

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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CSX TRAIN DERAILMENT *

BRONX, NEW YORK *

JULY 18, 2013 *

Docket No.: DCA-13-FR-009

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Interview of: MIKE DENNERLEIN

New York, New York

Monday,
July 22, 2013

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MICHAEL FLANIGON
Investigator-in-Charge

APPEARANCES:

MIKE FLANIGON, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20594

PETER LAPRE, Chief Inspector
Region 1
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

JOHN LONGOBARDI, Line Superintendent
Metro-North Operations

KIRK THOMAS
Association of Commuter Rail Employees (ACRE)

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I N T E R V I E W

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2 MR. FLANIGON: Okay. My name is Mike Flanigon, F-l-a-n-
3 i-g-o-n, and it is July 22nd, 2013. We're interviewing a Metro-
4 North conductor who was at Marble Hill station at the time of the
5 derailment that we're investigating that occurred 7/18/2013. I'm
6 going to go around the room and ask everybody who is here to state
7 and spell their name, and I'll start with Mike, who's the
8 conductor.

9 MR. DENNERLEIN: Mike Dennerlein, conductor,
10 D-e-n-n-e-r-l-e-i-n.

11 MR. FLANIGON: Okay, and with him is?

12 MR. THOMAS: Kirk Thomas, K-i-r-k, T-h-o-m-a-s, ACRE.

13 MR. FLANIGON: Okay. And?

14 MR. LAPRE: Peter LaPre, L-a-P-r-e, FRA.

15 MR. LONGOBARDI: John Longobardi, L-o-n-g-o-b-a-r-d-i,
16 Metro-North Operations.

17 MR. FLANIGON: Okay, great. Thanks. Just one
18 administrative detail that I'll get out of the way, I want to make
19 sure that you understand we're going to tape record or digitally
20 record the interview, and we'll supply you with a transcript.

21 MR. DENNERLEIN: I do understand that.

22 MR. FLANIGON: Okay, great.

INTERVIEW OF MIKE DENNERLEIN

24 BY MR. FLANIGON:

25 Q. I want to start real generally and ask you to walk us

1 through the relevant parts of that evening, what happened, and
2 take your time, just kind of lay it out in your own words, and
3 start at the point where you think best explains the story.

4 A. Well, I had been bit by a dog on the train. I contacted
5 the RTC, asked them what they wanted me to do. Blood was drawn by
6 the dog. The RTC got back to me, and said we're going to -- he
7 asked me where, he would like the police department to meet with
8 us. I said the woman's getting off on Marble Hill, so Marble Hill
9 would be sufficed. He agreed, and he told us to proceed to Marble
10 Hill and when we got there to stand fast until the police arrived.

11 When the police -- at that time frame, after she had bit
12 me, I went and I called him from the rear of the train. I saw the
13 freight train coming up. I knew at that time frame most likely
14 was, instead of holding him, they were going to put him in front
15 of me because I didn't know how long I'd be stuck at Marble Hill.
16 So I went back through the train. By the time I got back up
17 there, my engineer had saw the freight train. He goes, "Oh, man,
18 they put the freight in front of us, we're going to be here.
19 We're going to probably end up following him all the way up." And
20 about 40 seconds later, he called me back on the IC and he said,
21 "No, we're not, he's on the ground." And I said okay.

22 And we proceeded to wait until -- that's all I saw of
23 the freight train. We proceeded to wait for the police
24 department. When the police department came, I got off the train.
25 I went up to the bridge area, where I sat and we waited for the

1 EMT, and the woman with her dog. The police -- everybody thought
2 that the police was responding to the derailment, and the EMT was
3 responding to the derailment, but they were coming for me.

4 I could see a blinking light from the -- which I thought
5 was the rear of the freight train, in front of ours, just past the
6 signal at CP-11, the northbound signal. And that's all in regards
7 to that, that I saw.

8 Q. Okay. And one acronym you used there was RTC, which
9 stands for rail traffic controller; is that right?

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. Okay, good. So from your position in the train, were
12 you able to observe the freight train as it passed your train?

13 A. He came up, he was starting to pass me in the rear of
14 the train as I started to walk forward. Whether or not he had a
15 signal to stop, I have no idea.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. That's the only part of him that I saw, but he was going
18 extremely slow.

19 Q. Okay. And did you see anything that looked out of the
20 ordinary on what you did see of the train as it was going by?

21 A. No, I did not. I was trying to get back up front to
22 make sure my trainman didn't open up the doors after I was told by
23 the RTC not to open up the doors and wait for the police.

24 Q. Okay. And when you got up, you described seeing a
25 blinking light, which would have been, you thought, and makes

1 sense to me, the rear end device on the freight train. That was
2 on the other side of the CP-10 signal, I guess it would be the
3 southbound signal?

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. Okay. About how far, if you can estimate?

6 A. Hard to say because of the distance that I was seeing.
7 I don't want to guess.

8 Q. Okay. All right. And did you hear the radio traffic
9 between your engineer and the freight train, or any radio traffic?

10 A. No, because I was walking at that time frame in between
11 the two cars, getting back up to the fourth car. And when I got
12 up there, my first IC was -- he goes -- I heard him sit there and
13 say --

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. -- that -- he goes, "Oh, they put the freight in front
16 of me." And I said, "Yeah, that's okay." And then I walked out,
17 and I was talking to my trainman out on the thing, and then I
18 heard the IC go off again, and that's he informed me that they
19 derailed.

20 Q. Yeah. Okay. And at this entire time, you're stopped at
21 Marble Hill?

22 A. The entire time we're stopped at Marble Hill.

23 Q. Okay, great. I think that's probably all I have.

24 MR. FLANIGON: We'll go around the room and let other
25 folks ask any questions they think of.

1 MR. LAPRE: My name is Peter LaPre.

2 MR. DENNERLEIN: Hi, Peter.

3 BY MR. LAPRE:

4 Q. When you're stopped at Marble Hill -- well, first, how
5 many cars did you have on your train?

6 A. We had six cars.

7 Q. Six cars. And Marble Hill is a short platform?

8 A. It's a four-car platform, sir. The rear two were
9 hanging.

10 Q. And the rear two were south of the platform?

11 A. South of the platform.

12 Q. So your head car was?

13 A. Right on the platform.

14 Q. Right on the platform.

15 From -- and I don't know if you saw this, after your
16 engineer had told you that the train was derailed, if you were in
17 the front car or the cab with him, what would you be able to see?
18 Could you see the derailed cars, or did you -- could only see the
19 rear marker from that distance?

20 A. I was only in the -- I was in the fourth car. So I
21 wasn't on the head end with him. I was in the fourth car from the
22 north car. I didn't see any part of the derailment until I got up
23 onto the bridgeway going across from Marble Hill. Marble Hill's a
24 center platform. There's a staircase that goes all the way up to
25 the top of the hill, and then a bridge that goes over to the land.

1 And when we were standing on bridge, I could see the back, where I
2 saw the blinking light from, of the train.

3 Q. So you had to go all the way up there --

4 A. At that height, to see.

5 Q. -- to see the rear end of the train?

6 A. Right.

7 Q. Okay. Thank you, nothing further.

8 MR. FLANIGON: John?

9 MR. LONGOBARDI: Yes. John Longobardi.

10 BY MR. LONGOBARDI:

11 Q. Mike, just one quick -- a couple of questions. Did you
12 an assistant with you that night?

13 A. Yes, I did.

14 Q. Was -- where was that person?

15 A. At the time frame, he was in -- he came back with me. I
16 called him to the fourth car. He was in the fourth car with me
17 when this whole thing came, so he was right there at the back.
18 Because I had told him that we were waiting for the police, that
19 mostly likely is that they were either going to take me off the
20 train -- because at that one point, the RTC did ask if I had an
21 assistant on the train and could he take over, because most likely
22 was then they were going to take me away.

23 Q. Sure.

24 A. Okay, because they said if the EMTs need to take him to
25 a hospital, we need to know if we can -- if you had a conductor.

1 Q. Did your assistant see any part of the derailment where
2 he was working, sir?

3 A. I do not know that, sir.

4 MR. LONGOBARDI: Okay. That was it.

5 MR. LAPRE: I'm sorry. Pete LaPre.

6 BY MR. LAPRE:

7 Q. One additional question.

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. At any time did you use a radio to communicate the CSX
10 train?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Thank you.

13 MR. FLANIGON: Okay. That's it?

14 Good enough. Well, I'll thank you and turn this off.

15 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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JULY 18, 2013
Interview of Mike Dennerlein

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PLACE: New York, New York

DATE: July 22, 2013

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.

Andrew King
Transcriber