



SURVIVAL FACTORS/HUMAN PERFORMANCE FACTUAL REPORT ATTACHMENT

MILLERSBURG, OR

Transcript of NTSB Interview with Jefferson Fire Department

HWY23FH013

(48 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

FATAL MULTI-VEHICLE ACCIDENT NEAR * Accident No.: HWY23FH013
ALBANY, OREGON ON MAY 18, 2023 *

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Interview of: LOUIS GISLER, Chief, Incident Commander
LEVI ECKHARDT, Chief
Jefferson Fire Department

Jefferson Fire District
189 North Main Street
Jefferson, Oregon

Wednesday,
May 24, 2023

APPEARANCES:

JOHN HUMM, Survival Factors Group Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

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2 MR. HUMM: Today is May 24th, 2023. This interview is at the
3 Jefferson Fire District at 189 North Main Street in Jefferson,
4 Oregon. This interview is in reference to NTSB Case Number
5 HWY23FH013, the crash in Millersburg, Oregon. I am interviewing
6 the IC and Chief of Jefferson Fire District. So they're here with
7 me now.

8 So both of you, one at a time and, Chief, you can start, if
9 you could say and spell your name for the transcriptionist so that
10 she can identify your voice to a person.

11 CHIEF ECKHARDT: My name is Levi Eckhardt, L-e-v-i, E-c-k-h-
12 a-r-d-t.

13 CHIEF GISLER: My name's Louis Gisler, L-o-u-i-s, G-i-s-l-e-
14 r.

15 MR. HUMM: All right. Thanks a lot, guys. I really
16 appreciate it. So, you know, thanks for agreeing to do this
17 interview. It really helps our investigation quite a bit just to
18 know about the general EMS response.

19 So what I'd like to do first, and one at a time, if you could
20 both just, as we discussed before I turned the recorder on, if you
21 both give your consent that it's okay for me to record this?

22 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Yes, it's okay for you to record this.

23 CHIEF GISLER: Yes.

24 MR. HUMM: All right. Thanks, guys.

25 INTERVIEW OF CHIEF LOUIS GISLER AND CHIEF LEVI ECKHARDT

1 MR. HUMM: Chief, why don't you start. Maybe just how you
2 started in this department and how you came up and how long you've
3 held your current position?

4 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So I started in 1989 in the fire service.
5 I've been a volunteer firefighter in a couple different
6 organizations. I was a paid firefighter for the City of Cornelius
7 for 5 years, a paid captain training officer for Banks Fire
8 District. I was the fire chief for Scio Fire District, and then
9 in December of this year or last year, I became the fire chief of
10 Jefferson Fire District.

11 MR. HUMM: Thank you.

12 CHIEF GISLER: I started in '07 as a volunteer for Jefferson
13 and went to school. And they posted a job and I applied. And
14 been here since 2007. So I'm just working my way up.

15 MR. HUMM: Great. And currently you are?

16 CHIEF GISLER: Division Chief.

17 MR. HUMM: Okay. Thank you. All right. That's great.
18 Thanks. So now, what I'd like to get into is just some general
19 details about your department, and I don't know whoever is best to
20 give these, and again, if you don't know the answer that's fine.
21 So if you could tell me how many employees, both sworn and non-
22 sworn, that you employ?

23 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So we have eight full-time staff. That's
24 the fire chief, division chief in charge of training, a paid
25 firefighter engineer, EMT admin assistant, an admin assistant that

1 is also an EMR, and then there are three full-time
2 firefighter/paramedic engineers that work shift work. So the
3 first personnel are all dayshift personnel, and then the three
4 shift work people. We have 17 part-time EMT and paramedics and 10
5 out-of-district volunteers, 7 in-district volunteers, and 8
6 support members.

7 MR. HUMM: Thank you very much. That answers my next
8 question which was the number of -- if you have volunteers. So
9 thank you for that.

10 So could you give me a description of your current shift
11 setup

12 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So currently we have on shift every day, we
13 have a firefighter -- sorry, we have a full-time
14 firefighter/paramedic that's on shift. If they are off, then they
15 are covered by a part-time paramedic. And then we have a second
16 person that is a part time either EMT or paramedic that helps
17 staff the ambulance. And then daytime, we have the staff
18 personnel that are here which should be myself, the training
19 chief, the full-time admin engineer, firefighter/EMT and our other
20 admin EMR. And then we have resident volunteers, volunteers and
21 we always have a duty officer that's on as well. So it just
22 depends from day-to-day the additional staffing.

23 MR. HUMM: Okay. And then your typical schedule, is it fixed
24 or rotated?

25 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Which? Like who's schedule?

1 MR. HUMM: Like your shift setup. Do you --

2 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So our shift, we do 24-48s.

3 MR. HUMM: Okay.

4 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Daytime staff is Monday through Friday, 8 to
5 5. Our duty officers are on from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. during the
6 week, and 24 hours on the weekends.

7 MR. HUMM: Okay. Thanks. What I'd like to talk next is just
8 generic things about how you respond to things. So not yet
9 specifically about the crash. So, first of all, does your agency
10 use plain English or 10 code signals?

11 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Plain English.

12 MR. HUMM: Okay.

13 CHIEF ECKHARDT: As per NIMS requirement.

14 MR. HUMM: And if you could -- can you describe your radio
15 setup at all? Like do you have, you know, like a main channel and
16 like some other side channels that you can --

17 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So we have a dispatch channel which is South
18 1. We have a main working channel which is South 2 which mainly
19 is Jefferson Fire and Turner Fire.

20 CHIEF GISLER: And Aumsville.

21 CHIEF ECKHARDT: And Aumsville. And then there's a South 3
22 channel which is Stayton and Sublimity and I think --

23 CHIEF GISLER: Aumsville.

24 CHIEF ECKHARDT: -- Aumsville. And then the South 4 channel
25 which is further up the Canyon, Mill City and Gates and that. We

1 have access to the state fire marshal's channel to use, and then
2 we also have I guess VTAC channels which are search and rescue
3 channels and that type of stuff as well.

4 CHIEF GISLER: And we have a privately licensed channel for
5 us, for just kind of a traffic channel, that's just for Jefferson.
6 And then there's also a South 1 Halls Ridge which is way up the
7 Canyon.

8 MR. HUMM: Okay. Thank you. And then does your department
9 have its own dispatch center or how are you guys called out?

10 CHIEF ECKHARDT: We're dispatched through what's called
11 MetCom which does all the fire agencies except for Keizer, Salem
12 and Marion County Fire 1, in the Marion County -- in Marion
13 County.

14 MR. HUMM: And is that shared with the police department or
15 is that strictly fire?

16 CHIEF ECKHARDT: There are some police agencies as well.

17 CHIEF GISLER: Does all the city policy agencies for the
18 Marion County. Does not do Marion County Sheriff and it does
19 Public Works and some city public works, and there's something
20 else. I forget the other one.

