to FF 1.

INTERVIEW OF FF 1

FF 1: Yeah. So we got there on scene. We went in -- basically just walked in with a backboard. I talked to one of the captains in charge of it, and he told us real quick that there was one victim in there, one victim in this other car, and then I think there was five victims in the 206, and -- for a total of, I think, seven that hadn't been able to make it out on their own. And so we went into 645. There was already ---------- and two policemen and ---------- were already in there. They were trying to get a C-collar on him, and basically what we did was we splinted his arm, which the splint ended up coming off as soon as we were trying to walk out with the backboard anyhow, but we walked out with him head first.

And something you guys might be able to mention for your training in this, and at least I have learned in hindsight, is when the car is on its side -- I think I can draw it better than I can try to explain it -- but the seats -- ------- was leading to it. When the car is like this and the seat is out sitting sideways like this, and we're trying to walk with the backboard in between the roof of the train car, and the windows are right here and it's curved, and it's very easy to roll an ankle or just not even be able to -- because the backboard -- I haven't drawn it quite right here, but the backboard does not fit in between the roof and the top of these seats right here.

And if I remember right -- you guys would know better than I would -- I think there's almost like a little handle or something here on the seats. I think what we could do -- I'll probably never get a call like this again, but if I did, we might be able to put the backboard and just rest it on the seat there and slide the guy down. And then he can just slide from seat to seat to seat, because the seats are a lot less spaced than the entire length of the backboard, and you can just slide him out going down the whole length of the train instead of having to walk in between this area here. So, maybe if you guys did some kind of training with firemen, that might be something to advise.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Okay.

FF 1: That was one thing that I learned from it.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah, that could be handy --

FF 1: But we got him out and then --

CAPTAIN 1: -- that could be a handy bit of information for people if they ever find themselves in that situation.

FF 1: Yeah.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Well, what would have -- and the thing that would have -- the reason, because the backboards are just flat backboards without -- like the person's kind of hanging off of it or whatever, that's why you can't -- or were there obstructions on the seats keeping you from doing something kind of like that?

FF 1: I don't understand your question.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: So if -- you're saying that you could feasibly just put the backboards on the seats and just slide them from seat to seat to seat --

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah, because of the metal rails on the edges, the handles.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: The handles were blocking your ability to do something --

CAPTAIN 1: We were thinking we could have slid them on the handles.

ENGINEER 1: I think he's asking is there any kind of modification we need to make to help it go successfully, to go a lot smoother, correct?

CAPTAIN 1: Oh.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Yeah, or you're saying you weren't able to do that or you didn't just --

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: He didn't think of it.

FF 1: No, we didn't think of it.

CAPTAIN 1: We just weren't thinking about it.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: You didn't think of it.

(Simultaneous conversation.)

ENGINEER 1: Yeah. It was like, oh, that might have worked better.

FF 1: And our thought was when we were picking him up was we didn't know if we could make it or not but it was -- he was also a big heavy guy but we were like -- we didn't know, and it was one of those backboards that are flimsy, you know, they're plastic and they're not -- they don't glide really well.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Right.

FF 1: And it was like, we don't -- let's not experiment now. But it was afterwards. That's why I was saying, I think a Stokes would have worked great because it had that metal and that can take an abuse. I don't know if the chintzy plastic, you know, backboard would take the -- I don't know.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Or, yeah. Plus you got people hanging --

FF 1: It will be one of those things -- it was one of those things that while the cameras weren't there we were talking about.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We should go try that while we were here but --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Yeah.

FF 1: But anyway, I think it's something that -- it may work for people and it may not. I mean, I can see --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: I've seen similar issues with school busses.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay, yeah.

FF 1: Exactly. And I can think of, you know, if that car was more full with people trapped up against that roof line --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: That you would have had a lot more people to get out of there.

FF 1: Yeah, that would have been the only way to kind of sling people out. You could have had somebody on a rope system or -- I mean something, but that -- your walkway would have been gone for sure.

ENGINEER 1: Hard to design it for every style crash --

FF 1: Oh, yeah.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah.

FF 1: It was impressed -- I will say I was impressed that there was not -- the railcar did not appear to be, I guess, as damaged as you would expect. It was a wild ride it looked like.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah, that was very impressive.

FF 1: I know when I went into the engineer's compartment, that was -- it was -- just to kind of see what his perspective was, I was like, wow. I mean, it was pretty impressive in that regard, so --

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah.

ENGINEER 1: Oh, I did ask -- I guess he called himself a conductor; I don't think he was an engineer. I did ask him, what did you see? I don't know if you need that information. And he told me when he looked up he saw headlights coming toward the train.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Okay. And you don't know if it was the engineer or the conductor?

FF 1: It was ----------, so I think he was the engineer.

ENGINEER 1: Well, there was a -- I can't remember -- there were three guys that --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Right.

