

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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CSX FREIGHT TRAIN DERAILMENT *

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA * Accident No.: RRD18MR007

MAY 19, 2018 *

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Interview of: JESSE HORAK
Track Inspector
CSX Transportation

Sunday,
May 20, 2018

APPEARANCES:

JOE GORDON, Track and Engineering Group Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board

TROY LLOYD, Track and Engineering Group
National Transportation Safety Board

DON RICHARDSON, Rail Safety Manager
Virginia State Corporation Commission

DAVID DANIELS, Division Engineer
CSX Transportation

ROY MORRISON, Director of Safety
Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes Division
(BMWED)
(On behalf of Mr. Horak)

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. GORDON: So, good morning. I think we're still morning.
3 My name is Joe Gordon. I'm the NTSB Track and Engineering Group
4 chairman for this accident. We are here today on May 20th in
5 Alexandria, Virginia.

6 We're going to conduct an interview with Mr. Jesse Horak, who
7 is -- works for CSX. The interview is in conjunction with the
8 NTSB investigation where a southbound CSX mixed freight train
9 derailed and impacted a bridge spanning NS tracks. There were no
10 injuries, no hazardous materials released, and no evacuation. The
11 NTSB accident reference number is RRD18MR007.

12 Before we begin the interview, we'll go around the room and
13 introduce everybody in the room. We'll spell -- ask that you
14 spell your last name, give the agency or company that you're
15 representing, and your title. Just remember we're recording, so,
16 you know, speak clearly for the recording.

17 I'll start off. My name, again, it's Joe Gordon. Spelling
18 of the last name G O R D O N. I'm with the NTSB, Track and
19 Engineering Group chairman.

20 MR. LLOYD: Troy Lloyd, L L O Y D, with NTSB. I'll be
21 assisting Joe on the Track and Engineering Group.

22 MR. RICHARDSON: Don Richardson, R I C H A R D S O N, Rail
23 Safety Manager for the State Corporation Commission.

24 MR. HORAK: I'm Jesse Horak, H O R A K, CSX Transportation
25 track inspector.

1 MR. DANIELS: David Daniels, division engineer, CSX. That's
2 D A N I E L S.

3 MR. MORRISON: Roy Morrison, Brotherhood of Maintenance of
4 Way, Director of Safety. Last name M O R R I S O N.

5 MR. GORDON: All right. Thank you everyone.

6 And Jesse, we spoke before. You understand we're going to
7 record the interview, it will be transcribed and you'll get to see
8 a copy of that --

9 MR. HORAK: Yes.

10 MR. GORDON: -- to make any corrections.

11 MR. HORAK: Yes.

12 MR. GORDON: Okay. And do you wish to have a representative
13 with you in the interview today?

14 MR. HORAK: Sure.

15 MR. GORDON: Okay. And the representative is going to be
16 Mr. Morrison?

17 MR. HORAK: Yes.

18 MR. GORDON: Okay. All right.

19 INTERVIEW OF JESSE HORAK

20 BY MR. GORDON:

21 Q. And so let me see if -- if you could just start off by just
22 giving us a background, kind of, you know, when you came to work
23 for CSX, you know, if you'd railroaded any before that, and just
24 kind of give us a -- give us your background up until the track
25 inspection position that you're in now.

1 A. I hired in 2001 as a trackman out of Fredericksburg,
2 Virginia, worked there. Actually, the first bid-in position I was
3 awarded was a track inspector. And I worked there a few years,
4 and I transferred to transportation. Worked as a conductor for 4
5 years and then I came back to the track department 2009. Worked
6 as a track inspector a while, a welder, and then I flagged for a
7 few years. I came back to this job in December of 2017. I've
8 been on it ever since.

9 Q. Okay. All right. Thank you for that. So can you tell us
10 your -- what your areas of responsibility, like where you inspect
11 to and from, and frequency of those inspections?

12 A. Generally, I inspect between CFP 57.5, CFP 110.07. And
13 generally the Dobbin Branch, CFQ 0.0 to 9.9 -- CFQ 9.9; that's a
14 weekly inspection. And then it's three inspections on the -- from
15 57.5 to 110.07, that's three times for a week; two for the FRA,
16 one for our CSX third trip inspection.

17 Q. Okay. And then you've got a counterpart, I guess, that
18 inspects --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- the other days? Okay. All right.