21 CHIEF ECKHARDT: And OSP is on their own state channels and
22 dispatch center as well.

23 MR. HUMM: Okay. And so how typical is it for you guys to
24 respond with other agencies to a larger call, so whether it be
25 another fire department or police department? How typical would

1 you say that is?

2 CHIEF GISLER: Very common.

3 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Frequently. So all motor vehicle accidents,
4 we respond with either Marion County Sheriff's or Oregon State
5 Police. If it's on the highway, we respond also with ODOT
6 typically responds. And then all fires that we have, we would
7 have what we call auto aid agreements. So they're dispatched at
8 the same time with us on the fires. So normally we're pulling an
9 engine from another agency. And then, of course, large scale
10 fires we have mutual aid with all of our neighboring agencies.
11 So.

12 CHIEF GISLER: And Lynn County Sheriff.

13 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Yeah, and Lynn County Sheriff.

14 CHIEF GISLER: Then we'll have like ODOT as well.

15 MR. HUMM: Okay. And then maybe you said this, how do you
16 communicate with say like police? Like it seems to me -- I can
17 understand the fire part.

18 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So Lynn County -- or sorry. Marion County
19 Sheriffs, we have all of their channels in our radio. OSP is on 7
20 or 800. So we do not have their channels to switch to.

21 MR. HUMM: Okay.

22 CHIEF GISLER: So we have to work through dispatch centers to
23 talk to each other or if we get cell phone contact because a lot
24 of the PD agencies will keep cell phones locked down so they don't
25 have the numbers handed out remotely, you know. So they have to

1 get that from the individual.

2 MR. HUMM: And has that ever been like a difficulty for you
3 guys like OSP at all?

4 CHIEF GISLER: No.

5 MR. HUMM: Okay. And then do you guys have a mass casualty
6 plan at all, like a mass casualty incident plan?

7 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Yeah, we have county protocols to deal with
8 mass casualty incidents.

9 MR. HUMM: Okay. Great. So, now what I'd like to do is
10 we'll talk about the incident that day, get into the specifics of
11 that. So, first of all, regarding this case, how did you guys
12 notified about it?

13 CHIEF GISLER: Out dispatch center --

14 MR. HUMM: Okay.

15 CHIEF GISLER: -- toned us out for it.

16 MR. HUMM: And then -- now this is kind of -- I told you
17 before we started, this is kind of more the free flowing
18 narrative. So I'll just kind get out of your way here, but from
19 the time you guys first got the call, if you could just, to the
20 best of your recollection, describe your response.

21 CHIEF GISLER: We got a call for a heavy vehicle accident
22 which typically designs -- it's designated around the description
23 of the impact or the number of patients that might be involved,
24 and it changes the response type from our dispatch center. And we
25 load the people up in the engine and our rescue and then the

1 medic, and got out the door with the medic and myself and the
2 rescue before the engine. And dispatch was receiving reports of
3 multiple people being involved and people on scene that were DOA.
4 And so they automatically upon themselves bumped it up to a MCI
5 callout which automatically started requesting other ambulances
6 and fire agencies to come assist without us even requesting that
7 per the request or, you know, the information given.

8 And so we have MPS which is anybody over -- any victims over
9 two patients up to six, which it's just adding just a little bit,
10 but then when we go to MCI, we're stepping over that six boundary
11 and then we're going from there. And so based off the numbers
12 that they were receiving from the reports, they bumped it up to
13 the MCI which got things moving quicker and faster that way.

14 Upon that, while going en route and stuff, I asked our
15 dispatch center to check the status of the area hospitals so that
16 we could start kind of knowing what their (indiscernible) of
17 things are just due to the influx of people going in. It really
18 overloads them lately, just general walk-ins and things like that.

19 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So part of our protocol also is we have a
20 predetermined agreement I'd guess you call it within the county
21 and within the hospitals of the area. So not only Marion, but
22 also Lynn County, that in any given situation, hospitals agree to
23 take a minimum of, and it's -- it'll tell you exactly this many
24 red, this many yellow and this many green patients.

25 Unfortunately, that doesn't always hold true any more with

1 the low staffing and the high amount of patients at the hospitals.
2 So -- but we do have that. So, you know, they -- it is supposed
3 to be a guaranteed thing to occur. So it's kind of a
4 predetermined thing as well.

5 We did start requesting additional medic units, and we asked
6 for Life Flight to be on standby as well. Turner, which is one of
7 our neighboring agencies, asked if they wanted -- if we wanted an
8 engine or if they wanted a rescue with extrication tools to start.
9 So we started, just not knowing exactly what we were going to
10 have, another unit with extrication tools on it right away. So.

11 CHIEF GISLER: And then the Chief was behind me. I was --
12 well, my medic was just in front of me and he was a few -- he was
13 behind us because he was waiting for one other person to show up
14 to the station, one of the volunteers.

15 And then upon dispatch information, the location that they
16 were given, it was actually at the rest area. So it wasn't quite,
17 you know, but going off the callers and all that stuff. And then
18 got on the freeway, just like you expect, you know, heavy traffic
19 and pulled up to the incident and found two semi trucks and a van
20 that was off the shoulder of the northbound side and the rear of
21 one semi, just the trailer portion was smashed up. The front of
22 the other semi was smashed up, and then the van was smashed from
23 the front or from the rear forward. The front of the van was
24 still fine. It hadn't been damaged.

25 And, I could see people in the van. I could see people

1 laying on the ground. I could see a truck driver in the truck,
2 and go out. And then the medic crew went straight to doing a
3 triaging. So, you know, counting number of patients and tagging
4 them as we went. And then as people started arriving, I just
5 started directing people to different points of where they need to
6 go, whether it was medical treatment or setting up triage. The
7 Chief took care of the medical portion -- or transport and --

8 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Yeah. So Louis arrived or chief -- the
9 Chief arrived and he took command. Our medic on their arrival
10 took medical branch and their partner. So day we happened to be
11 staffed with two medics, two paramedics on board. And so the
12 other partner took triage. And so we just -- they started filling
13 the spots in the command structure as quickly as possible.

14 CHIEF GISLER: And then Chief here worked on the transport.
15 So getting the whole hospitals and getting who can take what
16 number of patients and things like that, and then they were able
17 to bring me the number of patients of the category of what they
18 fell into, and worked on getting I-5 shut down and secured because
19 we're working and called for two Life Flight helicopters at my
20 arrival as well and canceled one of them. Set the other one down
21 in the middle of the freeway for one of the patients, and we were
22 able to load the other patients and the medics and send them off
23 to the hospital, and just took care of that.

24 And then, we also had the one semi truck that we got the
25 manifest papers, the shipping papers and found it, and they had

1 some toxic material on it. And so got, you know, the trailer
2 checked out and made sure we didn't have leaks and things like
3 that going on as well. And, then just worked with -- worked
4 through that process, made sure of that.

5 We also, during that same timeframe made sure we did a double
6 and triple check that we didn't miss somebody because we had
7 ejected patients and things like that. And, you know, make sure
8 nobody was underneath a rig or thrown further than -- or anything
9 like that and make sure we didn't miss anything. And then made
10 sure they all got out of there -- off the scene, and then kept the
11 scene secured down.

