



Motor Carrier Attachment –AMT General Manager Interview

6/14/21 Phoenix, AZ

HWY21MH008

(17 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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FATALITIES DUE TO MILK TANKER *

ACCIDENT IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA * Accident No.: HWY21MH008

ON JUNE 9, 2021 *

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Interview of: MIKE THIESSEN, General Manager
Arizona Milk Transport

Tempe, Arizona

Monday,
June 14, 2021

APPEARANCES:

MICHAEL FOX, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

DAVE STOUT, Counsel
Jones, Skeleton, and Hochuli

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Mike Thiessen:

By Mr. Fox

4

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. FOX: This is Michael Fox, investigator for the NTSB, out
3 of the Washington, DC office. I am located at Arizona Milk
4 Transport, located at 2111 South Industrial Park Avenue in Tempe,
5 Arizona. Today we're going to be interviewing the General Manager
6 and Maintenance Chief for Arizona Milk. And there are several
7 folks in the room.

8 So we'll start off with you, Mike, if you could tell me your
9 name and spell your last name and your title.

10 MR. THIESSEN: Okay. My name is Mike Thiessen. My last name
11 is T as in Tom, H-I-E-S-S-E-N, and I'm the General Manager for
12 Arizona Milk Transport.

13 Mr. FOX: Okay. And then we also have an attorney from
14 Jones, Skelton, and --

15 MR. STOUT: Hochuli.

16 MR. FOX: Hochuli. David, go ahead -- your name, and spell
17 your last name for us.

18 MR. STOUT: My name's Dave Stout, S-T-O-U-T, and I'm counsel
19 for Arizona Milk Transport.

20 BY MR. FOX:

21 Q. Okay. So thank you all for being here today. We want to --
22 as mentioned when I first arrived, we wanted to just kind of get a
23 handle on maintenance today.

24 So Mike, your business card says you're the general manager,
25 is that your main title?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Are you also responsible for the maintenance of the truck
3 tractors?

4 A. I'm a -- I'm responsible for safety and then basically, I
5 overlook everything; so yes, I guess.

6 Q. Okay. Do you have a maintenance chief that works here at the
7 company?

8 A. No. Not a chief, per se.

9 Q. But you have a -- do you have a maintenance person?

10 A. We have -- mechanics?

11 Q. Mechanics, yes.

12 A. Yes, of course.

13 Q. Okay. And do any of them hold certifications, you know, for
14 --

15 A. In -- for what we do? Yes. Like, air conditioning, that
16 kind of thing.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And then they've been to brake schools and different stuff
19 like that, the one mechanic that I have right now. But most of
20 our stuff is outsourced, so --

21 Q. Okay. And how long have you been here?

22 A. I helped open this company; 16 years.

23 Q. Okay. Very good, and you said you have one or two mechanics
24 at work?

25 A. I have one right now.

- 1 Q. One mechanic?
- 2 A. And I'm hiring another one. Well, one will be in today for a
3 drug test.
- 4 Q. Okay. And does that -- and who is that mechanic?
- 5 A. The one that I currently have?
- 6 Q. Yes, sir.
- 7 A. Dorian.
- 8 Q. Dorian? And does Dorian --
- 9 A. He's a tech.
- 10 Q. He's a tech?
- 11 A. Yeah.
- 12 Q. Does he hold any certifications?
- 13 A. I'm not exactly sure which ones he has, but for what he does,
14 air conditioning, I think he's got his air conditioning thing, and
15 then he's got a certificate for doing brakes, you know, when we
16 do brake pads, that kind of thing.
- 17 Q. He does?
- 18 A. He's new.
- 19 Q. He's new?
- 20 A. Yeah.
- 21 Q. How long has he been here?
- 22 A. He's been here a year.
- 23 Q. A year?
- 24 A. Yeah.
- 25 Q. After this meeting, maybe you can get me a copy of his

1 certification?

2 A. Okay.

3 Q. It may already be in an email that I got earlier, that I
4 haven't opened.

5 A. Maybe Susan has it.

6 Q. Susan has it? So we'll take a look at that. Can -- you
7 touched upon the types of maintenance. Can you describe in
8 greater detail what kind of maintenance --

9 A. -- that we do here?

10 Q. -- or services are done here?

11 A. Yeah, we do preventative maintenance. We do all the lube,
12 oil changes, that kind of thing. If somebody bends a step,
13 they'll replace the step on it. Most of that stuff's cosmetic,
14 and -- but we do, like, all of the oil changes and filter changes,
15 fuel filter changes, end cap filters. And if they get an air leak
16 or something on the truck, they'll fix it, or if they need new
17 hoses on the truck, that kind of thing. That's pretty much what
18 we do here.

19 Q. And do you have a shop here?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Is it -- it's here on the property?

22 A. Yes, right here. Right.

23 Q. So after we finish up you can --

24 A. Sure.

25 Q. -- maybe give me a small tour.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Any of the bigger stuff, transmissions, motors, that kind of
3 thing, we outsource to either Freightliner, that's Betts who does
4 suspension work and stuff like that. And matter of fact,
5 Freightliner's out in the parking lot right now. They're doing
6 some work on it. They do some diagnostic stuff for us and stuff.

7 Q. Betts, you said? What?

8 A. Betts.

9 Q. How do you spell that?

10 A. B-E-T-T-S.

11 Q. And that's in shop?

12 A. Yes, on 75th Avenue, in Buckeye. And then of course,
13 Freightliner -- because a lot of our stuff is under warranties,
14 and stuff like that. Freightliner mobile is out there.

15 Q. I believe it was Unit 57 that was involved in the crash?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. And did you guys purchase that new?

18 A. I'm not sure. I think so. I think 57 we did purchase new.
19 Let's see. I'm not exactly sure. I'm sure we did purchase that
20 one new. We don't usually buy used trucks, but -- yeah, I'm not
21 exactly sure. Susan would have to tell us exactly.

22 Q. And I'll need a copy of the purchase order.

23 A. Sure.

24 Q. If you could -- if you have that in the file. Do you know
25 when the vehicle was last annually inspected?

1 A. At the beginning of the year. I mean, if we have that on the
2 computer. This is its annual inspection right here. So it was
3 inspected on December 28th of 2020.

4 Q. Okay

5 A. That's its annual. And it just had a 30-point inspection; I
6 think it was April 22nd. We have the TATEMS program that can show
7 us any of the other records, you know, computerized.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. So yeah.

10 Q. So that leads me up to my next question is, that -- can you
11 explain how you do your repairs and services?

12 A. Well, if -- well, they're done by mileage, as far as the oil
13 changes. And they're brought in, we do the oil changes, it
14 depends on which trucks they are, but 15,000 miles. And we do, if
15 -- every single day, our drivers will come in and do their vehicle
16 inspection.

17 And then if they'll check all the things the professional
18 driver does. And then if they have any issues, if they see that
19 there's an issue with it, they'll fill out -- they always fill out
20 a DVIR.

21 Q. Regardless if there's --

22 A. Regardless, and say it's all clear or if there's a problem.
23 And if there's a problem, they'll come in, they'll bring us the
24 DVIR inspection sheet, we'll put it out of service if it needs to
25 be put out of service, obviously if there's a problem, you know.

1 I mean, they tell us, like, if a door handle was loose or, you
2 know, that kind of a thing. But then we would put the keys down
3 here in the Out of Service, they would bring us the DVIR, and then
4 of course, we would then put it on our board, if it's Out of
5 Service line, and then it would be fixed by the mechanic.

6 And then, when the mechanic fixes it, then he signs off
7 saying it's been repaired, whether it -- whatever the particular
8 thing. Maybe it's got a bad tire, or he thinks it's got a bad
9 tire, or whatever. If it's something that's like, he says that he
10 thinks that the -- let's say it's leaking oil or something, or
11 there's -- it needs something like that.

12 Well then, we'll call -- well, Dorian can fix it. It's just
13 a hose or something like that, then we'll have that fixed here.
14 But if it's something like a seal leaking or something, we'll call
15 Freightliner, and then their mobile service comes out.

16 Or if it's a bigger problem, we send it down to Freightliner.
17 They'll either come get it or it'll be towed over there, whatever,
18 you know, and be sent to Freightliner to be fixed.

19 Q. This particular tractor, has it had any major repairs or
20 services, besides just normal quarterly services --

21 A. Normal stuff -

22 Q. -- or whatever?

23 A. -- its normal inspections. It's got a HEPA filter on it,
24 which extends the life of the oil. So it's like, every 25,000
25 miles, the oil needs to be changed.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. But it's had -- it had some front brake pads replaced in
3 April. That's it, because everything else is new.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. And other than that, I mean, it's been perfect. A perfect
6 truck.

7 Q. Yeah, I mean it did burn up -- it was burned in the crash --

8 A. Sure.

9 Q. -- but the back of it is still intact.

10 A. Sure.

11 Q. And the tires looked almost new --

12 A. Right.

13 Q. -- to me.

14 A. And we have Blue Ribbon Tire Company, who maintains our
15 tires. We let them know, they come out and replace tires. They
16 do all that stuff. So Blue Ribbon handles all our tires. If we
17 have a chip in the glass, we call FastGlass and they come out and
18 replace the glass.

19 Most suspension work goes to Betts, but everything else, all
20 other repairs, go to Freightliner, because most trucks are new,
21 relatively new, you know, it's a good warranty, that kind of a
22 thing. But we don't do any major stuff here, in-house.

23 Q. The Blue Ribbon Tire Company, is that a lease program? Are
24 those lease tires, or they --

25 A. No.

1 Q. You own them?

2 A. We own them.

3 Q. But they, they have, like, a gauge? I mean, it's like a
4 computerized system? They say, hey, you should be due for a new
5 tire, or --

6 A. Oh, no. Our drivers, like I say, they're all Class-A CDL,
7 they'll come out. And if they see that their tires are getting
8 worn, or if it happens to come in for, you know, an oil change,
9 and if the - if Dorian thinks that it needs new tires, we just
10 call Blue Ribbon up.

11 But most of the time, that would be caught by a, you know, a
12 driver. They'll say, hey, I'm down to, you know, three, thirty
13 seconds or whatever it is, and then they'll let us know, and we'll
14 just call them up and they'll bring new tires out, and we replace
15 them.

16 Q. So let me rephrase the question.

17 A. Sure.

18 Q. I'm very familiar with different companies that do that, like
19 Firestone or whoever.

20 A. Sure, sure.

21 Q. And they may manage the tires themselves.

22 A. Right.

23 Q. That is not the case here?

24 A. No.

25 Q. They're not -- they do not manage your tire rotations or

1 anything like that?

2 A. No. No.

3 Q. But they just -- they're your vendor?

4 A. They're our vendor. Yep.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. And then they also store our used tires. Like, if a tire is
7 worn -- let's say, we need steer tires, we don't ever just replace
8 one tire. We always replace them in pairs. So, if we got one
9 tire that's still good, they'll keep it for us, or we use it as a
10 run-out on something, whatever.

11 Q. Now, I think that the truck tractor had Falcons on there, or
12 -- let me see. I mean, well, the question is, do you have a
13 preferred brand that you use as far as tire manufacturer?

14 A. They have a particular brand -- oh, my brain. A-H, the 275,
15 295s, they're Hankooks? Hankooks.

16 Q. Hankooks, yeah, maybe that's what it was.

17 A. Yeah, Hankook.

18 Q. So is that your preferred brand that you use on the
19 freightliners?

20 A. Yeah. It's the -- their preferred brand, and we use it, too,
21 yeah. Pretty standard.

22 Q. Okay. And let's see, what else? But to your knowledge,
23 according to your -- I don't want to have you go by memory.

24 A. Yep.

25 Q. As far as you know, was there any major repairs done over the

1 past couple of years? Any kind of major engine component
2 replaced? Transmission, anything like that?

3 A. Nothing I can tell you right off-hand. I mean, if we could
4 look at the computer program, and I could tell you --

5 Q. Okay, so after we conclude here --

6 A. Sure.

7 Q. -- we'll take a look at that.

8 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's got -- we got a computerized list in
9 that truck --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- and I've got pulled up already.

12 Q. Okay, awesome.

13 A. But it didn't look like it, yeah.

14 Q. This truck tractor -- I mean, in your head, are you familiar
15 with it?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. And has it been doing good?

18 A. Very well. It's a newer truck.

19 Q. The driver that operates it, is he a pretty good driver?

20 A. Yes. He's been here -- matter of fact, I'm the oldest
21 employee here, helped to open the company. And then he is my
22 oldest employee.

23 Q. He is?

24 A. 12 years, yeah, Cesar.

25 Q. And as far as being diligent about his DVIR --

1 A. Extremely. Extremely diligent.

2 Q. And to your knowledge, up -- you know, the days prior to the
3 crash, had -- hadn't had any write-ups or -- I didn't see any on
4 the DVIR, but I just wanted to quiz you about that.

5 A. Nope, it's a good truck, and he takes, you know, very good
6 care of it.

7 Q. Yeah. So to your knowledge, it would - had nothing, no
8 issues?

9 A. Nope. Not at all.

10 Q. Okay. All right. Well, that's basically the questions I
11 have.

12 A. Sure.

13 Q. Is there anything that I failed to ask you, about the --

14 A. No.

15 Q. -- your maintenance or anything?

16 A. No.

17 MR. FOX: So we'll go ahead and conclude the interview now,
18 and then well take a look at your --

19 MR. THIESSEN: Sure.

20 MR. FOX: -- computer program.

21 MR. THIESSEN: You got it.

22 MR. FOX: And the time now is 9:25. Thank you, sir.

23 (Whereupon, at 9:25 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

24

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

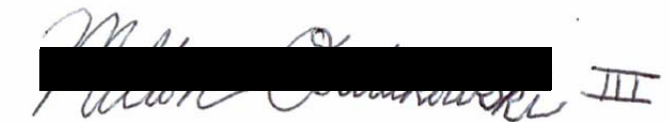
IN THE MATTER OF: FATALITIES DUE TO MILK TANKER
ACCIDENT IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA
ON JUNE 9, 2021
Interview of Mike Thiessen

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY21MH008

PLACE: Tempe, Arizona

DATE: June 14, 2021

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.



MILTON ORDAKOWSKI III
Transcriber