21 So let's focus kind of primarily on the area there around the
22 103. You know, you've got a -- I haven't looked at the track and
23 engineering charts, but it looks like you've got a curve coming
24 into the bridge. If we're going southbound, that was actually a
25 left-hand curve going into the bridge, correct? So the curve that

Dobbin
Branch
should
read
Dahlgren
Branch.
Correction
from Horak
07-05-18

1 we're speaking of there where the bank seemed to give way, can you
2 tell us a little bit about that -- about your inspections through
3 there? Maybe your last inspection through that area and what
4 track you were running?

5 A. My last inspection through there, Larry and I were together.
6 We were on 2 track, and I wrote up the inspection for 1 track, and
7 other tracks, but he wrote up the inspection for 2 and 3. But we
8 were right in the middle coming through there. That was this past
9 Wednesday, whatever date that was.

10 Q. Okay. And coming through there, do you remember if that
11 number 1 track was clear? Was there --

12 A. There was nothing on it when we went through there.

13 Q. Nothing on it?

14 A. As far as trains or equipment --

15 Q. Trains? Okay.

16 A. -- nothing on it.

17 Q. Okay. Did you guys do just a regular high-rail inspection
18 through there?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And anything out of the ordinary --

21 A. No.

22 Q. -- in that location? Okay.

23 MR. GORDON: I will -- I'll pass it around there, let
24 somebody ask some questions. Troy, if you want to --

25 MR. LLOYD: Yeah, just -- probably just one.

1 BY MR. LLOYD:

2 Q. What we saw yesterday up there, there was some -- looked like
3 someone might have been keeping an eye on it, there might have
4 been some road flour or crosslevel marks, and it was just about
5 right in the vicinity of where we had the field slide.

6 A. Uh-huh.

7 Q. Are they -- were they older marks, where somebody might have
8 been doing maintenance? Was that -- or is that an area that
9 you've periodically got to get out to check? It could be a
10 problem spot or something like that, where you would just --

11 A. It's been --

12 Q. -- reference --

13 A. I'm sorry.

14 Q. No, go ahead.

15 A. It's been a spot that's prone to falling off a difference in
16 crosslevel, in the curve there. And so I would -- the marks are
17 from me. I marked them.

18 Q. So you wanted --

19 A. And it's so I know. It says time, and I can see it from the
20 other track or that track; it doesn't matter. But you can get
21 right out and check it. Saves a whole lot of time, and it's just
22 -- it's always been a very gradual spot. We've never had a
23 problem there, and it's been there as long as -- well, I can't say
24 -- you know, they work it.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. It's one of those matter of time spots.

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. And that's where my marks, so I can get right out and check
4 it, keep an eye on it.

5 Q. Is that -- since you've been inspecting, I guess, since the
6 2017, have you all had to do any kind of work in there to keep it
7 built up? Any ballast drop or anything like that or --

8 A. I don't know when the last time -- I've only been back on the
9 job after a 3½-year absence, since December. So bear that in
10 mind.

11 Q. Right.

12 A. I'm not sure the last time it was surfaced there. The last
13 time -- and I can't tell you that I've ever found a defect there,
14 because they've always surfaced it well before that point. The
15 last time I recorded, it was three-quarters of an inch. I've
16 checked it since then. It was never beyond an inch.

17 But like I say, they've always -- it -- you know, it takes
18 its time and they generally send people up there to take care of
19 it before it's ever to the point of a slow order.

20 MR. LLOYD: I'm good. Thank you. That's -- I'm good.

21 MR. GORDON: Don?

22 BY MR. RICHARDSON:

23 Q. So when you said crosslevel, you said low rail?

24 MR. GORDON: Just introduce yourself.

25 MR. RICHARDSON: I'm sorry. Don Richardson.

1 BY MR. RICHARDSON:

2 Q. When you say crosslevel, are you talking low rail going down
3 or the high rail?

4 A. High rail.

5 Q. High rail going down?

6 A. Uh-huh.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Difference in crosslevel.

9 Q. Yes, sir.

10 A. Yes.

11 MR. RICHARDSON: Okay. That's all I got.

12 MR. GORDON: Okay.

13 MR. DANIELS: David Daniels.

14 BY MR. DANIELS:

15 Q. So, it's -- would you say it gains elevation or loses
16 elevation?

17 A. It loses.

18 Q. Okay. And when was the last time either you or your partner
19 actually traversed that track?

20 A. The last time I traversed it was the 11th, I believe. I can
21 tell you. Just -- I'm pretty sure it was the 11th of this month.
22 I'm not sure when Larry was over it last.

