

DCA13MR002  
Conrail - Shared Assets  
Derailment/Hazardous Material Release  
Paulsboro, New Jersey  
November 30, 2012

# Conrail Train Dispatcher Interview Transcript

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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CONRAIL DERAILMENT/HAZARDOUS  
MATERIAL RELEASE  
PAULSBORO, NEW JERSEY  
NOVEMBER 30, 2012

Docket No.: DCA-13-MR-002

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Interview of: JON HAVLICEK

Conrail  
Camden Yard Office  
Camden, New Jersey

Saturday,  
December 1, 2012

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: TED T. TURPIN  
Accident Investigator

## APPEARANCES:

TED T. TURPIN  
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ROBERT TOMASZEWSKI  
Operating Practices Inspector  
Federal Railroad Administration

RYAN KEATING  
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Conrail

JOHN GAROFALO  
Superintendent, Operations  
Conrail

MEL WICHELMANN, JR.  
TOM HEBERT  
Safety Task Force  
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

WILLIAM H. BATES  
Safety Task Force  
United Transportation Union (UTU)

RON PETERSON  
American Train Dispatchers Association (ATDA)  
Conrail General Chairman

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:15 a.m.)

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2  
3 MR. TURPIN: My name is Ted Turpin, and we're conducting  
4 interviews in connection with the Conrail derailment at the  
5 Paulsboro movable bridge that happened about 7:05 a.m., November  
6 30, 2013 [sic]. The NTSB Accident Number is DCA-13-MR-004 [sic].

7 Today is December 1st, 2012. It's about 9:15 a.m.  
8 We're at the Camden Yard office, and this interview is with Jon  
9 Havlicek, train dispatcher. And, Jon, do you understand that this  
10 is being recorded?

11 MR. HAVLICEK: Yes, I do.

12 MR. TURPIN: All right. Thank you. Would you please  
13 state your name and spell it, and we'll go around the room and  
14 have everyone do that please.

15 MR. HAVLICEK: All right. Jon Havlicek, last name is H-  
16 a-v-l-i-c-e-k.

17 MR. PETERSON: Ron Peterson, P-e-t-e-r-s-o-n.

18 MR. TURPIN: And who do you represent? I'm sorry.

19 MR. PETERSON: I'm the ATDA General Chairman.

20 MR. TURPIN: All right. Thank you.

21 MR. KEATING: Ryan Keating, Manager of Field Operations  
22 for Conrail.

23 MR. TOMASZEWSKI: Bob Tomaszewski. It's T-o-m-a-s-z-e-  
24 w-s-k-i, OP Inspector, FRA.

25 MR. WICHELMANN: Mel Wichelmann, Jr. Wichelmann is W-i-

1 c-h-e-l-m-a-n-n. BLET, Safety Task Force.

2 MR. HEBERT: Tom Hebert, H-e-b-e-r-t, BLET, Safety Task  
3 Force.

4 MR. BATES: William H. Bates, B-a-t-e-s, UTU, Safety  
5 Task Force.

6 MR. GAROFOLO: John Garofolo, G-a-r-o-f-o-l-o, Conrail,  
7 Superintendent, Operations.

8 MR. TURPIN: All right. Thank you. And if I didn't say  
9 it, you know this is being recorded?

10 MR. HAVLICEK: Yes, I do.

11 MR. TURPIN: All right. Thank you.

12 INTERVIEW OF JON HAVLICEK

13 BY MR. TURPIN:

14 Q. We'll just start with, you just tell us what happened.

15 A. Basically the train crew came up to the signal at the  
16 Paulsboro Bridge. It was in a stop position. The engineer  
17 radioed me that it was in a stop position, and that after the  
18 conductor walked the bridge, it appeared that it was okay, lined  
19 for their movement. As for 241, I gave them the Rule 241 and they  
20 proceeded.

21 Q. And then what?

22 A. And then about 10 -- 5, 10 minutes later, of course, the  
23 engineer reported an emergency over the bridge. Or he reported an  
24 emergency and I went and obviously started notifying Conrail  
25 personnel to, you know, to go and assist, you know, the crew and

1 whatnot.

2 Q. Okay. How soon were you aware that it was a derailment?

3 A. I wasn't aware there was a derailment until later on  
4 when, you know, I started getting information from other people,  
5 Conrail people saying that, you know, cars derailed and so forth.  
6 So I really didn't know there was a derailment at that point,  
7 other than they were in emergency.

8 Q. Okay. How about the release of hazardous material?

9 A. The first sign that I knew that there was something  
10 going on is when the engineer reported that there was a vapor  
11 cloud from the rear of his train.

12 Q. So that had to have been before he cut off from the  
13 train and left?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Do you know what time they made the cut and left?

16 A. It was maybe 15, 20 minutes after they reported an  
17 emergency probably, approximately.

18 Q. Okay. Once you were notified that there was a vapor  
19 leak, did you make any additional notifications?

20 A. I had the trouble desk notify local authorities and I  
21 told my boss, Tim Gardner, that -- you know, what I, at least at  
22 that point, knew was going on.

23 Q. Okay. All right. Let's go back to the red signal at  
24 the bridge. Do you have any control on that signal at all?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Do you have any display of that signal?

2 A. No. I mean, not in my office, no.

3 Q. All right. On the -- how about the track, is that  
4 signaled at all?

5 A. No. It's secondary. It's black territory, dark  
6 territory.

7 Q. Dark territory? You operate by use of --

8 A. Secondary -- Form D.

9 Q. Form D track authority?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Written. Okay. Where do the crews get those?

12 A. They -- well, they get it from the dispatcher when they  
13 -- basically they come up to C. P. Brown. They ask for the Form D  
14 usually at that point, and they continue on, you know, on their  
15 route then.