12 We did kind of a curtain block with our rights towards the
13 end of the incident. So that way as ODOT set up traffic detour,
14 so they took all traffic off the freeway back at two exits and
15 detoured but we still had all the traffic from the incident back
16 to that two exits that we had to funnel through the incident to
17 get them cleared. So that, OSP had their freeway clear to do all
18 their investigational purposes and kind of go from there. And
19 then --

20 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So I want to go back.

21 CHIEF GISLER: Yeah.

22 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So we had -- on arrival, we had six patients
23 that were ejected. Four were confirmed DOAs immediately. And
24 then two would actually be patients. We had two patients that
25 were still inside the vehicle that were actual patients, and we

1 had two DOAs inside the vehicle as well. So six total DOAs on
2 arrival, and seven transportable potential patients. Six out of
3 the -- or sorry, five out of the van, six total transportable
4 patients, five out of the van and then the semi truck driver and
5 then another potential patient, which would be the other semi
6 truck driver, he ended up refusing and not wanting any medical
7 need at all. And so an extrication group was also set up to light
8 extrication. The passenger door had to be removed off the van to
9 get those two patients extricated out of the van as well.

10 So ambulances came up, and unfortunately with all the traffic
11 at the rest area, you can go under I-5. So you can get from
12 southbound to northbound, and we were able to get them on the off
13 ramp or the on ramp I guess --

14 CHIEF GISLER: On ramp.

15 CHIEF ECKHARDT: -- it would be for northbound from the rest
16 area. And, it was actually very impressive that the medic crews
17 came up. They were asked, you know, what patient, they were told
18 and they just went to those patients and got them off the scene as
19 quickly as possible.

20 So, it truly worked the way a MCI should work in that there
21 was no, you know, wandering around trying to figure out what to
22 do. There was a clear game plan as far as, you know, this
23 patient's going to go with this ambulance, and we got all the reds
24 out of there, the yellows and the greens, gone just as it should
25 have been. So.

1 MR. HUMM: I don't mean to interrupt, but do you guys
2 remember how many of each tagged category there were?

3 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So initially it was three red, two yellow,
4 one green. It ended up being four red, two green. So initially
5 the -- we did not know the driver of the van was out of the
6 vehicle and was not really part of the incident. And we ended up
7 -- so he was a late transport off the scene just because of
8 language barrier and not understanding, you know, he had, you
9 know, obviously no signs of any injury because he was out of the
10 vehicle. We did transport him, and we kind of insisted he be
11 transported because of, you know, just the potential of, you know,
12 what he saw and what he had went through and that. So.

13 MR. HUMM: And that was a good call because I've heard from
14 follow up that he's experiencing some real mental difficulties.

15 CHIEF ECKHARDT: I'm sure he's having --

16 MR. HUMM: Yeah.

17 CHIEF ECKHARDT: We tried really hard to get the other semi
18 truck driver to go, and he just absolutely refused. He did not,
19 did not have anything to do with it. And, you know, I don't know
20 that he took a huge impact but, you know, again he watched the
21 whole thing unfold as well.

22 MR. HUMM: Okay. So you had four red, two green and when you
23 pulled up, how many were black did you say?

24 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Six.

25 MR. HUMM: Six, okay.

1 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So then one that was transported into that
2 passing, he was transported in Life Flight.

3 MR. HUMM: So he's the one that -- the person who passed, the
4 one that was in Life Flight.

5 CHIEF GISLER: Yes.

6 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Well, he passed at the hospital.

7 MR. HUMM: Oh, okay.

8 CHIEF ECKHARDT: He did not pass in Life Flight.

9 MR. HUMM: Sorry. I'm sorry. The person that transported in
10 Life Flight passed at the hospital.

11 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Yes.

12 MR. HUMM: And do you know which hospital --

13 CHIEF ECKHARDT: All patients went to Salem.

14 MR. HUMM: Oh, okay.

15 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So they were able to actually take all
16 patients. So.

17 MR. HUMM: Okay, yeah. Because I was looking at like the
18 level 2 trauma centers in the area, and it looked like there was
19 one --

20 CHIEF GISLER: Corvallis and Salem.

21 MR. HUMM: Yeah.

22 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Yeah, but they all went to Salem, which
23 Corvallis, it would have been a hard push. You know, we already
24 had northbound shut down. So I don't think they had a ton of
25 traffic until they, you know, got up more closer to Salem to deal

1 with. So that was definitely their quickest route to get to the
2 hospital. Corvallis, they would have had to went up, turned
3 around and then fought back through southbound traffic --

4 MR. HUMM: Understood.

5 CHIEF ECKHARDT: -- out to Corvallis.

6 CHIEF GISLER: It took one of our volunteers who was working
7 our medic that day for me, one of our medics that day, 2 hours to
8 get home from Corvallis and that's a 30 minute drive.

9 MR. HUMM: Okay.

10 CHIEF GISLER: So just -- and that was hours later.

11 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So, yeah. So DOAs on scene. We had six
12 patients that were transported, and then the initial count was the
13 two read, two yellow, one green. And then by the time the yellow
14 -- one of the yellows was transported, the unit bumped to red. So
15 three read, one yellow and then the two green patients.

16 MR. HUMM: So do you remember at all the occupants that were
17 fatal that was still in the car? I mean I know it was damaged,
18 but do you remember generally where they were located at all. In
19 the back --

20 CHIEF ECKHARDT: The one was located --

21 CHIEF GISLER: It was a 15 passenger van.

22 CHIEF ECKHARDT: And as you saw, the frame rail of the van is
23 intact but the rear of the van, the rear cargo doors of the van,
24 start in front of the rear tires. So they're between the front
25 tires and the rear tires. And so roughly speaking, I think both

1 of the patients, the one for sure, that was in the vehicle that
2 was DOA was on the -- was facing driver side out and was laying
3 backwards, feet kind of up. So if on the driver's side of the
4 van, it was kind of like this with their feet up in the air in
5 kind of a seated position, but not the way in these seats. So
6 perpendicular to how the seats would be. So does that make sense?

7 MR. HUMM: Yes.

8 CHIEF ECKHARDT: The other one I could not tell you because I
9 -- they were well inside the crumble zone.

10 CHIEF GISLER: Yeah. There was one of them I know that was
11 what would be the third row seat.

12 CHIEF ECKHARDT: The two that were extricated, one was front
13 seat passenger.

14 CHIEF GISLER: And the other one was second.

15 CHIEF ECKHARDT: And the other one we think was in the first
16 row passenger seat but was head down, like was thrown. So they
17 might have even come out of the second seat and went forward and
18 was head down. Because our crew said, when they got to him
19 initially, he wasn't breathing, and they opened his airway, and he
20 started breathing.

21 MR. HUMM: So that was one of my questions is because I saw
22 the passenger's seat, and it was fully reclined. I don't know if
23 that was done. So there was a front right passenger that was --

24 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Extricated.