23 Yeah, the 11th, I traversed it.

24 MR. DANIELS: I'm good.

25 MR. GORDON: Okay.

1 MR. HORAK: And I apologize. It gains elevation there.

2 MR. GORDON: Okay. So your low rail is kind of dropping off
3 a little bit? So you're --

4 MR. HORAK: Right. Yeah.

5 MR. GORDON: Okay.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That makes more sense.

7 MR. HORAK: On the spot -- but I apologize.

8 MR. GORDON: Yeah, no, no. You're -- yeah.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's okay.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, we got it.

11 MR. GORDON: Yeah. No, you're --

12 MR. HORAK: I've (indiscernible) million times.

13 MR. GORDON: Yeah. You're right. No, you're right. And
14 that's just -- you know, that's just orienting yourself with the
15 direction of travel and the -- you know, the direction of the
16 curve and everything like that. But, yeah. So I guess back to
17 me, Joe Gordon, NTSB.

18 BY MR. GORDON:

19 Q. So, in that curve -- and Troy mentioned the marks that were
20 put on the rail. So I'll just characterize it and you tell me if
21 I'm right about this. We saw some, like, 4 and 5/8th, 4 and
22 7/8th. So what this does is, you've got these marks this was what
23 it was the last time you checked it, and then that way you put
24 your level board there on the next inspection through or, you
25 know, maybe the next time you're traversing that track, you check

1 that location. You had 4 and 5/8th last time, you have 4 and
2 5/8th this time. You know that nothing's moved --

3 A. Right.

4 Q. -- since you were there.

5 A. Right.

6 Q. Okay. And as far as the ballast shoulder through there -- so
7 you've got some degradation, the low rail dropping off, you know,
8 gaining some elevation in the curve. Were you noticing any like
9 shy ballast on the heads of the ties or anything like that?

10 A. No. Nothing unusual.

11 MR. GORDON: Okay. Okay.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What's the normal -- what's the
13 uniform profile through the area for super-elevation? What is it
14 by design through that curve?

15 MR. HORAK: I believe it's 4.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Four?

17 MR. GORDON: Yeah. We're going to look at the track chart.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So we're going to look at all that.

19 I --

20 MR. GORDON: Yeah, and make sure that's --

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- hadn't looked there yet. I believe
22 it is 4 inches.

23 BY MR. GORDON:

24 Q. Okay. So you inspect from the 57.5 to the 110.7, basically
25 the main track?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Is that pretty much three main track the entire way, or --

3 A. More of it's two main, but there is -- I don't know how many
4 miles. I think there's 11½ between Franconia and RO of triple
5 main.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And then you have a mile and a half roughly of triple main
8 between Fredericksburg interlocking, 59 milepost, you might as
9 well say, and the 57.5.

10 Q. Okay. And everything else is double track? No single track?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. So on that 57.5 to 110.7, do you have other locations
13 where you have to do similar things, with like how -- the
14 reference marks in the curve?

15 A. Sure.

16 Q. Are there -- there are some other locations as well?

17 A. Sure.

18 Q. Because you're -- a lot of this track is on fill, correct?

19 A. Right.

20 Q. It's built up?

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. Okay. And you've been out there working in it. Tell us a
23 little bit about the weather. You know, I'm not expecting inches,
24 but, I mean, just a characterization of the type of weather we've
25 been having, or they were having in this area since Monday of this

1 past week.

2 A. It's been a damp week. It wasn't -- didn't really come to a
3 head, I guess, until Friday. But it's been damp all week.

4 Q. Yeah. Just kind of storms moving through and --

5 A. Yeah. And the one and off rain.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And it never really -- as far as starting from -- well, I
8 don't come into work until Wednesdays. So -- but, I mean, in
9 speaking of my house, the -- and I live in Culpepper, for what
10 that's worth.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. But it -- going to Wednesday, when I came into work, there
13 was -- it was bring my raincoat in case I need it.

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. But it wasn't put it on before I leave the shop type of rain,
16 you know.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. It was wait until I need it, put it on.

19 Q. Yeah, just kind of pop-up storms and those kind of things.

20 So if you could talk a little bit about your special inspections
21 for weather? Kind of how that -- how those come about, how you
22 get notified and what you guys do to patrol.

23 A. Okay. Well, usually -- I think this is the first any type of
24 flooding there's been since I've been back on the job. But the
25 roadmaster called me, told me there was a flood warning in effect

One and off
rain should
read on
and off rain.
Correction
from Horak
07-05-18

1 south of where I was. And so I turned around and went back and
2 started patrolling that area.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Heat inspections or any other stuff if -- they're on the
5 bulletin, or you watch the temperature and work with the
6 roadmaster. You know, it kind of varies.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Especially the time of year. Yep.

9 Q. So Wednesday you made an inspection through. And then your
10 next scheduled day to make an inspection through that area would
11 have been what day?

12 A. I didn't really have another scheduled day, per se. But I
13 was going to go up there Friday.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I was going to ride that end. And they called with a -- they
16 called about the flood watch on the other end, so I turned around
17 and went that way.

18 Q. Okay. So your required frequencies were met. Friday was
19 just going to be an extra inspection?

20 A. It would have been a third trip.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. It's something we do, not FRA required. But, yeah, it would
23 have been when there's a -- so I just -- because it worked with --
24 the FRA frequency was met on the far north end, this side of it.
25 So I just said, okay, I guess I'll do it in conjunction down there

1 with this flood inspection, since I had to be down there anyway.

2 Q. Right. Okay. And then you got turned around when you were
3 going to high-rail the south end, you got -- or you got -- you
4 went further south, right? Was that where the flood --

5 A. I was going to go north. I started to go north from
6 Featherstone, 87 milepost, going north.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. By the time I got to the 91 milepost -- so 4 miles --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- I'm reassuring myself, math ain't my strong point --

11 that's when they called. So I came back to the cross and got off
12 and went south from the 87 going south.

13 Q. Okay. So you were going away from the accident area?

14 A. Right.

15 MR. GORDON: Okay. Okay. All right. That helps to
16 understand, you know, some of what was going on and I appreciate
17 that, you know, as far as the frequency's met and that makes sense
18 to everybody in the room. So that -- I think that's what I've got
19 for right now. I'm going to look at -- Troy, anything else?

20 MR. RICHARDSON: One more question. Don Richardson. Do you
21 know the track centers there by chance?

22 MR. HORAK: No.

23 MR. RICHARDSON: No? Okay.

24 MR. GORDON: We'll take a look at them when we get out there.
25 Yeah.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Measure them.

2 MR. MORRISON: Roy Morrison, BMWED.

3 BY MR. MORRISON:

4 Q. So, Jesse, you said that you made marks other places, in
5 other places you watch. You had no flood warning in the area
6 where the accident was, right?

7 A. No.

8 Q. So there was no -- you went through on a Wednesday?

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. Correct? So Wednesday you had no real reason, or no -- I
11 mean, no observations to really have to worry about that spot.
12 There was nothing in there to give you --

13 A. No. I didn't take exception to anything unusual over there.

14 Q. And there was nothing -- I mean, your flood warnings were in
15 the other way. You have plenty of places that you mark. That's
16 not like an abnormality.

17 A. Right.

18 Q. Correct?

19 A. Right.

20 MR. MORRISON: That's my only question.

21 MR. GORDON: Okay. All right. Anything?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. I think that if you're good, I'm
23 good.

24 MR. GORDON: Okay. Well, what we'll -- what we always like
25 to do, Jesse, is as -- you know, you're the person that's got the

1 best knowledge of, you know, the track out there. I mean, track
2 inspector, you know it like the back of your hand. One of the
3 things that we always like to do is ask the people that are out
4 there doing the work, boots on the ground, you know, every day, if
5 there's anything that you see as like a safety improvement or
6 anything like that?

7 You know, if you know anything now you can let us know, or
8 you -- I'll give you my contact information, you can call and
9 follow up. If at any point later on, something else comes to
10 mind, you want to reach out to us and tell us something, there
11 again, everybody that's on this team, this is -- you know, this is
12 basically the track and engineering team that NTSB has put
13 together. Everybody that's on this team is -- we're just out here
14 to gather the facts and try to figure out, you know, if there's
15 any safety improvements we can make to be sure we don't have
16 another one of these type accidents. So, you know, if anything
17 like that comes to mind, just let us know. Reach out to me or
18 reach out to Mr. Daniels and he'll pass it along to us.

19 But, yeah, I appreciate you coming in, spending the time
20 talking with us. And I'll look around the room one more time,
21 make sure nobody has any further questions.

22 And with that, we'll go off of the record.

23 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

24
25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: CSX FREIGHT TRAIN DERAILMENT
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA
MAY 19, 2018
Interview of Jesse Horak

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD18MR007

PLACE: Alexandria, Virginia

DATE: May 20, 2018

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.



Jane Gilliam
Transcriber