ENGINEER 1: -- said that they were -- one of them had a goatee, and I can't remember his name. He told me that he did see lights. And yeah, he was a younger guy. I think he said he was a trainee.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Yeah, so there was a student engineer.

FF 1: Last name of ---------, right?

ENGINEER 1: Okay. He told me he saw headlights, so I don't know.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: I don't know.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Correct.

FF 1: Yes.

ENGINEER 1: Headlights coming toward him.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Okay.

ENGINEER 1: Yeah. And as far as --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Did he say what he did, like when they saw that there was something on the tracks, what his actions he took? Like was he trying to move back in the car -- in the train, or what did he -- did he say anything about --

ENGINEER 1: I didn't ask him that, and I just asked him what happened? And he said, I just looked up and there was lights coming toward us. That's all I remember him saying.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Okay.

ENGINEER 1: No, no, I hit the brakes or I tried to steer out of the way. He didn't say anything like that.

(Laughter; simultaneous conversation.)

ENGINEER 1: You know, as far as the crashes and you're looking for like design suggestions, I don't know if -- is that what you want, or no? Do you not want --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Well, I mean, things -- anything you guys can think of that you think might be helpful. I mean --

ENGINEER 1: Well, I just thought -- remembering the L.A. city incident and, like, if we didn't have access to the ends -- I mean, it was uncomfortable getting people out of the ends, and I know you can't design it for every style crash, but when we went back to remove the personal belongings and we were crawling through and we were down in the lower level of it --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

ENGINEER 1: -- it's odd, there must have been a construction worker because there was a brand new sledgehammer, and what else was in there? You know, it was kind of odd things to find on a train.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: A drill and some other stuff.

FF 1: That's -- is that the Metrolink stuff? Is that -- oh, no?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, there's a sledgehammer on there. But the tool bag, I think it belonged to a mechanic that was in there.

FF 1: Oh, okay.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: Oh, okay. What is the sledgehammer on there for?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The sledgehammer is actually on there for things to actually hit and jar, and the conductor would actually use it in an incident.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Oh, to get out?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

FF 1: We found it like in -- like next to the duffel bag. That's why we thought --

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: It's actually a federal --

FF 1: We pulled out the -- we pulled out the torch, everything. We're like, what the hell do they have a torch in this thing for? We were trying to figure that out.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah, a little propane torch.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's actually a federal requirement to have that sledgehammer there.

FF 1: Okay.

FF 1: When we found it, it was next to the duffel bag, so --

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: It's normally in an equipment locker, they call it, which has your glass cover and you break it.

FF 1: Yeah, okay.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: It sits in a bracket, a holding bracket.

FF 1: Okay.

ENGINEER 1: Yeah, there was a guy that did the news and he had an engineer's hat on --

FEMALE SPEAKER: I saw that guy.

ENGINEER 1: -- and I think he was the mechanic.

FF 1: Oh, okay.

ENGINEER 1: He was the mechanic. And I would not be shocked if he's not the one that pulled it.

FF 1: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So I can't say I looked, but is there and extinguisher in every car?

CAPTAIN 1: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: A fire extinguisher?

CAPTAIN 1: Yes, sir.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. I didn't look.

CAPTAIN 1: It's required.

ENGINEER 1: But in retrospect, I guess when I came over, it wouldn't have been a bad idea to have a droid camera or something staged, at least at the ends, just in case we were all in there and something decided to light off.

But what dawned on me when we were searching for the, you know, the items, is we're -- it's on its side, and I thought, well, if we didn't have access to the ends, like I noticed the L.A. city guys had to go up through the top, and I thought, oh, if I was just in here and I needed to get my family out of here, there's no like little ladder or access to get to that door. So it would be like trying to get from here to the ceiling and up and out of the door. I don't know if there's any little retractable something you could get to come down.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

ENGINEER 1: You know, something, an encased little thing, you know -- I don't know if a rope ladder would be appropriate, but something that people could climb up and out to get to the top. Because there's no way you could get up there unless you were --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you notice the windows, you could take them out?

ENGINEER 1: Yes.

FF 1: I actually did that on two of them.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good.

ENGINEER 1: We could -- you could get the -- yeah, on the top, but I mean, trying to get up -- you know, the ones that you could get out, you'd have to dig a hole, you know, down under the train and --

FF 1: That was -- we were thinking like that -- you know, for us we could do ladders and get in, but if you were inside there as a victim and they couldn't get out that back side, for the ones in the bottom, I don't know. Like you said, I mean, you would have relied on people to help each other up and over that bulkhead kind of thing.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: Yeah.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Did you say you pulled a couple of the emergency windows?

FF 1: I didn't need to. I've gone through -- yeah, I --

ENGINEER 1: The federal investigator, no, no --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: No, no, I'm --

ENGINEER 1: I'm joking.