25 MR. HUMM: Okay.

1 CHIEF GISLER: That could be our crews that reclined it back
2 just for getting them out.

3 MR. HUMM: Sure. No, I understand.

4 CHIEF ECKHARDT: It could have happened during the impact but
5 the seat -- I haven't -- I didn't touch it. So I don't know if it
6 was broken or any of that.

7 MR. HUMM: No, it's good to know. From what we understand,
8 they pulled over because they had an issue with the trailer, what
9 they were hauling. And so the driver initially was in the car,
10 but it was his brother I believe, or relative, that got out, fixed
11 it, and he got struck. And I wasn't sure that that person was the
12 passenger, but that -- so helps quite a bit.

13 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Well, that's interesting because we were
14 told the driver was out of the van.

15 MR. HUMM: No, he did. So he got after the passenger got
16 out. So then he got out to check, you know, what was going on,
17 and that's when it happened. So he was completely clear as far as
18 we understand.

19 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So there was potentially one other person
20 that was out of the vehicle when the impact occurred?

21 MR. HUMM: Supposedly. Yeah, that's our current
22 understanding. Or that's what was reported to us by the police.

23 CHIEF ECKHARDT: We did not know that. That's interesting.

24 MR. HUMM: Yeah. So --

25 CHIEF ECKHARDT: And was -- did he then become a fatality?

1 MR. HUMM: He must have

2 CHIEF ECKHARDT: I don't know.

3 CHIEF GISLER: Yeah.

4 MR. HUMM: Yes, I know he died.

5 CHIEF GISLER: We knew it as the driver got out to deal with
6 the issue.

7 MR. HUMM: Okay.

8 CHIEF GISLER: And everybody else was still in the van is how
9 we knew it. And, the driver jumped out of the way as the semi
10 truck come along. That's what's --

11 MR. HUMM: No, this is all still kind of, you know --

12 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Right.

13 MR. HUMM: -- because there is a language barrier. So that's
14 -- in our initial discussion with the police, that was how it was
15 described to us.

16 CHIEF ECKHARDT: And that was our initial -- was hard, the
17 language barrier, and we even have one of our personnel on scene.

18 CHIEF GISLER: Our paramedic, one of our paramedics and one
19 of our other volunteers both are very fluent with Spanish.

20 CHIEF ECKHARDT: And we were still having issues trying to
21 figure out exactly how many people were associated with the man.

22 CHIEF GISLER: I tried to use the national language line
23 thing, but it wouldn't let me in.

24 MR. HUMM: Well, I imagine it must be difficult because you
25 have the language barrier but, you know, people are like in shock.

1 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Yeah.

2 MR. HUMM: So I just think that you're fighting a real uphill
3 battle there.

4 CHIEF GISLER: Yeah, I was trying to use the language line
5 thing with the video conference aspect to talk to one of them
6 which was the driver of the van, but the program, it wouldn't let
7 me in. So it was a tough one.

8 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So the other thing that I think is, you
9 know, I don't know if this goes in your report or not, but as we
10 were finishing up on scene, we contacted our chaplain, a service
11 that we use. We also contacted our comfort dogs which -- so when
12 our crews got back, they immediately had a diffusing, debriefing,
13 whatever you want -- whatever language you want to call it. And,
14 we had comfort dogs here, and we took our crew out of service for
15 about an hour, hour and a half, and we had people here to cover
16 us, so that they could process and that before we turned them
17 loose to go home.

18 MR. HUMM: Well, I was going to ask that because I've seen
19 the truck. I saw the side of it. So I can only imagine, you
20 know, what the scene was like. And so how's the crew doing?

21 CHIEF ECKHARDT: I think our crew's doing well. I have been
22 in contact with really every single one of them, if not every day,
23 every other day since. We've had a couple that -- who struggle a
24 little bit, and it's very interesting. One of them is what I
25 would say a very seasoned person that's been around in this

1 service I think over 20 years that she has, and she's definitely
2 struggled with it. And it's also hit very close to home. We have
3 another gentleman, one of our Hispanic speaking folks, he actually
4 works with the farm crews and that. He does crop stuff. And so
5 it hit very close to home for him as well. We also had three
6 people on scene that this is -- they've only been responding on
7 calls for a few months, and so it's been interesting, you know,
8 and a couple of them are very young kids as well. They're 18, 19
9 years old. So, and then, you know, very seasoned people as well
10 that were out there, too.

11 So, you know, I think over all our crew's doing very well,
12 but we're definitely keeping track of them and talking to them,
13 and making sure that's the case. And like I said, it's important
14 to us, their health. And so we made sure that we had folks here
15 to talk to them and process and that. And our chaplain actually,
16 that happened to be our drill night as well, he was at drill all
17 night with the crews and that so he could talk to them. So.

18 MR. HUMM: Would you say this is probably one of the biggest
19 incidents in a while or -- for your department would you say?

20 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Yeah. So --

21 CHIEF GISLER: No. I wouldn't say -- the damage-wise, we've
22 seen that amount of damage in vehicles, no problem. But the
23 volume of patients is where the biggest portion comes up. So the
24 damage to the vehicles, that's really -- I don't want to say an
25 every day thing type, you know, but that's way more common to see.

1 It's the volume of people that were involved. That is what is
2 uncommon and mind struck to people.

3 MR. HUMM: Yeah, I'm sure.

4 CHIEF ECKHARDT: It's in the horrific. I mean it was a
5 horrific scene. I mean you're talking a semi truck that's got
6 blood splatter almost the entire length of the trailer.

7 CHIEF GISLER: It looks like the movies.

8 CHIEF ECKHARDT: You know, and to have that many people
9 ejected and that many fatalities immediately and the other, you
10 know, stuff out there, that's -- it's probably one of the biggest
11 overall that this agency has seen. It's definitely, you know,
12 like I said, I started in '89. It's in the top two for my career.
13 Another guy that was on scene, he's done this for -- Kevin's 50
14 years, and it's in his top couple. So I mean it's an amazing
15 thing to see. It's just horrific. So.

16 MR. HUMM: Yeah, I've seen the truck. I've seen it since.
17 So I can only imagine, you know, the scene that you guys had to
18 deal with.

19 CHIEF GISLER: We had other agencies here and BCs and stuff,
20 and they said they've never seen anything like that. And so I
21 mean it goes to show just how outside of our agency, but to
22 others, like I say that general concept of everybody being
23 involved the way it was, that nobody's seen things. They've seen
24 like the damage to vehicles. It's when you add everything else to
25 it --

1 MR. HUMM: Right.

2 CHIEF GISLER: -- that's where it --

3 CHIEF ECKHARDT: I mean I think Oregon has seen, you know, I
4 know in Pendleton, they had a school -- or not a school bus but a
5 transit bus that rolled down a canyon and they think there's a lot
6 of patients. But I don't think nearly again the magnitude, you
7 know, it was a major eye popping. So you may have a lot of
8 patients and not be as probably a mental impact on people as what
9 I would guess this is or was.

