

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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CRUDE OIL TRAIN DERAILMENT WITH  
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS RELEASE  
APRIL 30, 2014  
LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

Docket No. DCA-14-FR-008

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Interview of: ROBERT E. LIPSCOMB  
Battalion Chief, Lynchburg Fire Department

Lynchburg Fire Department Mobile  
Command Trailer  
Lynchburg, Virginia

Thursday,  
May 1, 2014

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MUHAMED EL-ZOGHBI  
Accident Investigator

## APPEARANCES:

MUHAMED EL-ZOGHBI, Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board  
Washington, D.C.

TIMOTHY BROWN, Hazmat Safety Inspector  
Federal Railroad Administration

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Robert E. Lipscomb:

By Mr. El-Zoghbi

5

I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. EL-ZOGHBI: This is NTSB investigator Muhamed  
3 El-Zoghbi here to conduct an interview with Chief Robert E.  
4 Lipscomb, and that's spelled L-i-p-s-c-o-m-b, of the Lynchburg  
5 Fire Department. This is related to the incident that occurred on  
6 May 30th in Lynchburg, Virginia -- sorry, April 30th in Lynchburg,  
7 Virginia.

8 Chief Lipscomb, if you can give us a little information  
9 about your background and your experience?

10 MR. LIPSCOMB: Well, I'm currently a operational  
11 battalion chief in Lynchburg Fire Department. I've been with the  
12 fire department, it'll be 24 years in July of this year. I've  
13 been a battalion chief for 3 years and 4 months, somewhere around  
14 that range. I've been assigned to field operations since June of  
15 last year. I'm currently assigned as Battalion 1 chief on the B  
16 shift, which is we have a three-platoon system and we have two  
17 battalion chiefs on each shift, and I'm the battalion chief that's  
18 now assigned obviously to the first battalion, which includes the  
19 response area for the downtown area.

20 MR. EL-ZOGHBI: Also sitting in on this interview is an  
21 FRA hazmat investigator. Please introduce yourself.

22 MR. BROWN: Timothy Brown, Hazmat Safety Inspector, DOT,  
23 FRA. I cover the Virginia area.

24 MR. EL-ZOGHBI: Excellent.

25 INTERVIEW OF ROBERT E. LIPSCOMB

1 BY MR. EL-ZOGHBI:

2 Q. Well, Chief Lipscomb, related to the events that  
3 occurred yesterday, if you could, in your own words, just tell us,  
4 you know, your involvement and everything you can recall related  
5 to the incident?

6 A. The call came in I believe it was somewhere around 1400,  
7 2 p.m. yesterday. I believe the actual time of the call was 1354,  
8 as I recall. I was in headquarters station. I was actually at  
9 Station 1. I was in my office and the call was dispatched for a  
10 vehicle fire and with the location being down on the riverfront,  
11 down by -- from Depot Grille.

12 The initial dispatch was kind of odd because when it was  
13 dispatched by our dispatch center it was dispatched as a full  
14 structural fire response, which is a little bit unusual, where we  
15 got initial three engine companies, a ladder company, a battalion  
16 chief and then the rescue company, which is a little unusual  
17 because we don't normally send that many pieces of apparatus on a  
18 vehicle fire.

19 As soon as I marked en route or got into the Tahoe to  
20 leave the station, our deputy chief of administrative services was  
21 actually downtown and he reported immediately that there was a  
22 heavy column of smoke or black smoke emitting from the riverfront,  
23 and at that time he actually went ahead and upgraded the response  
24 himself to add two additional engine companies and another truck  
25 company, as I recall. And as soon as I pulled out of the station,

1 I could see the column of smoke coming over the top of the  
2 buildings from downtown.

3 Myself and the second battalion chief, Battalion Chief  
4 Bomar, who's on Battalion 2, he was actually pulling into the  
5 station to come visit me, so we initially responded together to  
6 the incident.

7 As I turned out of the station and started heading  
8 downtown, I came down 7th Street, as I recall, to make a straight  
9 shot to this area down here and it was obvious that we had a  
10 significant incident going on on the riverfront with heavy, heavy  
11 black smoke emitting from the area down by Depot Grille.

12 Chief Smith, who is our deputy chief, actually got on  
13 scene first. I was right behind him. And when we both got on the  
14 scene, it was obvious that we had a significant incident that was  
15 involving rail transportation. We could see the train was  
16 stopped. I could see heavy fire, heavy column of black smoke and  
17 people leaving the area. My initial placement of my vehicle was  
18 at the bottom of 9th Street adjacent to the Amazement Square  
19 children's museum. That's where Chief Smith was. I went down and  
20 met him and we briefly interacted and he came out and we left to  
21 go down Jefferson Street to do an assessment. I set up an initial  
22 command right there and engine companies started arriving.

23 The first engine company to arrive to me was actually  
24 Engine Number 2 and our initial thought was to go ahead and get  
25 some master streams in place to address any of the fire that we

1 saw, but we found out pretty quick that we needed to back out.  
2 Our hazmat team got on the scene pretty quick and identified the  
3 product. I believe it was at placard 1267 is what they indicated.