FF 1: I've been through three of your guys' classes and every time you always talk about the windows and I've always wanted to pull one, and then we have a train on its side and I'm sitting right there, so I pulled a couple of the windows.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Do you remember which car you pulled them from?

FF 1: Yeah, the one we were in, 645.

FEMALE SPEAKER: 645, okay.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: And how did it come apart, did it --

FF 1: Oh, man, it was slick. Yeah, I could pull it up with one hand. It came out very easily.

CAPTAIN 1: You're not breaking the rules (indiscernible).

FF 1: I know.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did a rubber grommet come with it when you pulled it?

FF 1: Yeah, I just pulled the two red things, the rubber grommet just came right out. And then it's got two handles right there that lifted up very easily. Yeah, I mean, it was totally pointless because it was --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Good to hear. They worked as designed then, so --

FF 1: -- on its side. Yeah.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Yeah.

FF 1: Yeah, it worked good.

ENGINEER 1: The only problem is, when he got it out there was the ground right there.

FF 1: Yeah. So it was totally pointless, but --I've always wanted to do it.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah, and I think the -- you guys talked to the Truck 68 crew. Did he tell you how --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Is that --

CAPTAIN 1: It wasn't the same car. I think it was a different car, it was another car that was on its side.

ENGINEER 1: So, I mean, you pulled the window that one guy fell through.

CAPTAIN 1: We were talking about that this morning and he's like, it was the wrong -- it was a different car. But he had experience, and that was something we were talking about. Yeah, that could have been at night or something, that would have made it just that much more difficult in the position it was in, but --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Yep.

CAPTAIN 1: I think ultimately we were all lucky that it wasn't that occupied.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Right.

CAPTAIN 1: That would have been -- yeah.

FF 1: It held up amazingly. I -- when we were going down to this, I was imagining us having to drag in the jaws of life, starting it up inside a car, with all the exhaust and everything, you know. But the seats weren't -- no one was pinned. It was just kind of like getting them out. I was very impressed; it held up well.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah, I think we were all picturing, you know, Chatsworth and --

FF 1: Yeah.

CAPTAIN 1: -- yeah, this is going to suck. And then we got there and it's kind of like, this is not what I expected it to be, but it was --

ENGINEER 1: Lucky.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah. Yeah. Lucky that -- like I said, more people, it would've been definitely been more carnage, I think we all understand that, but --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Are there any questions for us that you guys have?

FF 1: When do you think the train track will be up and running again?

CAPTAIN 1: It is.

ENGINEER 1: It is.

FF 1: Oh, it already is? Oh, okay.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah, it is. You win that bet.

FF 1: Oh, okay. I won that bet.

CAPTAIN 1: You won that bet.

FF 1: We bet burritos on that.

CAPTAIN 1: He wins burritos.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: You said you talked to the train crew. Do you -- when did you talk to them? We know where the engineer was, but --

ENGINEER 1: In the triage area while I was, you know, evaluating them and --

CAPTAIN 1: Treatment area.

ENGINEER 1: Yes. I'm sorry. Did I say triage area?

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah. Treatment.

ENGINEER 1: Yeah, treatment area.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: Did they say anything about the number of passengers that might be on the train or give you guys

ENGINEER 1: No, I just asked him, asked him what happened. They were, you know, they were -- I was trying to scramble, look for some blankets, and everybody ended up really cold. So --

FF 1: I think because the adrenalin was dumping -

ENGINEER 1: Yeah. And they're, you know, on backboards and laying out in the middle of the street at 5:00 in the morning. So, I mean, we learned a lot from this also, you know. Simple things, backboards, blankets, restrooms, you know, to get that stuff there quickly so -- you know, it's a lot of -- a bus, they ordered up a --

(Laughter.)

CAPTAIN 1: I hope that's off the record.

ENGINEER 1: They ordered up a bus.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We heard about that.

ENGINEER 1: Yeah. We had (indiscernible), huh?

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: And so were there -- I'm trying to think out there -- yeah, there aren't really any facilities nearby there. I mean, you know, like there's been other -- like in Metro-North, there was a gymnasium that was nearby and so everybody went to this gymnasium. But out there, there's nothing around there. There's strawberry fields --

CAPTAIN 1: We finally got -- finally someone saw some portables at the little farmhouse right at the corner and got attention of some farm workers to get a tractor and bring some port-a-potties over. But that wasn't until --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: I was just thinking of a building or something. You wouldn't even have any kind of buildings or anything out there.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. No, there's nothing. UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: John Deere place.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah. No, it's a ways. It's a walk. And some of those people weren't going to make that walk, you know, the bottom line of it too, so --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: So they order the bus for the walking wounded. Did they -- do you know where they took everybody after --

ENGINEER 1: They took them to the Oxnard train station.