10 MR. HUMM: So can you explain maybe the -- who else
11 responded? I know -- so I know Lebanon like medic came and
12 they're the ones I think that transported the driver the way we
13 understand.

14 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Yeah.

15 MR. HUMM: But then there was the Life Flight and then there
16 was --

17 CHIEF GISLER: We had two Life Flight helicopters. We
18 canceled one of them. We had two ambulances from Falck which is a
19 private company that Salem contracts. And then we had a Turner
20 ambulance and our medic that transported off the initial portion,
21 and then the Lebanon medic came in and took the driver out towards
22 the end as far as that.

23 On the fire side, we had Turner Fire and Albany Fire
24 assisting, and then OSP assisting with any medical that they could
25 try to offer as well, and then we had ODOT out there as well.

1 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So Turner Fire sent a rescue and their
2 medic, Albany sent an engine, a battalion chief, and they actually
3 because of traffic, they were -- they literally got there just
4 before we loaded the last patient because our crew that was
5 working on the Life Flight patient, they were pretty beat. I mean
6 it was extensive to just take care of him. So Engine 13's crew
7 came up from Albany and carried the patient actually to the
8 helicopter. We had a Stayton Fire engine that had moved up here
9 to cover our district while we were tied up. And then --

10 CHIEF GISLER: Albany medic.

11 CHIEF ECKHARDT: -- Lebanon started to the scene, and once
12 we, you know, figured out exactly what we had, they were then
13 moved up to cover us. And, then they got pulled to the scene as
14 well to transport the last patient off. And then Albany medic
15 moved up. And, you know, kind of to go back to what we had talked
16 about with the, you know, how busy the hospitals systems and
17 everything, we typically would not have seen a Falck Medic unit.
18 We would have seen a couple of medic units come out of Albany but
19 they had nothing available to us. That's why we got a Lebanon
20 Medic which is -- I don't know that Lebanon typically ever ends up
21 over here to do anything with us. And Albany actually had a
22 Corvallis medic that was moved up a ways to help cover Albany
23 because of what was going on. And then I know for the whole day
24 and during that time, the Salem area was just slammed as well with
25 stuff going on. So, it was one of those just crazy times that

1 everybody was super busy.

2 MR. HUMM: Yeah, okay. So that was going to be my next
3 question was to explain the whole like Falck like, because that's
4 what I was trying to understand.

5 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Yeah. So Falck contracts to do the City of
6 Salem, their transports, and then Marion County Fire District 1
7 does their district. Keizer does their district as far as that
8 area goes.

9 CHIEF GISLER: Polk County does theirs.

10 CHIEF ECKHARDT: And then -- yeah, Polk County does their own
11 thing. And then there's Woodburn Ambulance that covers Woodburn
12 and Silverton and up north type stuff. And Santiam Hospital has
13 ambulances. They have two that covers Stayton and Aumsville and
14 that area. And then Lyons also has an ambulance that covers
15 Lyons, Mill City, Detroit, Gates, up there. So.

16 MR. HUMM: Okay. And so do those -- so the people on Falck,
17 are they really just responsible for like the transport part of
18 it? Like would they ever come out and work on a patient or are
19 they just kind of --

20 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Well, I mean I guess -- yes, they would.

21 MR. HUMM: Okay.

22 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So once they're assigned a patient, then
23 that would be their patient to take care and that. I guess it
24 depends, you know, large -- in a large scale incident, you know,
25 like if you had an Amtrak Train issue or something like that, no,

1 their job would literally be and so would all the medic units'
2 jobs would be to transport patients to the hospital. They're not
3 going to do treatment type stuff until that patient is in the back
4 of their ambulance, and we'd have other crews assigned to the
5 treatment area. We'd have an extrication group or groups to pull
6 people out of trains or, you know, whatever, and put them in a
7 triage -- or a treatment area and then they would be loaded into
8 the ambulance and taken off. In this case, you know, had they
9 been, you know, the first couple of units, then their folks, you
10 know, they would have been assigned a patient and taken care of
11 until they could get them loaded and transported.

12 MR. HUMM: Got it. That's good.

13 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Does that answer --

14 MR. HUMM: Yeah, it does.

15 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Yes to all. So.

16 MR. HUMM: No, I've just -- I've been to other place where it
17 was like their contracted and really they just like, you know, the
18 fire department medics, they take care of all the, on scene stuff
19 and then they just get them to the door essentially and then
20 sometimes they'll go with them to the hospital,

21 CHIEF ECKHARDT: They would do all. They wouldn't do -- you
22 know, our medics are trained, at least our full-time medics to do
23 extrication and firefighting. So, you know, had this been -- if
24 we had to, we could have had our medic actually cutting somebody
25 out of the car if that was needed but, you know, typically in a

1 large event like this, their job is just to get the transport
2 aspect of it done.

3 MR. HUMM: And regarding extrication, that reminds me. Just
4 for our purposes, did you have to cut anything? Did you have to
5 slice into any of the pillars.

6 CHIEF ECKHARDT: I think they just popped the door.

7 CHIEF GISLER: They just opened the door up.

8 MR. HUMM: Okay. I mean that's what it looked like to me,
9 but I just wanted to verify that with you.

10 CHIEF GISLER: Yeah, I don't think they cut any pillar or --
11 any of the pillars. I think they just opened the door up is all.

12 MR. HUMM: Yeah, that's it. That's what the OSP officer
13 said. Because it on the left side D pillar, it did have like --

14 CHIEF ECKHARDT: When you say left side --

15 MR. HUMM: Driver's side.

16 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Driver's side.

17 CHIEF ECKHARDT: That place was passenger.

18 MR. HUMM: Yeah, okay. It looks like a little bit like a
19 sawzall but if you look at it closely, it's just the -- it was
20 just buckled, but -- so we looked at that. So I'm almost done.

21 If you could give me just a general idea because I haven't
22 seen any of the scene photos, just whatever you can remember as
23 far as the location of the vehicles and then any of the occupants
24 that were ejected relative to the vehicle, just roughly, you know,
25 like there were three close by on the ground. You know, anything

1 on the road would really help me out.

2 CHIEF GISLER: For me, I remember the semi that caused the
3 incident was just past the ODOT sign, one of the overhead sign
4 arms, and the other semi was kind of sideways. And then the van
5 was out in front of them probably -- at least the one that caused
6 it, by 30 feet and then probably 10 to 15 feet in front of the
7 other one. I remember seeing two patients on the passenger side
8 of the van on the ground and then two more back towards the semi
9 that caused the incident on the ground. And, the driver sitting
10 -- of that semi sitting on the ground with his head between his
11 knees. And then seeing two people from the driver's side, you
12 know, into the van. I could see a couple people that were munched
13 up in the back and then I remember seeing a couple proposal
14 towards the front of the van. And debris splattered everywhere
15 from the van, and then the public, general people out there just
16 parked all over running around when I got there. And I remember
17 also, too, like when I first got there, was what the heck am I
18 looking at? Like I had to process it for a minute to figure out
19 what I was looking at just because of the people. It took a
20 minute to get through that.