16 Q. Okay. So you relay that by radio?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. The authority?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. They don't get it off a printer here --

21 A. No.

22 Q. -- at Camden or anything? Okay.

23 So when they call and ask for permission to go by that  
24 signal, what are you checking?

25 A. Basically I ask, you know, is it lined and locked for



1 your movement; is it safe? And obviously the engineer said the  
2 conductor walked the bridge, found it to be, you know, lined and  
3 locked for their movement and deemed it to be safe to be, you  
4 know, talked by the signal.

5 Q. All right. Do you recall the last time somebody had  
6 called for that signal?

7 A. The last time it was at a stop signal you mean?

8 Q. Yes.

9 A. Probably like the day before. I mean, on my shift  
10 anyway, like the day before, basically pretty much it was at a  
11 stop again.

12 Q. And did that clear or did they need permission to go  
13 again?

14 A. They needed permission at that point from what I recall.

15 Q. Was that logged?

16 A. It was -- I don't know if that specific incident was --  
17 yeah. Yeah, everything was recorded on tape. So, you know --

18 Q. Right. Do you put in a trouble ticket though like to  
19 the signal department?

20 A. Yes, I do.

21 Q. And do you remember if you did on the 29th?

22 A. I don't remember if it was reported on that day or not,  
23 no.

24 Q. Okay. When is the last time you put in a trouble ticket  
25 on that?

1           A.    Previous in the week because it was almost like a daily  
2 occurrence with that bridge.

3           Q.    Okay.  Does it always stay red or does it clear  
4 sometimes?

5           A.    Other trains, it does clear.

6           Q.    Now, do they notify you when it's red before they've  
7 tried to clear it?

8           A.    No, they always -- well, I shouldn't say always.  
9 Sometimes they do; sometimes they don't.

10          Q.    Okay.  So there's times crews have gone down there with  
11 a red signal, code it in, activated, it's gone green for them, and  
12 you'd never know about it?

13          A.    That's right.

14          Q.    Okay.  Just to recap, you would say it would be a pretty  
15 common occurrence for them to have a red signal at the bridge?

16          A.    Lately, since the storm, Sandy, it seems like we've had  
17 more occurrences there than previous.

18          Q.    Okay.  Was that -- that was the change point you feel?

19          A.    I think so, yeah.  Something happened, you know, during  
20 the storm, and I don't know why but, you know, it seems like a  
21 daily occurrence.

22          Q.    Okay.  Okay.

23                MR. TURPIN:  We'll go around the room now and see if  
24 anybody else has any questions.  Ryan?

25                MR. KEATING:  No.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I've just got one.

2 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

3 Q. About how many trains come and go during the day?

4 Approximately.

5 A. Yeah, basically on my shift approximately three, three  
6 trains.

7 MR. TURPIN: And what shift is that? I'm sorry.

8 MR. HAVLICEK: Three to four -- that's daylight.

9 MR. TURPIN: Okay.

10 MR. HEBERT: Tom Hebert, BLET.

11 BY MR. HEBERT:

12 Q. When you give a 241, do you keep a record?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Just a --

15 A. It's a verbal, right. It's taped anyway.

16 MR. HEBERT: That's all.

17 MR. TURPIN: Got anything?

18 BY MR. TURPIN:

19 Q. Okay. Let's back up, just kind of the overview of your  
20 duty. You said daylight. Daylight is from when to when?

21 A. From Tuesday through Saturday, from 7 to 3.

22 Q. So how long had you been on duty when you got the call  
23 on this?

24 A. I come in around 6:30. So it's probably been 20 minutes  
25 or so.

1 Q. So you got the transfer. You get your transfer and then  
2 sit down at the desk and just --

3 A. Start working.

4 Q. -- start working.

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. And this is the first thing that basically happened?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Okay. You hadn't issued the Form D to this crew, had  
9 you?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Okay. This was Friday morning. Anything remarkable on  
12 Thursday that you can recall?

13 A. No. The train came up, you know, pretty much the same  
14 thing, tried to get a stop signal -- not tried to get a stop --  
15 tried to get a proceed signal and basically initiate a 241. And,  
16 again, you know, whether it was on Thursday that he got the 241 or  
17 not, I don't know. I'd have to go back in my records and look and  
18 listen to the tapes and so forth, but I mean it was like, you  
19 know --

20 Q. Yeah. Did you have it almost daily that week, this  
21 week, since Tuesday?

22 A. I would say almost, yeah.

23 Q. Yeah. How about northbound?

24 A. Northbound seemed not to have a problem, at least I --  
25 you know, I only had maybe one train to come north over that time

1 period, you know, per day.

2 Q. Uh-huh.

3 A. And usually they didn't have any request of a 241 by any  
4 signal. So, you know --

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. -- it seems like it was just the southbound signal.

7 Q. So on your dayshift, you have two to three souths and  
8 usually just one north?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. On your day shift.

11 A. One to two norths and two to three south, yeah.

12 Q. More south than north?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Okay. All right.

15 MR. TURPIN: Anything else? Anybody else have  
16 something?

17 BY MR. TURPIN:

18 Q. You felt rested?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Went to work?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay.

23 MR. TURPIN: All right. I think we're done. Thank you  
24 very much, I appreciate it.

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:            CONRAIL DERAILMENT/HAZARDOUS  
   MATERIAL RELEASE  
   PAULSBORO, NEW JERSEY  
   NOVEMBER 30, 2012  
   Interview of Jon Havlicek

DOCKET NUMBER:            DCA-13-MR-002

PLACE:                        Camden, New Jersey

DATE:                         December 1, 2012

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.

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Kathryn A. Mirfin  
Transcriber