

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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AMTRAK TRAIN 188 DERAILMENT NEAR

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PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

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Docket No.: DCA-15-MR-010

MAY 12, 2015

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Interview of: JIMMY WALTERS

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Monday,

May 18, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: DAVID BUCHER
Railroad Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

DAVID BUCHER, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

STEPHEN JENNER, Ph.D., Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MICHAEL BULL, Operating Practices Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

JAMES GEE, Operating Practices Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration

CARL FIELDS
Safety Task Force
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

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I N T E R V I E W

(3:15 p.m.)

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3 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher, Rail Accident
4 Investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board. It's
5 May 18, 2015, and this is the interview of Jimmy Walters, Conrail
6 engineer that was working at Frankford Junction yard on May 12th
7 at the time of the Amtrak derailment. That'd be NTSB Accident
8 Number DCA-15-MR-010. The time is approximately 3:15. And we're
9 going to take a little break here, one second.

10 (Off the record.)

11 (On the record.)

12 MR. BUCHER: All right. This is Dave Bucher, and we're
13 back. And to my right, I have --

14 DR. JENNER: Stephen Jenner with the NTSB.

15 MR. HILL: Donald Hill with the BLET Safety Task Force.

16 MR. BULL: Mike Bull with the FRA.

17 MR. GEE: Jim Gee with the FRA.

INTERVIEW OF JIMMY WALTERS

18
19 BY MR. BUCHER:

20 Q. Okay, Jim, if you would, if you could just go back and
21 tell us what happened in the best of your recollection on Tuesday
22 evening around the time of the Amtrak derailment?

23 A. Okay. Are you still there?

24 Q. Still here. Go ahead.

25 A. Okay, I tied my engines up in the yard at Frankford

1 Junction. We were finished working that evening, and I tied my
2 engines down, tested the brake. And when I was walking across the
3 yard back to the office, you know, I heard the train coming. I
4 guess it was eastbound. And I -- you know, my subconscious, I
5 knew something didn't sound right with it because normally the
6 wheels are like whistling and I heard like a clacking sound or
7 something. I looked up at the Amtrak, the main line, and I saw
8 the train briefly, but then my eyes got diverted from me.

9 The catenary poles started sparking. And like, then
10 there was a couple good explosions, and then one giant explosion.
11 And I just -- you know, at that time, you know, it kind of
12 startled me so I really didn't hear the crash and the wreck. But
13 I knew something was wrong, so I also went to the yard office and
14 made some phone calls: South Jersey dispatcher to shut down the
15 Delair Branch; CTEC 6, for them to, you know, investigate, maybe
16 shut down what they could out there on the main line; and I called
17 the trainmaster at Camden yard office just to make sure that
18 everybody knew that there was a problem out here.

19 And I knew, you know, there was a lot of dust coming
20 from the back -- the east end of the yard. So, you know, I wasn't
21 sure what to do then because if there was catenaries down or
22 whatever, you know, I didn't want to go back there and, you know,
23 could be some electrical problems. So about -- I waited maybe 5
24 minutes. The next thing, there was people filtering out of the
25 west end of the yard here by where our freight cars are and the

1 engines that I parked.

2 And I just -- I grabbed my conductor and grabbed some
3 flashlights and hustled down there and tried to help some people
4 out as best I could. And, you know, saw the wreck down there and
5 was helping people off of the wrecked cars and stuff. And that's
6 about the long and the short of it.

7 We were in contact with CTEC 6 during the whole time,
8 trying to, you know, coordinate some emergency vehicles. And then
9 I had to come up here to the (indiscernible) to try and direct
10 some of these emergency vehicles into the site, what's the easiest
11 way that they could back there. And just tried to help out the
12 best we could.

13 Then I had to move some cars around later with the help
14 of the trainmaster and my conductor to -- you know, so they could
15 get emergency vehicles into an access road in the back there. So
16 that's about the long and the short of it.

17 But you know, as far as the wreck went, I knew something
18 sounded funny like -- you know, I don't know if it was the speed
19 of the train hitting that curve, because I lost sight of it
20 because the Delair Branch is actually higher level than the main
21 line next to it. So, like I said, I didn't see the wreck itself,
22 but I did hear something that was funny, like up by the home
23 signal there where we come out on the Delair Branch. So, and
24 that's about it.

25 MR. BUCHER: Okay, I appreciate it. A lot of detail

1 absolutely.

2 MR. WALTERS: Hello?

3 MR. BUCHER: Hello?

4 MR. WALTERS: Hello?

5 MR. BUCHER: Hello? Okay, this is Dave Bucher. We're
6 going to pause again.

7 (Off the record.)

8 (On the record.)

9 MR. WALTERS: All right.

10 MR. BUCHER: Okay, this is Dave Bucher. We're back
11 again. And we're going to start with just a couple questions for
12 Mr. Walters.

13 BY DR. JENNER:

14 Q. Hi. This is Steve Jenner with the Safety Board. Thank
15 you for taking time out to talk to us.

16 A. No sweat. I'm on the clock, Steve. No problem.

17 Q. Oh, okay. You can talk slow if that helps.

18 A couple questions. Did you hear any radio
19 communications from the Amtrak train before it derailed?

20 A. No, sir. No. We weren't working on that channel at the
21 time. I was actually walking my (indiscernible), you know,
22 letting a train derail.

23 Q. Okay. So you weren't able to hear any radio
24 communications from any train for like, let's say --

25 A. No, sir.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. I just heard -- a little earlier, we heard something
3 about a SEPTA train being hit with something, but that was it.
4 You know, that was earlier. Maybe 15, 20 minutes earlier.

5 Q. Okay, right.

6 A. And then we came -- you know, we came back into the yard
7 and I parked my engines and then at the time of the Amtrak wreck,
8 no, I didn't hear any communications over the radio, until the
9 wreck. And then we were in constant contact with CTEC 6.

10 Q. Okay, did you have any interaction with the passengers
11 from the train?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. And can you just walk us through what you saw and what
14 you did?

15 A. Just a lot of injured folks. I was helped -- I helped a
16 couple people off of one of the cars, and then I -- it was a
17 little too dangerous after the first one, but she had already been
18 committed, you know, because she was climbing down. And I asked
19 the other folks to stay up there until emergency personnel came,
20 and which they did. And waited for some ladders and stuff to get
21 there. And we helped -- I helped one lady on the ground, stuffed
22 a pocketbook under her head. She was laying in the dirt. And a
23 couple folks, I -- you know, I opened the door to our office here
24 and they were sitting in here.

25 And, you know, I gave some water to some people. I

1 brought a big bag of water down there and was handing some water
2 out. And just trying to, you know, use a flashlight to -- you
3 know, so they could watch where they were walking and stuff. And
4 that's about it.

5 Q. Right. Do you know if you had any contact of the
6 engineer of 188?

7 A. No, sir. But I do remember a police officer or somebody
8 saying that he wasn't in the cab of the engine. Because that was
9 like separated from the cars a little further down inside the
10 yard, but they checked the engine and they didn't see him or
11 couldn't find him or something. I don't know. They were asking,
12 people were asking where he was.

13 Q. Do you have a -- can you give an estimate of how long
14 after the accident you heard that communication?

15 A. I think maybe 15, 20 minutes (indiscernible), which I'm
16 just guessing there, Steve.

17 Q. Right. That's fine. Did you run into any of the
18 conductors or assistant conductors?

19 A. No, sir. No.

20 DR. JENNER: Okay. That's very good. Thank you for
21 those details. That's all the questions I have. We'll go around
22 the table here.

23 MR. WALTERS: Okay.

24 MR. HILL: This is Don Hill. I have no questions.

25 MR. BULL: Yeah, Jim, Mike Bull, FRA. I don't have any

1 questions either.

2 MR. WALTERS: Okay.

3 MR. GEE: Jim Gee. Thank you very much, Jim. And I
4 have no questions. Thank you very much.

5 MR. WALTERS: Thank you also.

6 BY MR. BUCHER:

7 Q. Okay, Jim. I just have a couple follow-up and then I
8 think we're done. And it involves a little bit about the SEPTA
9 train that got -- that you mentioned you heard a little bit about
10 on the radio.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay, in your experience in working around the Frankford
13 Junction area, have you personally ever experienced, you know,
14 rocks being thrown at your train for any reason?

15 A. No, sir. I actually just got on this job about 2 weeks
16 ago. And but as far as, rocks thrown at me out here since then,
17 no. And, you know, on and off on the extra list working up here,
18 I've never really had any problems.

19 MR. BUCHER: Okay, all right. I think that's the only
20 question I have. So I'm looking around the table and I see one
21 more from Mr. Hill.

22 BY MR. HILL:

23 Q. Yes, Jim. This is Don Hill again with the BLET. How
24 long have you been with Conrail?

25 A. For 25 years.

1 Q. And you stated you just started working at Frankford
2 yard?

3 A. I'm sorry, what was that?

4 Q. I'm sorry. I said that you stated you just started at
5 Frankford yard. Have you worked at Frankford yard prior to this
6 accident?

7 A. Oh, yeah. Well, I worked on and off here, you know,
8 over the years maybe had a couple weeks that I could hold it and
9 got bumped, you know, here and there. And I worked up here when I
10 was younger, you know, on the extra list on and off, a day here, a
11 day there, but never really steady on a regular job.

12 Q. Okay, thank you. I appreciate that.

13 A. Okay.

14 MR. HILL: I have no further questions.

15 MR. BUCHER: Okay, and I think we have one more, and
16 then we're done.

17 BY MR. GEE:

18 Q. Yeah, Jim, this is Jim Gee again from the FRA. I just
19 have one question. When you tied your locomotives down, you know,
20 what track did you tie your locomotives down on?

21 A. I believe it was on 3 track.

22 Q. Ready 3?

23 A. I'm not sure, to be honest with you. That's all I know
24 it as, is 3 track.

25 Q. Okay. Well, what track would it be next to? The

1 eastbound?

2 A. Yeah, yeah, 4 and 5 on the -- if you're looking at, you
3 know west to east, to the right. And then, eastbound/westbound, I
4 believe -- or westbound/eastbound.

5 Q. Okay, perfect. I know what track. Thank you, Jim.

6 A. All right, sir.

7 BY DR. JENNER:

8 Q. This is Steve Jenner again. Can you tell us what your
9 conductor was doing during this time?

10 A. Yeah, he was back there directing the -- you know, in
11 contact with CTEC 6. They were asking him questions about
12 catenaries and he was helping people also.

13 Q. Okay, so similar activities as you?

14 A. Pardon me?

15 Q. More or less, similar activities as you?

16 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

17 Q. Okay. Do you --

18 A. I believe we were the only ones on the ground with radio
19 contact with CTEC 6, and -- you know, up until the emergency
20 personnel and the police and everybody got here.

21 Q. Got it. Great. Well, thank you.

22 A. Okay.

23 MR. BUCHER: Okay, Jim. I think that does it. We'll go
24 ahead and conclude the interview.

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: AMTRAK TRAIN 188 DERAILMENT NEAR
 PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA
 MAY 12, 2015
 Interview of Jimmy Walters

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-MR-010

PLACE: Philadelphia, PA

DATE: May 18, 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.

Katie Leach
Transcriber