21 CHIEF ECKHARDT: So, two of the DOAs was almost directly
22 behind the van between probably -- I don't know if I'd say
23 centered, but close to between the rear of the van and the semi
24 that hit the van. And the other two were just slightly to the
25 east of that but in the same general location. And then everybody

1 else was to the east side, the passenger side of the van that was
2 outside. I think there's some a little closer to, you know, the
3 front off that side and kind of along -- kind of that whole side
4 of the van-ish area is where everybody seemed to be at. And then
5 obviously the driver was different than -- when I seen the driver
6 of the semi, he was probably, I don't know, 10, 15 feet in front
7 of the van, sitting on the road. So I assume that's where you --

8 CHIEF GISLER: No, he was sitting right at his truck --

9 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Okay. So maybe --

10 CHIEF GISLER: -- with his dog.

11 CHIEF ECKHARDT: -- he was -- when I seen him, he was triaged
12 tagged. So maybe our folks moved him to that location for, you
13 know, the green, everybody that can walk, get up and come up here.
14 So --

15 MR. HUMM: And just so I understand it, besides the driver,
16 everybody else to your knowledge that was out of the vehicle was
17 fatal? Was there any --

18 CHIEF ECKHARDT: No.

19 CHIEF GISLER: There was --

20 CHIEF ECKHARDT: There was two that were, two that were still
21 alive outside.

22 MR. HUMM: Okay. So they were ejected, and they weren't
23 walking around. They were on the ground.

24 CHIEF ECKHARDT: I'm assuming they were ejected.

25 MR. HUMM: Sure.

1 CHIEF GISLER: Yeah, that's the two that were to the
2 passenger side that I remember.

3 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Okay.

4 CHIEF GISLER: I remember seeing those two and they were
5 moving their legs a little bit, and those two we transported, and
6 then the others -- and I only remember seeing the other two. They
7 were in front of the van. I don't remember seeing the additional
8 two of the DOAs or the semi, I don't seeing those other two at
9 that time, but --

10 MR. HUMM: And which one went on the Flight -- the
11 helicopter?

12 CHIEF GISLER: The one that --

13 CHIEF ECKHARDT: He was the one that was either --

14 CHIEF GISLER: Face down in the --

15 CHIEF ECKHARDT: -- in the first front seat of the -- yeah,
16 middle seat.

17 CHIEF GISLER: He was the one face down in the van.

18 CHIEF ECKHARDT: I mean if I was a betting man, I would say
19 he was probably in the --

20 CHIEF GISLER: Third.

21 CHIEF ECKHARDT: -- second row seat, you know, as far as the,
22 you know, you have passenger, driver seat, first row, second row.
23 I'm guessing there because of the, you know, way he was facing. I
24 would think if he was sitting like this and got hit, no more, you
25 know, there's really nothing that you would have shoved straight

1 forward. You couldn't have been head down but I don't know. I
2 mean that's not me.

3 MR. HUMM: Okay.

4 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Not my forte but, you know, just the way
5 bodies typically move around.

6 MR. HUMM: That helps.

7 CHIEF ECKHARDT: And I guess that's why I would assume that
8 there wasn't a lot of seatbelts being used, but I couldn't tell
9 you that for sure.

10 MR. HUMM: From the photos I was able to take, it did not
11 appear like any of the latches were used. I mean I didn't get to
12 examine all of the, but just from what I could see from the
13 outside and zooming in with my lens, from the ones I could see,
14 again because it was kind of -- it took me -- like you, I had to
15 look at this. Oh, that is actually the inside, you know, so I had
16 to go back and kind of figure that out. That took a little bit.

17 This is the last question I'll ask about this incident, the
18 scene. Do you guys remember anything about the trailer, like
19 where that was?

20 CHIEF GISLER: We didn't know there was a trailer under
21 later.

22 CHIEF ECKHARDT: When you say trailer, you're talking port-a-
23 potty?

24 MR. HUMM: Yeah. So it was like a little metal trailer that
25 supposedly the port-a-potty was hooked on.

1 CHIEF GISLER: I didn't even see it when I first got there. I
2 didn't even know about it until I think we were back at the
3 station.

4 CHIEF ECKHARDT: We didn't even know about it until Friday --

5 CHIEF GISLER: Yeah. And then Chief --

6 CHIEF ECKHARDT: -- when I was talking with the DA
7 investigator.

8 CHIEF GISLER: And Chief said something to me, he goes, hey,
9 did you know there was a port-a-potty behind that? I'm like,
10 what? And so I instantly pulled up our photos and I was looking
11 at it. I'm like, there's no --

12 CHIEF ECKHARDT: I wonder if it was under the semi to be
13 honest.

14 MR. HUMM: Okay.

15 CHIEF ECKHARDT: But I mean I don't know. I -- and the semi
16 truck was --

17 CHIEF GISLER: Flat.

18 CHIEF ECKHARDT: -- flat to the ground. So we did a little,
19 you know, we were trying to make sure that no one was under that,
20 the semi truck, the tractor itself because you couldn't actually
21 see under there. So.

22 MR. HUMM: All right.

23 CHIEF ECKHARDT: But I would assume OSP could tell you where
24 it was.

25 MR. HUMM: Yeah, we're hoping -- like I said, we're hoping to

1 get a copy of their photos at some point. I'm just wondering, you
2 know, what -- the reason it's important to me is, you know, did
3 the trailer, you know, slice through some of -- you know, cause
4 some of the damage to that or was it all truck, you know. Did the
5 truck push the trailer --

6 CHIEF GISLER: So we had to leave equipment out there for the
7 investigational purpose of OSP stuff, and we were under the
8 assumption that we were going to have to come back out to extract
9 the remaining people out of the vehicle. And, so I worked with
10 Chief, and we had a few people that we selected to go deal with
11 that. And in the end, we got a phone call that the patients were
12 out, the people were out of the van. We're not really sure how
13 they got them out, but they did. And me and one other of our
14 volunteers, we drove back out just to pick up our equipment that
15 we left out there. And, we picked up our stuff.

16 And then I talked to one of the troopers, and I asked him if
17 he was okay if I took some photos for us of the van more specific,
18 because the ones we had were from a far distance. So I got up a
19 little bit closer and tighter and I started looking at the van,
20 and it's a Ford Econoline van which had, you know, it's a 15
21 passenger, and if you look it from the driver's side, it looked
22 like the van, but basically from the driver's door back was just
23 peeled back and just moved backwards like a sliding door. The
24 whole side of it, and then when you got around to the other side,
25 that whole passenger side, outside of that sheet metal on the

1 driver's side, was just shoved clear forward.

2 The front of the van was fine, but what I was talking to the
3 Chief about that day when I got back, I said what was impressive
4 was, is like the frame was buried done the ground and the sheet
5 metal just ripped right off it and just crumpled forward. And
6 when you looked at it, the passenger seat was smashed up to the
7 dash and then all the other seats were all smashed up and then
8 piled on top of each other, but the driver's seat, it was pushed
9 forward, but it wasn't as bad. Like it wasn't as entangled as the
10 other seats were.