4 So upon determining what the product was, we backed out  
5 and relocated all of our operations up 9th Street to an area  
6 adjacent to -- or actually across the street from 54 9th Street,  
7 which was where we set up the initial CP, and moved our units out  
8 and set up the command structure at that time and began doing an  
9 assessment to try to determine what we had, what the product was,  
10 what the initial isolation distances were, what any suppression  
11 activities would be, all along the same time determining that we  
12 had to do an evacuation of the immediate area, which would include  
13 the Depot Grille itself and the businesses down there, the  
14 children's museum, and any residential facilities or buildings  
15 that were adjacent to our operational area.

16 At the very beginning it was obviously very dynamic,  
17 very chaotic, so to speak, because there was a lot of units coming  
18 in. We were trying to get those initial things set up to where we  
19 had, again, established what we had, what we were going to do with  
20 it, and then evacuation.

21 As units arrived, I was able to get the command  
22 structure set up. I immediately tagged one of our engine company  
23 officers, Captain Ronnie Coleman to be my aide/deputy IC. Our  
24 hazmat team was actually called. I actually went ahead and called  
25 them en route and they were responding. When our hazmat captain

1 arrived on scene, Captain Danny Williams, I assigned him to be the  
2 hazardous materials branch director. We had one of our  
3 administrative chiefs arrive on scene and I assigned him to be  
4 operations section chief. And from that point on, we were able to  
5 start assigning units to those individual areas. We took two  
6 engines, assigned them to operations for fire suppression and then  
7 we took the hazardous materials folks and assigned them to Captain  
8 Williams under the hazardous materials branch.

9           At that point in time, the hazmat team went into product  
10 identification. They brought their vehicle out and started doing  
11 their research on the product and determining what we had, what  
12 the issue was. And hazmat was in contact with me all the time  
13 advising me on what we need to do and setting up the areas and  
14 setting up suppression tactics and suppression -- I'm drawing a  
15 blank here -- not tactics, suppression strategies to take care of  
16 this.

17           Early on we did decide, after consulting with the hazmat  
18 team, that we were not going to apply any water to the product,  
19 that we were going to let it burn out because of the danger of  
20 getting close to it and also we felt that if it consumed -- when  
21 the product consumed itself, then the situation would take care of  
22 itself, and in due time it actually did. It consumed the product,  
23 the fire died down, we were able to put suppression operations  
24 into place to do some cooling and eliminate any hotspots.

25           Throughout that time frame, we were receiving a lot of



1 phone calls, we were receiving a lot of folks showing up. We had  
2 notified our EOC, which then notified the state, and so we had an  
3 immediate response of folks from Department of Emergency  
4 Management, Department of Environmental Quality. Our law  
5 enforcement, our police department was on scene quickly. We gave  
6 them the -- we set up a unified command with PD to take care of  
7 traffic control and evacuation. We did set an evacuation distance  
8 of what would be -- Main Street of our city, everything riverside  
9 of Main Street down and then from 5th Street to 12th Street. We  
10 evacuated that whole area and had the police department assist in  
11 doing that through a unified command process. Virginia State  
12 Police showed up and assisted our law enforcement department to  
13 assist in any way they needed. Again, I had a great outpouring of  
14 folks coming in to help us start -- get the process set up.

15           One of the things we did determine early on was we  
16 needed to find out how much of this train consisted of crude oil,  
17 because we did identify it as, again, the placard, I believe, was  
18 1267. So we did identify it as crude oil, but we didn't know how  
19 long the train was, how many cars were in the train, and whether  
20 the entirety of the train consisted of that product. So we  
21 determined early on we needed to know what the train was. Was it  
22 just this isolated part of it contained the product or was it the  
23 entire train?

24           So knowing early on we needed to find out that, we  
25 requested the assistance of the railroad. Now, we have two rail

1 lines going down along the river. We have a Norfolk Southern line  
2 and then we have the CSX line. We didn't know which one it was so  
3 we requested both railroads. We did get a representative from  
4 Norfolk Southern here. I don't know the time frame. It was  
5 probably within the first 30 to 45 minutes we got a representative  
6 of Norfolk Southern here. They immediately determined that it was  
7 not their rail line. They did stay on scene to kind of, I guess,  
8 be of some assistance, but they weren't able to help us at all  
9 really because it wasn't their train.

10           What we were looking for at that point in time, as much  
11 as anything, was information from the engineer or a conductor and  
12 a consist. We really wanted to know what was on that train. We  
13 made multiple, multiple notifications to the railroad to get  
14 someone from CSX to come to the command post. There was a delay  
15 in getting someone to the command post. I believe, if I'm not  
16 mistaken, it was somewhere around 4:00 before we actually got a  
17 representative from CSX to the command post. And it was -- I  
18 can't remember the gentleman's name. Was it Chase? I believe the  
19 gentleman's name was Chase.