CAPTAIN 1: Transportation center.

ENGINEER 1: Transportation center.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Oh, okay. Okay.

CAPTAIN 1: That must have been quite the traumatic ride. I mean, it's -- to be in a train and have it tumble like that, it's got to be --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Oh, oh, you mean -- yeah, the event, yeah.

CAPTAIN 1: The people looked terrified more than the ones that weren't significantly injured, yeah.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: It sounded like people were all in all reasonably calm, though. There weren't a lot of people freaking out or -- I mean --

FF 1: No, I think it was -- I only remember just seeing or hearing about one or two people that were kind of -- but it was -- yeah, some people were -- I think -- I don't know, you know, by the time we got there we just got initial -- we just went in that car and didn't really take in the rest of it. But I think a lot of the walking wounded came from -- I think what I was told, you know, cars were still upright. And so, I think for them by the time they felt -- they were probably walking off thinking, what just happened in front of me. But I think you could tell the people that were in the other cars they were -- there was some quietness going on with some of them, but -- other than that, they seemed --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: So do you think if the car, the train would have been pulling it and it hit, with the heavy locomotive in front, it would have prevented the derailment?

CAPTAIN 1: It's hard to really say. It's hard to really say.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Just because that's a --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Historically --

(Off the record.)

(On the record.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- you see, this is an event you've never dealt with before. Anything you can think of other than what you've just mentioned? You had very good -- some very good thoughts on your points.

FF 1: No, I think maybe just include that in your next training session that you do with fire departments.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

FF 1: I'd never imagined that before.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You got that, [redacted]?

FRED: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

FF 1: And then after we did it -- I would have tried it on the second victim if we had one.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -------- and -------- (ph.) will train you guys. ------- was an emergency management person for Amtrak and then -------- worked for us; point it out to those guys.

FF 1: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, it obviously only works if the train is on its side.

CAPTAIN 1: I think for us we've gotten -- you got trained -- like the guys at Chatsworth, you know, we know a lot of the L.A. city guys who were on that. So, you know, their event was way different than ours. They're, you know, augering into the bottom, cutting people --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It was significantly, significantly different incident, yes.

CAPTAIN 1: And it was like -- and so for us, that's what we were thinking of, and we went in, and you're like, this thing just turned over on its side. I've got to walk a guy out on the roof and it's kind of, okay, well, wow. So --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Yeah.

CAPTAIN 1: So, I guess for, you know, not -- a train car that's not that busted up, you're going to be shuttling people that are broken --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

CAPTAIN 1: -- and that was like -- whoa. We were expecting, you know --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Two trains and -- you know, that was --

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah. So, I mean, if it had been more technical rescues, obviously, we would've probably done the window stuff and all that, but -- I think only for us I think the big thing we'll reflect on as a department is just our lack of resources was definitely exposed and our lack of like overhead and things -- internally we'll learn more. I think as far as what we saw on the scene, it wasn't -- there wasn't that much carnage and that much even technical rescue stuff that -- I don't think we'll second guess -- a lot of it was just helping people that needed to come out of a big vehicle. I mean, it wasn't -- you know, it wasn't cutting chairs, it wasn't doing anything like that, so --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: So your feeling for your -- I mean, like the lack of resources, where did that -- it sounded like you had good resources on scene, but -- so was it more sensitive to the backfilling of --

ENGINEER 1: Stations.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: -- stations? Is that what you're talking about? Or what -- when you say the --

CAPTAIN 1: We just -- well, our department is just -- we lack the proper staffing.

ENGINEER 1: That was everybody.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah. We're just --

ENGINEER 1: For that incident.

CAPTAIN 1: -- we're really behind and I think -- so when we get a big incident, we tap out the area. I mean, I think at one point --

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Right.

CAPTAIN 1: -- L.A. city and L.A. county were covering Simi Valley and the Thousand Oaks area. We tapped out every ambulance in the county. I mean, obviously it's a major MCI, but -- I mean, if we have a two-alarm fire we're done, that's it. We're relying on Camarillo, Thousand Oaks, Ventura, Fillmore, Simi Valley, Moorpark -- I mean, we're relying on the rest of the county to fill. So to have one single event that was that depleting of the county, I think reflects to not just our city but also the region. It'll be like why we are -- you know, we do hurt when stuff like that -- I think those would be the things, I think, the fire service and the county will learn from it.

NTSB INVESTIGATOR 1: Yeah, got it.

CAPTAIN 1: Yeah.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	METROLINK GRADE CROSSING ACCIDENT
	OXNARD, CALIFORNIA
	FEBRUARY 24, 2015
	Interview of ENGINEER 1,
	CAPTAIN 1, and FF 1
DOCKET NUMBER:	HWY-15-MH-006
PLACE:	Oxnard, California
DATE:	February 25, 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.