11 And when he -- a few days later when he brought up about the
12 trailer on Friday, I went -- I was like I don't remember seeing
13 like even a hitch or stinger or anything for a trailer. And so I
14 went back to the photos I took and there's no evidence in the
15 photo that I took that there was even a trailer assembly, a
16 receiver, a stinger or anything, on that van for a trailer.

17 And so, yeah, I was like, you know, I didn't even know about
18 it until -- but we also didn't -- even that day, we did not know
19 how the second semi was even involved until, you know, that Friday
20 or --

21 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Yeah, I think it was Monday actually.

22 CHIEF GISLER: Yeah, I was going to say maybe even month.

23 CHIEF ECKHARDT: When we were talking to the investigator.

24 CHIEF GISLER: We didn't know how that was like was but just
25 because of the way things were situated, we didn't even know how

1 that was involved.

2 CHIEF ECKHARDT: We thought the two semi trucks were like --

3 CHIEF GISLER: Paralleling each other.

4 CHIEF ECKHARDT: -- you know, I mean were trying to figure
5 out how's that other one involved in this. So. We didn't know
6 they were parked.

7 CHIEF GISLER: Yeah, we found out that it was parked and the
8 van was parked and then --

9 MR. HUMM: I can imagine that was confusing. Okay. So, this
10 is another open ended question. So would you say there's -- what
11 would you say you guys did best? Like when you look back on this,
12 like what are you most proud of?

13 CHIEF ECKHARDT: For me, I think our crew did a great job. I
14 think all the agencies worked great together, and I think we got
15 the patients triaged and out of there in a very reasonable amount
16 of time and got them headed to the hospital. So.

17 CHIEF GISLER: I'd say, yeah, I'd agree with the crew aspect.
18 They came, checked in and did what they were asked and they stuck
19 to their task and, you know, I mean for what they went through and
20 seen, they didn't allow the traumatization of the incident affect
21 ability to function. They just went to what I kind of describe
22 always as robot mode. They just go out, do what they're trained
23 to do, and then they come back and process the aspects of things
24 afterwards. And so to have people that can just jump into a mess
25 and --

1 CHIEF ECKHARDT: I mean I didn't time. I keep meaning to and
2 I just -- there's lots going on, but I would best from when we got
3 on scene, we probably had everybody transported within 20 to 30
4 minutes. We had everybody en route to a hospital, and actually
5 the last, the slowest to get out of there was the helicopter. And
6 that's just because they were trying to RSI the patient and manage
7 the airway that they had to deal with.

8 MR. HUMM: What do you think was the most challenging? Like
9 of this response, you know, when you look back and you think like
10 this is what made it difficult?

11 CHIEF GISLER: I think just for me, like the first initial
12 challenge was like trying to process what the heck I was looking
13 at and then grasp ahold of that. And then turn around and, you
14 know, having like Chief doing the part he was doing and then our
15 medic doing his part, the triage part, but people following and
16 doing that which made things really easy for my part. And then it
17 was just chomping down the list of just getting people into the
18 incident because not only was northbound and southbound I-5 backed
19 up, but then people were using like the off ramps to go through
20 the rest area to get back on, to bypass traffic with the on ramps,
21 and try to secure not only the freeway but also the on ramp
22 because we had public that was wanting to come through. And, you
23 had the rubberneckers from the other side that were, you know,
24 they're either honking horns, stepping on the brakes and, you
25 know, you hear people yelling and all this other stuff, just

1 because somebody wants to look, somebody wants to drive fast. So
2 you have all these other aspects. So you're still worried about
3 some other car, you know, crashing on the other side even though
4 that side is lined with state troopers and Marion County Sheriff
5 cars. And, you know, and then just problem solving like, you
6 know, we knew we had helicopters coming in, where we were going to
7 place them. It was pretty quick and easy in the middle of the
8 freeway, but then we had like public that got tired of waiting,
9 you know. We had the road blocked, and they got tired of waiting,
10 and so they just drove around the rigs and proceeded to ride on in
11 as we were getting ready to bring the helicopter in on it's last
12 landing. And, you know, just -- and so, yeah. Then my guy that
13 was going to land the helicopter, he's like, hey, there's traffic
14 coming. I'm like what the -- people just got tired of wait and so
15 then once one goes, they just all start to follow suit because --

16 MR. HUMM: Yeah.

17 CHIEF GISLER: -- you know, you've got a fire truck that's
18 across the road sideways, cones out that says don't, you know,
19 you've got other rigs that are parked this way. You've got an
20 ODOT truck with a reader board that says, freeway's closed. Yeah,
21 if I can squeeze through, I'm going, and they do. And we had
22 people later on that were driving when we were clearing out the
23 freeway for the traffic that was remaining in that area that were
24 driving by taking cell phone pictures and the state troopers were
25 out there yelling at them and, you know, to just shut up and drive

1 basically.

2 CHIEF ECKHARDT: There was one actually texting, she's lucky
3 she didn't end up with a ticket.

4 CHIEF GISLER: The lieutenant had a word with her, and the
5 sergeant was coming over, I want to talk to her, and the
6 lieutenant kicked her out of there before he could get to her
7 because you could see he was made.

8 CHIEF ECKHARDT: I think it's the same sergeant that you --

9 CHIEF GISLER: Yeah, you could see he was mad, and the
10 lieutenant, just let her go. He had to like talk his guy down,
11 just let her go, you know. Yeah, just the processing of
12 everything of like organizing it and just making things happen,
13 you know. It kind of just becomes a --

14 CHIEF ECKHARDT: I agree. I think one of the most
15 challenging things was the ability to get rigs in and out and that
16 was honestly from the start. So, I was the -- actually one of our
17 rigs was behind me, but three were ahead of me, and you -- we
18 fought traffic the entire -- once we got on I-5, we were fighting
19 traffic almost the whole entire way. And, you know, cars weren't
20 getting over. Cars weren't, you know. So he had called for an
21 Albany --

22 CHIEF GISLER: Truck.

23 CHIEF ECKHARDT: -- truck and my suggestion was actually to
24 have a Salem because I think it would have been easier to get the
25 Salem truck in because we could have actually shot them across

1 Talbott and brought him the wrong way down the highway versus them
2 trying to fight their way all the way up. But, traffic was just
3 terrible. And people didn't care. They weren't -- they were not
4 yielding to, you know, moving out of the way. Gee, traffic
5 stopped. Maybe I should get out of the way and stay out of the
6 way because, you know, emergency vehicles are probably going to
7 come up through. The other --

8 CHIEF GISLER: One --

9 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Sorry.