20           There was some confusion as to where they needed to go.  
21 They initially went to the -- I guess it would be the western end  
22 of the train and we're trying to take care of some issues down  
23 there, but we kept communicating back and forth we need them to be  
24 at the command post. Keep in mind, though, that all along this  
25 time this was happening, I was getting calls from CSX. I was

1 actually getting calls from folks in Charlotte. I believe  
2 Mr. Hopes called me a number of times and several folks called me  
3 from CSX that they were on their way, that they were coming. They  
4 indicated that the hazardous materials folks were boarding a plane  
5 in Jacksonville, headed our way, which was helpful to me to know  
6 that they were coming, but obviously what I needed at that time  
7 was I needed someone from CSX to get me a consist and find out was  
8 there anything wrong with the engineer, did the train hit  
9 something down line that we didn't know about? Did we have  
10 another incident at the head of the train with the locomotive that  
11 has caused something else down there that has compressed the train  
12 and caused it to -- do we have a wreck down there that caused the  
13 derailment up here? So there was a little bit of delay and a  
14 little bit of confusion on getting the information from CSX to us.  
15 Once we got it, it was fine.

16           The consist initially went to -- was faxed to the police  
17 department and there was -- so once they did that, we did get it  
18 after consulting with the police commander. We were able to get  
19 the consist to us, but I don't know why it went to PD or what the  
20 process was to get it to PD, but once we got the initial  
21 documents, then we were able to determine what we had and could  
22 identify the train as being nothing but crude oil, I believe. If  
23 I'm not mistaken it was two locomotives, a car of industrial sand  
24 and then crude oil from that point forward, which was helpful to  
25 us because we wanted to know what we had.

1           We were able to confirm that there was no issue with the  
2 engineer. We actually never did see the engineer or talk with the  
3 engineer. We don't even know how far down the locomotive was. We  
4 just knew that our isolation area was going to be that number of  
5 cars. I believe the initial discussion was it was 13 cars that  
6 were involved with 3 in the river, after we had done some  
7 reconnaissance. Some individuals had gone across the river to get  
8 a better shot at it or get a better look at it after the fire died  
9 down to where we could determine how many cars we had involved.

10           We initially set our initial operation period at  
11 midnight, which would have been 10 hours. It was going to go from  
12 time of call until midnight. We just used midnight as a round  
13 number because we want to set 8-hour operational periods beyond  
14 that. We were able to, at that point in time, go ahead and confer  
15 with CSX and one of the goals and objectives of our initial  
16 operational period was to, one, identify the product, isolate it  
17 and contain it, any suppression activities and evacuation that  
18 needed to take place. But the other thing we were really looking  
19 for was to isolate the affected cars and get the rest of the train  
20 out of the way. We wanted the unaffected part of the train gone  
21 because, one, we didn't want to have anything bad happen to the  
22 part of the train that was in good condition and then, secondly,  
23 we had issues with the train being stopped across multiple grade  
24 crossings that was causing us issues with evacuation and then  
25 traffic flow.

1           The big -- evacuation was the biggest concern because we  
2 have an industrial foundry which was west. It goes upriver. It's  
3 called Griffin Pipe. And we want to evacuate the facility, but  
4 the train was actually stopped across the only way out. So we had  
5 some difficulty getting the folks out. They had to actually walk  
6 down the tracks and come back out. So that was a major concern of  
7 ours because we need to get this train out of the way.

8           So the initial folks, I believe it was Chase when he got  
9 on the scene, he said we can't do anything with the train yet. So  
10 we built that into our operational plans that we were going to  
11 leave the train as is until we got clearance from, I believe he  
12 said from the NTSB to -- or someone to actually uncouple and move  
13 the train.

14           And around 5 p.m. or 1700 we had made the decision --  
15 there was two decisions we made at that time. One was the hazard  
16 had diminished to the point where we can allow folks to come back  
17 into the previously evacuated area, so we allowed folks to come  
18 back into the evacuated area as far as Jefferson Street. We  
19 didn't allow anyone to go to the riverside of Jefferson Street,  
20 just the uphill side of Jefferson Street. Because we were looking  
21 at sheltering issues because there's a lot of residences on  
22 Jefferson Street on the uphill side and we didn't want to get into  
23 an issue of sheltering because we did determine that the incident  
24 had been contained enough that we didn't have a high hazard. So  
25 1700 was our benchmark for getting people back into their

1 businesses, getting people back into their residence so that we  
2 did not have to go into a sheltering piece overnight.

3           The other determination we made is, is that at 1700 I  
4 wanted to move the command post from the back of my Tahoe to our  
5 command post vehicle because we knew we were going to have a long  
6 duration and we wanted to get into a place where we could start  
7 developing our IEPs in a more organized, controlled environment  
8 instead of standing out in the street behind a Tahoe. So at  
9 1700-ish both of things took place, where we were able to, again,  
10 lift the evacuation for the upper parts and then move our command  
11 post to our command vehicle.

12           At the same time we were -- we had folks in the command  
13 vehicle working on developing the IEPs and doing the ICS forms  
14 documenting the incident. And from that point forward, our  
15 objectives became, for that first operational period, were going  
16 to be to continue detection monitoring, continue fire suppression  
17 support, continue EMS support and the command function as well,  
18 and we still wanted to get those trains, that train uncoupled and  
19 get those two independent pieces moved away. I believe somewhere  
20 around 2100, or 9 p.m., that started to happen. My times are kind  
21 of blending into what piece got moved first. I think the  
22 locomotive end moved first and then the tail end of the train was  
23 moved second. So somewhere in that 9:00-ish range, which I'm not  
24 sure exactly, we were able to meet that objective and get the  
25 affected piece of the train isolated and everything else gone.

1           And then from that point forward, it was more of us just  
2 supporting the operation and through the night. We did reach  
3 midnight and then we changed operational periods and we scaled  
4 back our operation at midnight. We brought in a reduced response  
5 because our -- CSX was actually starting into the recovery phase.  
6 They still had an active dynamic incident, but the hazard was very  
7 much minimized to where we thought the only thing we might have  
8 would be some, maybe some spill of product or some flash fires or  
9 some EMS emergencies, some injuries as related to the wrecking  
10 operation.

11           So when we got to midnight, we scaled back to the second  
12 operational period, which went from 2400 to roughly 0800, with a  
13 scaled back presence to where we were just supporting that  
14 detection monitoring and then suppression piece along with the  
15 EMS. And that carried us through until the change of shift and  
16 the transfer of command at 7:30, 0730 this morning, which is May  
17 the 1st.

18           Q. Well, Chief, just one other question. You mentioned  
19 that there were --

20           UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hey guys, could I grab a couple  
21 waters out of here? Okay. Thank you.

22           MR. BROWN: Do you want me to lock that?

23           MR. EL-ZOGHBI: No, that's fine. Don't worry about it.

24           BY MR. EL-ZOGHBI:

25           Q. Some delays with CSX in terms of being able to get the

1 information, consist information. Can you elaborate -- did your  
2 folks go out searching for the train crew or, you know, with your  
3 hazmat team or can you explain --

4 A. No, we actually didn't. Our big concern at that point  
5 in time with the hazmat crew was isolating it and determining what  
6 the product was and monitoring it. So we did not actually go seek  
7 out anyone that was on the train crew because we didn't even know  
8 where the locomotive was. The locomotive was train in -- out of  
9 site. So we don't even know where the locomotive -- I don't have  
10 no idea where the locomotive even stopped, so we did not do that.  
11 Our big thing was we wanted a CSX rep to come to the command post.

12 Now, the one thing, you know, to clarify is, is that we  
13 were getting -- we were in contact with CSX. They were calling us  
14 telling us, you know, this person's on their way, they're coming,  
15 this is what we're doing, and so forth and so on. But what I  
16 needed more than anything -- I mean, that was comforting to know  
17 that they were coming, but what I needed was someone from that  
18 company at my CP to be able to provide me answers to: Where's the  
19 locomotive? Is there anything else going on down line that we  
20 don't know about? Is there anything wrong with the engineer? Do  
21 we have a -- did it it a tractor trailer further down that we  
22 don't know about? Things of that nature, and then we need the  
23 consist. We need to know what this train has on it. We know  
24 what's here because we've identified the placards, but we don't  
25 know what's at the end and we don't know what's at the front. Is



1 the whole train this product or is it a mixed loaded train? So --

2 Q. And through your conversations, no one at CSX actually  
3 provided you that information, that you have a unit train of crude  
4 oil?

5 A. Not to me.

6 Q. Not to you? Okay.

7 A. Not to me. I was speaking more with the hazmat folks  
8 and the folks that were responders coming up here to mitigate the  
9 incident. But I did not get any communication from anyone saying  
10 that, yes, I'm looking at the consist and this is what it is.

11 Q. Okay. Did your hazmat team have to walk the whole train  
12 in order to make that determination?

13 A. No, because by the time we were getting ready to do that  
14 or thought we needed to do that, we did get a initial document.  
15 It was not the entire consist. It was a -- I think it was a  
16 three-page document that was two full pages and then a piece of a  
17 page that listed all the cars that -- it wasn't the consist as it  
18 -- it was just a list of all the cars and it confirmed what was in  
19 it. It confirmed the two locomotives, the industrial sand and  
20 then the rest was 1267. So that initial document that we got  
21 satisfied my initial concern as to, what is the train? The entire  
22 consist came later, the entire document with all of the individual  
23 information on the individual cars came at a later point.

24 Q. You estimated it was about 2 hours, 2 or 3? Do you  
25 remember how long it took?

1           A.    I'll tell you, the reason I'm going to say it was about  
2 2 hours was I remember talking to my deputy, Captain Coleman, and  
3 we were -- kept wondering where CSX was and kept wondering where  
4 CSX was, and I remember looking at my watch and it was around 4:00  
5 or 1600 and I told him, I said -- I forget who I had on the scene.  
6 I had someone there adjacent to the command post that I said to  
7 myself -- I said to him, if I don't get a person here from CSX by  
8 5 minutes after 4, I'm going to go talk to -- I believe it was, I  
9 believe it was Adam Thiel with the state, because he's the deputy  
10 secretary of public safety. I believe I said if I don't get  
11 someone from CSX here by 5 minutes after 4, I'm going to go talk  
12 to Adam and we're going to -- we're taking this to the next level.  
13 And within that couple of minutes, before I did that, he showed  
14 up. So the initial guy from CSX showed up at the CP before 5  
15 minutes after 4 because I remember --

16           Q.    Okay.

17           A.    -- specifically looking at my watch and setting that  
18 time that 5 -- he's got 3 minutes or whatever it was, because I  
19 was getting kind of frustrated. I'm like I've got to know, we've  
20 got to have someone here, and before my time ran out, he showed  
21 up. So --

22           Q.    Did you feel that you had the sufficient information in  
23 order to make the evacuation call and the --

24           A.    Well, yeah, what --

25           Q.    -- the safety calls based on your assessment or --

1           A.    Yes, what we did was, I felt that we had the sufficient  
2 information to make the calls that we needed because we based  
3 everything strictly on the product code or placard on that one --  
4 on those cars that we could identify, so we assumed the whole  
5 train was. So when we -- our hazardous materials team advised us  
6 to do the evacuations based on, okay, well this is the product  
7 that's here. So we -- our initial isolation distances and  
8 evacuations and all that were based on what we had.

9           We just wanted to know what everything else was. So we  
10 assumed that the whole train was, but our initial setup was based  
11 on what we knew we had. It was -- we knew what we had. We wanted  
12 to have the entire consist and all of the information so we could  
13 definitively say this is what we've got. But we wouldn't have  
14 changed anything. We did it the -- we did it the way we did it  
15 because that's what we were looking at. And so I felt we, I felt  
16 we had the information that we needed at the time to make the  
17 command decisions that we did based on the fact that there were  
18 placards on the cars that we could identify. Now, some of them  
19 were obstructed and some of them were damaged, but we were able to  
20 get a placard number off of a car that was involved or close to  
21 being involved that gave us the information and we were able to --

22           Q.    Okay.

23           A.    -- use the ERG to do our initial, our initial tactical  
24 considerations. So the consist would have been nice but it wasn't  
25 absolutely necessary. It was just something I wanted to check off

1 my box. It was a strategic, tactical goal I needed to get done.  
2 I needed to know what this train was.

3 Q. Absolutely.

4 A. And but it didn't -- if I had it in my hand when the  
5 train -- if I'd had it in my hand driving down here, it wouldn't  
6 have changed what we did. It was just something that this  
7 completes the circle and it checks all the boxes off that, okay, I  
8 have removed without any shadow of doubt what this train is. But  
9 it wouldn't have changed it.

10 Q. Can you describe to us the fire itself? Was it unique  
11 in any way or what were your impressions associated with how it  
12 was --

13 A. It was --

14 Q. -- (indiscernible) the liquid?

15 A. -- high level of black smoke. It was just intense  
16 boiling black smoke and just a high volume of fire. It was very  
17 aggressive. I mean, it was just -- you could tell it was burning  
18 something that was a petroleum-based product because of the, just  
19 the rolling nature of the fire, and it was just the intensity of  
20 the fire and then just the black smoke was just an incredible  
21 amount of black smoke, which to us is indicative of a hydrocarbon.

22 Q. You mentioned that there came a point when you decided  
23 just to let it burn?

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. Do you feel you had the resources needed, let's say, if

1 there was a cool fire up on, you know, the tracks themselves and  
2 could potentially -- any of the tank cars, do you feel like you're  
3 prepared --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. -- you were prepared for that?

6 A. Yes. We were well prepared. We had resources, we had  
7 adequate resources from our department. We actually -- the second  
8 battalion chief, Chief Bomar, who ran the city while I was down  
9 here, they activated mutual aid, got mutual aid companies from the  
10 counties backfill our stations. He used some overtime funds to  
11 put additional engines in service. So any resources I needed I  
12 had. I had actually way adequate resources down here. I think as  
13 long as the utilities could have given us water, we'd have been  
14 fine as far as our resources. We had master stream capabilities,  
15 had elevated string capabilities. There was no concern there.

16 Our decision to let it burn was based strictly on the  
17 recommendation of the hazardous materials folks. They recommended  
18 to do this and I listened to them. They're the subject matter  
19 experts on it. If they say do this, I do that because that's how  
20 I operate. I trust the -- I trust those folks as the subject  
21 matter experts and if they say, Chief, don't do that, then I don't  
22 do that.

23 Q. Understandable.

24 A. And that was the -- and that's how we made the decision  
25 to go ahead and let it burn, based strictly on the input and

1 advice of the hazmat team, hazmat folks.

2 Q. Do you recall hearing any pressure relief devices going  
3 off or --

4 A. I did not.

5 Q. -- anything like that down there?

6 A. I did not.

7 Q. No? Okay.

8 A. No, I didn't.

9 Q. Were there any concerns related to, you know, tank cars  
10 exploding or --

11 A. Oh, certainly.

12 Q. -- or did you guys take precautions on that?

13 A. Certainly. I mean, we -- our precaution was --

14 Q. Stay back?

15 A. -- backing out.

16 Q. Okay. But you guys didn't cool any of the tank cars up  
17 there? They all --

18 A. When we, when the --

19 Q. The fire was basically down?

20 A. -- when the fire died down, we started our cooling  
21 process --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. -- and hitting some hotspots. I know there was some  
24 concern that the cooling process may have cracked one of them. I  
25 believe one of them may have cracked during the cooling process

1 and so they stopped cooling. But I was -- I'm a strong advocate  
2 for trusting my advisors and when my advisors, being the hazmat  
3 team, are telling operations or telling back to us to tell  
4 operations do this, do that, then I have to trust their judgment.  
5 I mean, these guys are -- you know, I use the word subject matter  
6 expert loosely, but they are my subject matter experts and if they  
7 say do this, I do that. If they say don't do this, I don't do  
8 that. So a lot of our cooling operations and suppression  
9 operations were based solely on the input and advice of the  
10 hazardous materials team.

11 Q. Okay. And the fire you said went out, it was probably  
12 around 2 hours? You said it did take (indiscernible) an hour? Do  
13 you --

14 A. You know, I think it -- I don't know if it was that  
15 long. I would say it was every bit of an hour.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. My vantage point was one where my command post was  
18 located -- I could see byproduct of the fire overtop of buildings,  
19 but I couldn't actually see the fire. Our radio traffic would  
20 actually be clearer as to when that actually started to occur --

21 Q. Right.

22 A. -- because there were units talking about it had died  
23 down, it was mostly out. I don't remember when that was and  
24 Captain Coleman may have benchmarked that. I'm not sure whether  
25 he did or not and -- or time-stamped it with our dispatch. But I

1 do remember it being at least an hour before we felt comfortable  
2 that it had died down. You've got to remember that we received  
3 the call at something to 2 and by 5:00 we were letting people back  
4 in their house. So in that 3-hour period of time, this thing had  
5 gone from fully involved to out and had gone into a stable  
6 condition to where we felt comfortable letting folks back in. And  
7 actually, if I recall, we set 5:00 as our time because it was a  
8 nice round number, but if my memory serves me correct, we were  
9 actually earlier than that we could have let people back in, but  
10 we just set 5:00 as a time.

11 Q. Do you know how many people, roughly, were evacuated?

12 A. I don't. I didn't -- never got that number. I'm sure  
13 that the police department folks would have a better number on  
14 that. I think a lot of folks -- I don't know that we'd ever get  
15 an accurate count on that because I'm sure that there was a lot of  
16 self-evacuation. Chief Smith told me when he came down here he  
17 was driving, you know, typical --

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. -- fire department fashion: I'm driving in and they're  
20 running out. So there was a lot of folks just --

21 Q. Just leaving?

22 A. -- saw it and took off, so I have no idea how many. I  
23 know that the children's museum was occupied at the time. I don't  
24 know about the restaurant and how many people were in it, but I  
25 would say PD would have the better number on that, but --



1 Q. Okay.

2 A. -- I do not know.

3 Q. And I'm assuming you guys have an evacuation plan for  
4 incidents along the rail or do you have a city evacuation plan  
5 that you guys implemented?

6 A. Not necessarily along the rail. What we have is if we  
7 have to do an evacuation, the police department assists with the  
8 evacuation and the EOC would be activated, obviously, if we had an  
9 activation, and then the EOC would be contacted to help with the  
10 sheltering piece as well as the transportation piece. So we would  
11 be using our buses, our transit buses and other modes of  
12 transportation to transport the folks and then utilizing shelters  
13 of the -- the shelter that was discussed yesterday was E.C. Glass  
14 High School.

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. We do have other sheltering opportunities, and that's  
17 usually coordinated through the EOC.

18 Q. Did you have to implement any of those resources?

19 A. They did call for -- Major Stokes, who was the police  
20 commander, did call for buses and did call to have the shelter  
21 opened at E.C. Glass. But before we actually moved people, we had  
22 gotten to that point where --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- we're not going to do that. We didn't -- actually  
25 did not shelter anyone. They had moved forward on opening the

1 shelter or getting the shelter opened up just to put people in and  
2 providing transportation. But to my knowledge, no one was ever  
3 actually sheltered.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. They were evacuated and stood up on Main Street and  
6 watched it. And then when they were told they could come back in,  
7 they came back in and got their car and left or turned their  
8 computer off or came back in and went back to their apartment.

9 Q. With regards to your relationship with CSX and any  
10 training, do you guys have recurrent training with them or any  
11 sort of --

12 A. We don't --

13 Q. -- training exercises or anything like that?

14 A. No, and I think that a lot of that is probably, it's  
15 probably an information thing. I know that CSX provides training  
16 and I think it's -- could be one of those things that we didn't,  
17 either didn't know that they provided the training or didn't know  
18 what kind of training they provided and all that. So we're -- I  
19 didn't mention in my introduction, but prior to me being a field  
20 operations chief, I was the the training chief, so I'm familiar  
21 with all the training that's out there. And we have done some  
22 work with the railroads on some training, but it was normally --  
23 the big thing I remember was the DuPont CAER Car.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. DuPont would bring in the CAER Car. That's the main

1 thing I remember.

2 Q. It's through TRANSCAER, the --

3 A. Yes. Yes.

4 Q. -- (indiscernible) coming through? Okay.

5 A. I remember us doing that on a regular basis with the  
6 hazardous materials team, working with that particular group to  
7 get that training. But I don't remember any CSX training  
8 specifically.

9 Q. Okay. Do they -- I guess have you guys ever requested,  
10 like, commodity flow data or, I mean, in terms of knowing what  
11 products normally come through these routes?

12 A. I'm not sure if that is something that would've been  
13 done with the hazardous materials team. I know Chief Johnson is  
14 our hazardous materials coordinator and I don't know if that's  
15 something that he would have requested along the line as to what  
16 commodities go through here. I know he's very aware of the  
17 products in town with, specifically with the, you know, SARA --

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. -- Title III reports and all that. He's very familiar  
20 with that. But I'm not sure about any commodity flow reports or  
21 anything that's been done. That would actually be a question for  
22 him that he would know more about since that is his area, being  
23 the hazardous materials coordinator. But I'm not aware of any.

24 Q. But you guys don't have any specific procedures for,  
25 like, you know, PIH -- well, poison inhalation hazards or anything

1 that you guys are aware of or very concerned about --

2 A. Not that I'm aware of.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Not that I'm aware of.

5 Q. All right.

6 A. And again, the hazardous materials team themselves may  
7 have some --

8 Q. Operational -- yeah.

9 A. -- operational things that address that, but --

10 Q. Okay. Excellent.

11 MR. EL-ZOGHBI: Tim, do you have any questions?

12 MR. BROWN: I have none. Thank you.

13 MR. LIPSCOMB: Now one thing I will say in closing, I  
14 guess, is that while there was a delay with the getting someone  
15 from CSX to the CP initially, once we got people from CSX here, it  
16 was everyone I'd ever want to know from CSX here. When they came,  
17 they came in force. I think the only concern I had, and I think  
18 quite honestly it was a communication thing, I think it was --  
19 because I believe the guy said he came from Clifton Forge, so I  
20 mean he had like a 45-minute, a 50-minute drive, 50-mile drive to  
21 get here, so I think there was a communication issue initially.  
22 But I have no doubt in my mind that from the moment this happened  
23 CSX corporate knew about it and they were Johnny-on-the-spot on  
24 it, because to mobilize as quick as they did and to have folks  
25 here as fast as they did in the numbers that they did to support

1 this was -- it was phenomenal to me.

2 BY MR. EL-ZOGHBI:

3 Q. Excellent.

4 A. I didn't realize things happened that quick. But now I  
5 do know that when these things happen, they stop everything, get  
6 on a plane and go to Lynchburg. But I -- so I have no concern  
7 with the response because I know that it takes a while to get  
8 people from --

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. -- Charlotte. It takes a while to get people from  
11 Jacksonville and all that. So I have no concern with that. I  
12 really don't have a big concern in general. I think it was a  
13 communication issue with making sure that CSX had someone local on  
14 call that could come to the command post and find me something  
15 right now, which the big thing obviously at the time was what  
16 happened, what do you know happened? What's the situation with  
17 the engineer? What's the situation with your locomotives? Is  
18 your locomotive secured? Is this thing, is this thing shut down?  
19 Do we have a engineer that's had something happen to him and  
20 they've wrecked up the line and --

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. -- and the locomotive is still running or is this  
23 locomotive locked out? I need to know that and then I need to  
24 know what your train consists of. And I think that was -- if I  
25 had a concern it would be that that initial piece of getting

1 someone to the CP to answer what happened, what's the status of  
2 your locomotives, what's the status of your engineer and what's on  
3 the train? That was my initial concerns. It was -- I felt, from  
4 an incident commander's perspective, that that two hours was a  
5 little bit long.

6 Now, keep in mind too that I was getting document -- I  
7 got the consist in that initial document prior to the rep showing  
8 up.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. But -- so I was able to eliminate that concern, but I'm  
11 the type of guy who still wants to talk to someone. I want to see  
12 someone, hey, what have I got here? So --

13 Q. One quick follow-up here. You said you did the air  
14 monitoring and you're tracking and -- for the wind directions and  
15 all that?

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. Was the plume coming back towards the city or was it --

18 A. As I recall, it was --

19 Q. -- a different direction?

20 A. As I recall, it was going mostly straight up.

21 Q. Straight up. Okay.

22 A. And if it was going at all in any direction, it was  
23 going downriver.

24 Q. Downriver. Okay.

25 A. It may have gone up, it may have gone up and downriver

1 some, but it pretty much went straight up.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. There wasn't any, there wasn't any appreciable wind. It  
4 wasn't, you know, laying over and blowing into town. It was  
5 pretty much going straight up and if it had any lateral movement,  
6 it would've been downwind, or downstream.

7 Q. So there were really no -- and I know you guys were  
8 doing monitoring. There were no concerns for --

9 A. No.

10 Q. -- personal exposure and --

11 A. No.

12 Q. -- stuff like that?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. No. We actually had gotten to -- we had actually had  
16 set up an engine for decon, or post-decon and we never used it.  
17 We never got to a point where we deconned anybody or anything  
18 because it was pretty much the incident happened here, it stayed  
19 there and everything went straight up.

20 Q. Okay. Excellent.

21 In closing, I would say do you have any sort of lessons  
22 learned or things that you'd say you'd hope we could improve or  
23 would make your job as a fire chief in an incident like this any  
24 better, any easier?

25 A. Information. I think that's the big thing. I think I'm

1 one of those folks that -- me personally, as a battalion chief, I  
2 like to have information. I like to have a steady flow of  
3 information as quick as I can. Now maybe sometimes my requests or  
4 -- may be unreasonable, but that's just how we are. I mean, I've  
5 got this situation going on and I'm the IC and I'm -- been charged  
6 or tagged by -- you know, "tag, you're it" to take care of this.  
7 I need information. I need to know what this is. I need  
8 information as quick as I can. And I'm somebody that too much  
9 information is never enough, so I can't be overdone with  
10 information.

11           So I think -- I wouldn't necessarily call it a lesson  
12 learned. I think it's a way to make it better overall is to maybe  
13 streamline that communication piece and find a way to get the  
14 information a little bit quicker. And I'm not saying that anybody  
15 did anything wrong. I'm just saying that it kind of was  
16 frustrating from my perspective, that I needed it. But then  
17 again, I may be unreasonable and "I want it now" type of thing may  
18 be unreasonable.

19           So I think other thing, from a response perspective, we  
20 did not know what we had. We had no idea what we had and it  
21 didn't take us long to figure out what we had and then we had to  
22 put it in reverse. And been in the business as long as I have,  
23 you want to avoid as much as you can putting the car in reverse.

24           Q.     Yeah.

25           A.     But we had no idea what we had and if you rolled -- you



1 couldn't see it because if you look at the way the layout of the  
2 geography or the layout of the buildings are, when you come  
3 straight down 9th Street and you look in that direction, what you  
4 see is the Depot Grille. And the entire fire and all of the major  
5 derailment was in your line of sight behind the Depot Grille. So  
6 you had the Depot, then you had the incident, and then you had the  
7 river. So when you came down 9th Street, the first thing you saw  
8 was this great big column of smoke and fire coming from the other  
9 side of the Depot. Now you know the railroad's there, but we  
10 don't know what's over there. So you had to go down to get a,  
11 more of an angle on it so you could actually see what it was.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So again, I'm not one of those guys who likes to put it  
14 in reverse, but I understand I've got to find --

15 Q. Sometimes you got to, yeah.

16 A. -- I understand I've got to find out what this thing is,  
17 so --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. That would be a lesson learned would maybe be just to  
20 sit back and -- from a distance and say, well, it looks like it's  
21 probably a train -- it looks like a train, probably is a train.  
22 But then again, too, we have a life safety hazard. We had folks  
23 that were in the hot zone. We had folks that were in the parking  
24 lot, people who were in the business down there, so it would have  
25 been irresponsible for us to not get people out of there.

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. And that's kind of one of those things that we have to  
3 take an appreciable risk to look out for the folks that are down  
4 there. That might be driving down there and getting on the bull  
5 horn and say get out of here and backing up yourself. So --

6 Q. Well, Chief Lipscomb, I just want to thank you.

7 MR. EL-ZOGHBI: And I guess with this, we'll conclude  
8 the interview at approximately 5 minutes to 4.

9 MR. LIPSCOMB: You're quite welcome.

10 MR. EL-ZOGHBI: Thank you.

11 (Whereupon, at 3:55, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:           CRUDE OIL TRAIN DERAILMENT WITH  
                                  HAZARDOUS MATERIALS RELEASE  
                                  APRIL 30, 2014  
                                  LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA  
                                  Interview of Robert E. Lipscomb

DOCKET NUMBER:           DCA-14-FR-008

PLACE:                    Lynchburg, Virginia

DATE:                     May 1, 2014

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to  
the recording accomplished at the interview.

---

Karen A. Stockhausen  
Transcriber

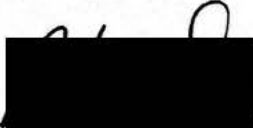
**National Transportation Safety Board  
Office of Railroad, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Investigations  
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, SW  
Washington, DC 20594**

**SUBJECT:** Review of Interview Regarding the CSX Transportation Train Derailment in Lynchburg, Virginia on April 30, 2014  
NTSB accident number: DCA-04-FR008

I have reviewed the referenced material and:

- (A) I have no comments to make, or  
✓ ----- (B) my comments are submitted herewith.

**NOTE:** Please submit this statement and any comments **NO LATER THAN (12 P.M.) ON July 16, 2014.**

 ROBERT E. LIPSCOMB, JR.  
Signature and Printed Name  
BATTALION CHIEF, LYNCHBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT  
Organizational Affiliation  
14 July 2014  
Date



*Fire Department*

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14 July 2014

Mr. El-Zoghbi:

Following my review of the transcript of the May 1, 2014 interview conducted following the CSX derailment in Lynchburg Virginia, I am submitting the following changes/clarifications:

- Page 6-Line 20: "he came out and he left"
- Page 21-Line 15: "had elevated stream capabilities"

The balance of the transcript is acceptable as presented.

  
Robert E Lipscomb Jr.  
Battalion Chief