10 CHIEF GISLER: One thing that makes it difficult for that,
11 too, and I know it's been like maybe 10 plus years, the shoulders
12 on the sides of the interstates, they're putting all the
13 barricades in, and they're bringing inward. So like if a car has
14 a breakdown or something, they pull over. There's really no -- I
15 mean their mirror is sitting on that white line. And like let's
16 say I have a flat tire. I have no room for myself to work between
17 my car and the passing traffic. And, this is another incident
18 that comes into because of the narrow shoulders that, you know,
19 traffic has nowhere to go. The fire trucks don't have, you know,
20 bigger rigs have nowhere to squeeze through.

21 So it all adds into, and then you've got like guardrails that
22 will, especially in that area, where the guardrails will come --
23 taper outward towards the lanes of traffic for the bridge
24 abutments and then they taper back out. And, that all plays into
25 things as far as accessing. And people and just general driving

1 habits, you know, the rule's been, you know, move to the right for
2 emergency vehicles, right. Well, now all of a sudden you've got
3 one that goes to the left, and then you've got ones that start
4 parting ways and split down the middle. And then you've got other
5 ones that just can't go anywhere because they're grid locked. You
6 know, it's not their fault. They just literally can't go
7 anywhere. And so --

8 CHIEF ECKHARDT: And Oregon doesn't do a lot with cut
9 throughs.

10 MR. HUMM: With what? Sorry.

11 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Cut throughs.

12 CHIEF GISLER: Bypasses to --

13 CHIEF ECKHARDT: To be able to go from north to south. You
14 pretty much -- in fact, I don't know that there's any in our
15 district. You have to go to an overpass to go from one direction
16 to the other.

17 CHIEF GISLER: You go south they have it, but from here, and
18 then they have a few north of Salem, but between Albany and North
19 Salem, there's no bypasses to be able to transition from one
20 direction to the other, other than using the overpasses, but
21 you --

22 MR. HUMM: It makes it hard for emergency vehicles.

23 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Right.

24 CHIEF GISLER: Yeah.

25 MR. HUMM: It's interesting.

1 CHIEF GISLER: Because they put all the cable barriers up and
2 stuff like that, too.

3 CHIEF ECKHARDT: Anyway, I will say something else. In -- I
4 don't know where it's in, but something I've never seen and most
5 troopers, state troopers are actually certified either as an
6 emergency medical responders or an EMT. And they all carry first-
7 aid kits. And I've done this for a long time, and I've see the
8 first-aid kits out before being used by the public but never by
9 them. And this, they actually as I was getting on scene, they had
10 went from the accident back to their car and were headed back with
11 their first-aid kits to actually go take care of people. And so
12 it was very impressive as well. Again, it just -- I think it
13 shows the severity of the incident and even they saw that, hey,
14 we've got to do something here. It wasn't a typical thing before.

15 MR. HUMM: That's a great job.

16 CHIEF ECKHARDT: And that may be different in Eastern Oregon
17 because, you know, they're way more remote and they may actually
18 be dealing with patients for, you know, longer times. And the I-5
19 corridor, you know, especially, you know, Eugene north, you
20 normally have a fire apparatus that gets there fairly rapidly to
21 help take care of the patients but, you know, it was impressive to
22 me to see them actually do that. So.

23 MR. HUMM: Okay. So there's just one -- this is for my
24 knowledge. So as the IC, like do you have to plan out? Like how
25 do you -- do you have to plan -- like do you plan out to the

1 extent that I've got this ambulance out of here like, you know,
2 how am I going to -- or do they kind of -- does the ambulance
3 driver, you know, once they load the patient or are you trying to
4 think like, okay, I've got to keep this area --

5 CHIEF GISLER: I'm planning how to get the ambulances in and
6 out.

7 MR. HUMM: Okay.

8 CHIEF GISLER: You know, I mean my, my planning when I roll
9 out for any wreck, whether I'm coming from the state or even my
10 house or wherever, my planning starts when the tones go off in my
11 mind and the aspect of, okay, where am I going? Because having
12 been in this district for, you know, 16 years, I know the area
13 really well, and kind of, you know, how to set up like detours or
14 what to expect of hazards in different areas. And so the planning
15 will start as I'm leaving, and then, you know, dispatch will give
16 me information. And I start tacking on that plan even more as to
17 that thought process, you know? Does the plan change or diminish
18 or increase based off the arrival? Oh, yeah. But, you know,
19 ultimately you know, the main goal for us and anybody in the fire
20 service should be, is how to get your people in and out in a safe
21 manner so that we can work because if we can't get in and we can't
22 work safe, and we can't get out, what good are we for the general
23 person in that end? And so, you know, that is a huge aspect, and
24 that part of, you know, I didn't -- up until I got on scene and we
25 got the medical and triaging done, I didn't know what we were

1 expecting. We could have had all red patients, you know, and
2 maybe, you know, the hospitals couldn't take as many as, you know,
3 Salem wouldn't have been able to task as much. Maybe we couldn't
4 get to Albany or Corvallis or something like that. So having the
5 helicopters come in because maybe we needed to use one to go to
6 Corvallis or maybe one to Portland or something like that. And so
7 that's where the thought process of planning because this has to
8 start, you know, overscaled a little bit, you know, on some
9 things, and make that plan happen to, you know, function.

10 CHIEF ECKHARDT: I think as well, this scene or any scene.
11 So in this one in particular, the IC is looking at, you know,
12 getting fire apparatus in and medic units in, ambulances in as
13 well, but then that's why it's so important to fill those roles
14 like medical branch and transportation and those, because the
15 ambulances then really become the concern of transportation, you
16 know, how am I going to get them in? Where am I going to put
17 them? Who am I going to put in the back of them? You know, that
18 type of thing which helps take the load off of the incident
19 commander. You know, that's one less thing that they have to take
20 care of. So I think that's why, you know, using the command
21 structure is so critical that, you know, there's so much stuff
22 going on that the IC's managing that you need those other legs to
23 be able to take on those parts. So that, you know, you have the
24 IC managing the overall scene, but not every little aspect of the
25 scene as well.

1 MR. HUMM: Great. Well, you guys really have answered all of
2 my questions. Is there anything you want to add or anything that
3 I missed, any questions like, you know, or anything I didn't cover
4 that you want to comment on?

5 CHIEF ECKHARDT: I don't think so.

6 CHIEF GISLER: I'm good.

7 MR. HUMM: All right. That's okay. I'm going to turn off
8 the recorder. The time by my watch is 11:25, and we're going to
9 end the interview. Thanks a lot, guys.

10 (Whereupon, 11:25 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

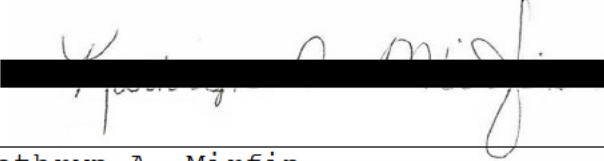
IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL MULTI-VEHICLE ACCIDENT NEAR
ALBANY, OREGON ON MAY 18, 2023
Interview of Chief Louis Gisler and
Chief Levi Eckhardt

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY23FH013

PLACE: Jefferson, Oregon

DATE: May 24, 2023

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.


Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber