



SURVIVAL FACTORS ATTACHMENT

First Responder Interview Transcripts

Highland, IL

HWY23MH015

(103 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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GREYHOUND BUS CRASH NEAR HIGHLAND,
ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023

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Accident No.: HWY23FH015

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Interview of: PHIL DECKER, Chief

Highland-Pierron Fire Department

Highland-Pierron Fire Department
Highland, Illinois

Sunday,
July 16, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RONALD KAMINSKI, Senior Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Phil Decker:

By Mr. Kaminski

4

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. KAMINSKI: Today's date is July 16th, Ronald Kaminski
3 with the NTSB. I'm here at the Highland-Pierron Fire Department
4 and I'm going to be talking to Chief Phil Decker, D-e-c-k-e-r, and
5 he's going to give us a description of, as incident commander,
6 what he saw and did while on scene. And Chief, you don't have a
7 problem with me recording this?

8 MR. DECKER: Not at all.

INTERVIEW OF PHIL DECKER

9
10 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

11 Q. Okay, great. So why don't you start off?

12 A. We were paged out for a bus versus semi with one reported
13 back injury and possible entrapment. We arrived on -- I was the
14 first one on scene and did a 360 of the wreck and quickly realized
15 this is a multi-casualty incident.

16 Q. And you were the first one on scene?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Okay. Did you go in your personal vehicle?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Because I respond from my house in my personal vehicle to
22 make a quick assessment so we know what we need.

23 Q. Okay. POV, okay.

24 A. Initially, as soon as I got on scene, there was a truck
25 driver using a fire extinguisher, claims there was a small fire

1 between the rear of the bus and the front of the semi. I could
2 not see the fire, but I just seen -- the extinguisher powder was
3 still -- you know, the cloud was still there.

4 Q. Sure.

5 A. So I didn't -- there was no visible flames, so I continued on
6 my assessment of the wreck.

7 Q. And this was before you declared the MCI?

8 A. Yes. Yes, as soon as I walked up, he was just like well,
9 what else do you know and he's -- he's one of the first ones that
10 said well, I walked around, the driver appears to be dead and
11 there's more people in the back, but I want to make sure I get
12 this fire out before the fuel tank takes off.

13 Q. Sure.

14 A. So I continued around after talking to him. I did see the
15 driver, I did shake him, he was laying back far enough, I couldn't
16 really reach for a pulse, didn't appear to be breathing, and I
17 just moved on. So then I went around the back side of the semi to
18 get to the back side of the bus and there were already a lot of
19 people that had self-extricated and people that helped them out.

20 Q. Did you see how they were getting out, by chance?

21 A. There was other truck drivers there helping them down.

22 Q. Out the opening or --

23 A. Out the opening.

24 Q. -- out the broken windows or out the windows?

25 A. Out the opening.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. The only people that came out the windows was after we put
3 ladders on there. The window was broke, I guess, like I think
4 somebody had tried to do that, from the inside --

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. -- and all of it came down and broke, but one was broke, but
7 I don't remember -- I think it was broke when I got there --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- so it wasn't one of our -- it just -- I really think
10 somebody tried to get out --

11 Q. Tried to push it open and --

12 A. -- and it came down broke.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. So on the other side they were just helping each other down,
15 the ones that could, and then the rest of them were still --

16 Q. Out the opening.

17 A. Yeah, out the wide opening. Which is, I mean, gosh, I didn't
18 measure, but I mean that's not some place you just want to jump
19 out of and there's a ditch there, I mean that wouldn't have been
20 an easy --

21 Q. Well, from the window sill to the ground is around 8 feet,
22 so --

23 A. The floor --

24 Q. -- that side wall to the floor, you can maybe take 3 feet
25 off, it's still going to be a 5-foot drop, yeah.

1 A. Right, yeah.

2 Q. Not an easy jump.

3 A. No.

4 Q. Especially if you're an older guy --

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. -- an older person, yeah.

7 A. Yeah. So the amount of people that were out sitting in the
8 field, in the grass, I used my flash, I just kind of quickly
9 looked, they were all sitting upright, so I assumed them to be in
10 good enough shape to take care of themselves for the time being.

11 Then I got in the back of the bus, right up against it and
12 realized there's a lot of stuff going in here, there's still
13 people trapped, there's still people up there, so then -- and that
14 was probably one of the hardest things I ever do is just walk away
15 from that because I knew what I had to do, like I had to get up
16 there and get more people coming.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. Instead of jumping in and helping the people who needed help,
19 to walk back in front was probably the -- the hardest thing from
20 doing the 360 --

21 Q. Right.

22 A. -- you know, because you can physically see people that could
23 use help --

24 Q. Right, but you needed --

25 A. -- and I had to walk away to make more radio calls to get --

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. -- more people coming to get things done. Because I was
3 there, I don't know how much time before EMS was there, you know,
4 so I radioed back to them, we've got multiple victims, which I --
5 did you get the audio yet?

6 Q. No.

7 A. Okay. I haven't asked for it, either, it would be kind of
8 curious just to hear how draubled (ph.) I was, I'm sure,
9 especially in that first --

10 Q. And what should I ask for? I know I'm going to ask for the
11 911 calls, but should I ask for the radio communications?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Because that all should be recorded. All the stuff on our
15 main channel's recorded, the only part that probably isn't and
16 they wouldn't hear would be the fire ground communications.

17 Q. I got MABAS Blue --

18 A. Right.

19 Q. -- and MABAS Red.

20 A. Right. That's the only two channels that I don't know if
21 they can record and were probably too far away from them to be
22 able to hear it, anyway.

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. But yeah, all the -- all of our channels should be recorded.
25 So it should be.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. So -- but yeah, when --

3 Q. And that's with Madison County?

4 A. Yes, yeah. And I can -- like I said, I can send you --
5 Cale Becker's the guy, the boss, for them, so he should be able to
6 get it.

7 Q. I'll reach out to him tomorrow, I'll give it until --

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. -- noon, if I don't hear anything, I'll reach out.

10 A. Yeah. And then -- yeah, so once I --

11 Q. What's his name again?

12 A. Cale Becker. I don't know if I sent him your information or
13 not. Or sent you his.

14 Q. And his position in Madison County is --

15 A. I think he's a sergeant there and he's in charge of dispatch.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I've got two numbers for him, so I'll send you both.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. While I'm thinking of it. So then once I came around the
20 back to the front, I decided where I was going to get the first
21 engine to pull a hose line to make sure that fire that he put out
22 with the extinguisher was completely out, we didn't have to worry
23 about that any more. And --

24 Q. So they pulled -- did they pull adjacent to the bus or --

25 A. So they pulled off -- I wanted them out of the way enough

1 that we could still get up through there.

2 Q. Ambulances through, yeah.

3 A. So that was my plan and so they did pull off, that little
4 triangle part between the ramp and the interstate.

5 Q. Yeah, the core (ph.).

6 A. Yeah. That's where they parked. We pulled off a hand line
7 from there, they hosed it down just to make sure it stayed and
8 then that was it. Then they came back and we just -- they started
9 helping with everything else. Once we got more stuff figured out,
10 that we're going to have use this ramp for EMS for ambulances to
11 pull up, we came back with the hose then and rinsed off the ramp
12 from all the glass, there was an unbelievable amount of glass
13 there.

14 Q. I imagine.

15 A. A lot of glass.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. So we rinsed that all underneath the buses and all underneath
18 the truck just to get it off the roadway, that was it and then we
19 stopped. Then we cleared the hose and that truck was pretty well
20 done then.

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. And then once we started getting, you know, everything lined
23 up, getting the helicopters landed, getting all the other
24 ambulances coming and getting them all ready to go, that's when we
25 started utilizing that as the drive-through.

1 Q. Did you happen to talk to either of the truck drivers that
2 were --

3 A. Just the first one and I can't remember which one he was.

4 Q. Oh.

5 A. He had the fire extinguisher, but I was -- I was listening to
6 him but looking at the bus, so my -- I didn't -- I wouldn't
7 remember which one he was for sure.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I did see the fire extinguisher. He went on both sides, he
10 kept doing what he was doing and I'm like I appreciate your
11 help --

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. -- you know, you're doing great, thank you. And for whatever
14 reason, he was on the back side of the bus initially, but when I
15 found the fire extinguisher after the fact, it was inside the
16 front of the bus, like in front of the semi, right where that
17 opening is. So he walked back and forth and kept doing that.

18 Q. Nice.

19 A. So he did do --

20 Q. Um-hum.

21 A. -- a good college effort.

22 Q. Yeah, I think we'll be talking with the truck drivers.

23 A. There, you should have both numbers for him now.

24 Q. Okay, great.

25 A. Yeah. And then once we got EMS in there establishing how

1 many -- how many helicopters we need, you know, and they did a
2 quick, quick assessment and started with number three. So I
3 called back dispatch, we got helicopters coming in and I can't
4 believe they all three came pretty much the same time, staggered a
5 little bit, but they all three landed and then that was the first
6 crew -- that was the first people we got out.

7 Q. And then, so these other -- we talked the other day about all
8 these EMS, ambulances --

9 A. Uh-huh.

10 Q. -- that responded, so the EMS responded but the fire
11 departments didn't?

12 A. No.

13 Q. All right.

14 A. No. And the only fire departments personnel that was on
15 scene was Highland-Pierron, City of Highland, Grantfork, and
16 Marine.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. But like Marine didn't -- they were there, but we returned
19 them before we had to use them.

20 Q. Right.

21 A. So yeah. And it's one of those things, being a volunteer
22 department, you never know, with us, how many we get. We've got
23 close to 40 people, but I only had like 13 show up, you know, and
24 a lot of it comes back from the page, initial page, I'm not going
25 all the way up there for one, one person possibly hurt.

1 Q. Right, with a back injury.

2 A. Right. They didn't listen to the rest, you know, they don't
3 look into it that far, so -- which --

4 Q. And that's surprising, usually volunteers, something big like
5 this, it will bring them all out.

6 A. Yeah, I know.

7 Q. Um-hum.

8 A. But it does -- it wasn't relayed that way initially. And I
9 could've re-paged this out, but I had enough going on, I just kept
10 calling for other people, if they're willing to show up, I'll just
11 keep using whoever's showing up.

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. And with Highland, they're bringing two trucks out, which a
14 lot of time they'd have more people, too, so that -- between our
15 two departments, we really could've handled this.

16 Q. So how many trucks total came out, then? They had two?

17 A. They had two and then I had three.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. So we had five just between our two departments.

20 Q. Engine units?

21 A. Yeah. One heavy rescue for me and then two engines and then
22 Highland brought two engines.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Yeah. So we had four engines and one heavy rescue, which --

25 Q. And the heavy rescue, that's the one that carries like the

1 extrication equipment --

2 A. Yeah. Well, they all carry extrication; the heavy rescue,
3 we've got, you know, gas powered K12, battery powered K12, you
4 know, a gas powered set of jaws in addition to the battery powered
5 set of jaws, you know. We got supports, air bags --

6 Q. Um-hum.

7 A. -- tons of stuff for shoring, like if we had to support
8 something --

9 Q. Right.

10 A. -- we could do that, so --

11 Q. Okay. Okay. Yeah, it sounds like you guys got two good
12 departments here.

13 A. Yeah, we're --

14 Q. Good crews, no doubt about it.

15 A. For being a volunteer department, we're --

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. -- pretty fortunate, really.

18 Q. Yeah. And I didn't realize you both were volunteer
19 departments, for some reason --

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. -- I was thinking that the Highland was paid, but that was --
22 the chief's the only one that's paid.

23 A. Yeah. They're paid hourly, but we're just paid per -- we're
24 \$12 per a call, it doesn't matter if you're there, like this call,
25 we got 12 bucks.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. If somebody stubs their toe, 12 bucks, you know, it doesn't
3 matter what call it is.

4 Q. And how many hours you're out there.

5 A. Right.

6 Q. Wow.

7 A. This is a flat fee.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. Where his guys, since they're -- they're city, they get paid
10 hourly, they have to be, for labor laws, because they're city
11 employees, where we're volunteer to a district.

12 Q. But I'm telling you, I've done a lot of these wrecks and the
13 volunteers are the ones that it seems they're -- you know, they
14 have other jobs, but they --

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. -- come out and they do just as good of a job as the paid
17 guys.

18 A. It used to be the number was like 75 or 80 percent of this
19 nation was protected by volunteers. Because we can't afford --

20 Q. Right.

21 A. -- you know, so --

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. Yeah, it's -- you know. And the report, like -- Straub and I
24 kind of work together on the report, his report's -- my report's
25 going to say basically the same thing his did, but it's all in

1 there, you know, how we kind of split up the command, unified
2 command and, you know, I took care of -- I was really worried
3 about the helicopters landing with the power lines and so I went
4 out in the middle of the interstate and just kept shining my
5 flashlight until they could all see it, until they all three were
6 on the ground, you know, then the fourth one came out and I went
7 out and did it again.

8 Q. Now, by the time the fourth one came, were the other three
9 gone or --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Yeah, the other three were already gone and probably landed
13 and then we got the fourth one out for the driver, so --

14 MR. KAMINSKI: Okay. Yeah, there's a couple other calls I
15 have to make to the helo companies, so -- okay, Chief, that will
16 -- we'll conclude this interview, it's approximately 10 minutes --

17 (Whereupon, the interview concluded.)

18

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CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: GREYHOUND BUS CRASH NEAR HIGHLAND,
ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023
Interview of Phil Decker

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY23FH015

PLACE: Highland, Illinois

DATE: July 16, 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.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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GREYHOUND BUS CRASH NEAR HIGHLAND,
ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023

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Accident No.: HWY23FH015

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Interview of: BEN STRAUB, Lieutenant
City of Highland Fire Department

Highland-Pierron Fire Department
Highland, Illinois

Sunday,
July 16, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RONALD KAMINSKI, Senior Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Ben Straub:

By Mr. Kaminski

4

I N T E R V I E W

(11:36 a.m.)

1
2
3 MR. KAMINSKI: Today's date is July 16th, Ronald Kaminski
4 with the NTSB. I'm here at the Highland-Pierron Fire Department
5 and I'm going to be talking to Lieutenant Ben Straub, S-t-r-a-u-b,
6 who is with the City of Highland Fire Department. So you don't
7 mind if I record this?

8 MR. STRAUB: No.

9 MR. KAMINSKI: Okay.

INTERVIEW OF BEN STRAUB

10
11 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

12 Q. So why don't you just give me a brief description of what you
13 saw and what you did out there.

14 A. So what we did, when we first got there --

15 Q. Oh, and what engine and what vehicle --

16 A. Okay. So the truck I was on was the City of Highland Unit
17 Number 1517, the engine. When we arrived on scene, we set up the
18 landing zone for the helicopters and after we got done with that,
19 we just immediately jumped in and started helping with, you know,
20 getting the rest of the patients out of the bus and packaging
21 patients.

22 Q. So you set up the landing zone first and then you went --

23 A. Um-hum.

24 Q. -- back to the bus?

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Yeah, made sure we got the highway shut down so we could land
3 the helicopters on the road.

4 Q. So who shut down the interstate, then?

5 A. That would've been our second truck.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Fifteen twenty-seven.

8 Q. Fifteen twenty-seven.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Stopped the I-70 traffic, okay.

11 A. And then we just -- after we did all that, we just went over
12 to the passenger side of the bus and were helping the medics that
13 were obviously triaging and, you know, once the helicopters
14 started landing, we got the -- the three patients that immediately
15 needed to go. I believe I helped with the -- the first two, I
16 believe, that went to the helicopter, I helped with getting them
17 to the helicopter.

18 After that, you know, I was just more so moving patients up
19 the embankment, helping, because obviously, that was kind of a
20 task, a little bit. Doing that, just -- and the ones that were
21 just going to ambulances, you know, just moving them, and then --

22 Q. And you didn't deal with any extrication or anything like
23 that?

24 A. Not of the patients.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. I did help with the extrication of the three bodies --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- towards the end. I also was involved with the extrication
4 of the driver.

5 Q. Helped carry him out, lifted him out to --

6 A. Yeah, so Shawn Hogg on Highland-Pierron's department, he was
7 up in the bus on top and then Captain Spengler was also in there
8 and then I was standing on the front bumper helping them lift him
9 up and then we just got him out on the backboard, there was -- I
10 mean, there was a whole slew of people there, I can't remember
11 exactly everybody --

12 Q. Sure.

13 A. -- who was there, but --

14 Q. Sure.

15 A. So that's what we did with that, we just kind of did it a
16 little -- a little different than we normally would, we tried
17 going in a couple different ways to get him out of the bus, but I
18 mean, the way it was looking, he didn't -- we didn't really think
19 he was -- it was going to be beneficial to take the long route to
20 getting him out, so we just kind of --

21 Q. Lifted him out.

22 A. Just kind of stood him up, almost, and pulled him out.

23 Q. Um-hum. Yeah, because there was damage right there at the
24 front loading door and --

25 A. Yeah, well, I think one thing --

1 Q. -- you can't get in on the driver door.

2 A. Well, that was one thing that confused us, we kind of saw
3 that and we're like oh, there's a door right here, we'll just open
4 it. Well, it turns out it's not actually a door.

5 Q. Right.

6 A. It's just a fuse --

7 Q. I mean, there's a little spot --

8 A. It's like a -- yeah, it's like a fuse panel door, almost --

9 Q. Exactly.

10 A. -- I mean, there's a little room to get underneath there,
11 but --

12 Q. Right.

13 A. -- it wasn't going to work for what we needed, so --

14 Q. Sure.

15 A. -- that kind of confused us a little bit at that time, but --
16 and then that was about it for what we did or what I did during
17 the -- obviously, the crucial minutes of the beginning of the
18 call.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. And then I was on the passenger side of the bus with the two
21 patients that were deceased and then we -- I was in the crew with
22 them that --

23 Q. And how were they located, do you --

24 A. The first one, the first patient, they were pretty close to
25 each other.

1 Q. Towards the front or back of the bus?

2 A. So they were -- I want to say they're almost kind of like
3 middle to front.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. The first one on -- from the front, he was laying flat on the
6 ground and he -- I mean, he had stuff piled all over top of him.

7 Q. Face down?

8 A. Face down, yeah. And we just -- and he was -- it was pretty
9 easy to get him out because it was almost just everything that was
10 loose just all kind of ended right there. So it was just more so
11 us just throwing everything out and getting it out of the bus and,
12 you know, throwing it across so we weren't trying to fight it
13 coming through the ditch with him and --

14 Q. Sure.

15 A. The second one, he was actually seat-belted in.

16 Q. Really?

17 A. Yeah, he had a seatbelt on, in the seat, and he was kind of
18 more so just kind of hanging in the seat.

19 Q. So did you guys cut the seatbelt off him or --

20 A. I believe they did to get him out, but it looked like he was
21 seat-belted in, because he was -- I mean, he was in the last, the
22 last seat that was still there in the passenger side of the bus.

23 Q. That wasn't torn out?

24 A. Right. He was in that very first -- that first, last,
25 however you want to say it, that seat --

1 Q. Well, it would've been in the aisle seat or --

2 A. No, he was right on the window.

3 Q. On the window seat, okay.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Good to know, that's a good one there, yeah, because we're
6 trying to -- you know, I mean, I looked at all the belts and I did
7 find two belts that looked to be used that were on the driver's
8 side.

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. But I'm still -- I still haven't really had the time to look
11 at all the seats that were torn, we're going to do that
12 tomorrow --

13 A. Right.

14 Q. -- because we're going to doing scanning, we're doing --

15 A. Right.

16 Q. -- all sorts of stuff, so -- in the window seat, okay.

17 That's good to -- did you hear of anyone else that was restrained,
18 but --

19 A. No, that was just -- that was just the one I saw because he
20 was -- I mean, obviously, he was at the -- you know, there was a
21 whole open section --

22 Q. Right.

23 A. -- where all the seats were gone and then he was in that
24 first seat --

25 Q. First seat, okay.

1 A. -- and he was -- just the way he was positioned in the seat,
2 I mean, you could tell that he was stuck there.

3 Q. Okay. And who else would've -- can verify that the seatbelt,
4 if it was cut? I mean, I'll see that tomorrow.

5 A. Yeah, so it would be -- I believe it was one of the guys
6 who's here, Ryan Dumstorff.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. He was up in the bus and then Jerod Kampwerth.

9 Q. Okay. Well, maybe -- and Jerod.

10 A. Yeah, I don't think Jerod is here today, but --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- I think he's -- I think he's going to be coming in to meet
13 with you at some point here.

14 MR. KAMINSKI: Okay. Okay. Boy, you've given me a lot of
15 good information, Ben, I appreciate it.

16 MR. STRAUB: Yeah.

17 MR. KAMINSKI: So yeah, you have my business card and
18 anything else comes up, give me a call.

19 MR. STRAUB: Okay.

20 MR. KAMINSKI: And that concludes our interview here with
21 Lieutenant Ben Straub at approximately 11:44.

22 (Whereupon, at 11:44 p.m., the interview concluded.)
23
24
25

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ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023

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Accident No.: HWY23FH015

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Interview of: CHRIS STRAUB, Chief

City of Highland Fire Department

Highland-Pierron Fire Department
Highland, Illinois

Sunday,
July 16, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RONALD KAMINSKI, Senior Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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Interview of Chris Straub:

By Mr. Kiminski

4

I N T E R V I E W

(1:33 p.m.)

1
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3 MR. KAMINSKI: Today's date is July 16th, I'm Ronald Kaminski
4 with the NTSB. I'm going to be talking with Chief Chris Straub,
5 S-t-r-a-u-b, with the Highland Fire Department. And is it okay,
6 Chief, if we record the interview?

7 MR. STRAUB: Yes.

INTERVIEW OF CHRIS STRAUB

8
9 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

10 Q. Okay. And why don't you just give me a description of from
11 the time you got on scene, when you got the call, and what all you
12 did and what you saw?

13 A. Yeah, from the point that I arrived on scene, we were
14 actually paged out as mutual aid for Highland-Pierron, so Highland
15 -- we were the second department in on this particular call.
16 That's a gray area out there, so sometimes -- it was actually our
17 call, but they called them, it's just such a gray area out there
18 is how this went down.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. So we were actually called in as mutual aid, I arrived on
21 scene, I talked to Chief Decker with Highland-Pierron, as he was
22 the first one on scene. He gave me a brief overview of what he
23 saw, as far as number of injuries and what he thought he had in
24 deceased passengers and putting together our next step of where we
25 go from here. We decided instead of turning the command over to

1 me due -- even though it was in my jurisdiction, we decided to
2 stick with a unified command since he already established that for
3 himself.

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. And Chief Decker worked pretty much so with the EMS side of
6 getting the helicopters and the ambulances moving, and I worked
7 with the fire side for the staging of the trucks and getting the
8 manpower and their job duties going.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. As far as what I saw, as far as the scene, we staged on the
11 interstate and then we went up to the ramp where the accident
12 occurred. We left that ramp open for transport reasons for EMS.
13 I saw a Greyhound bus that appeared to have hit two trucks and
14 then ended up into the back of a third semi. My view from the
15 interstate side, the bus looked intact, you know, other than you
16 could tell the front was in a collision, I did not see the other
17 side until at one point I went and did a 360 to make sure there
18 was no fuel spilling. And that's kind of where we took off from
19 there.

20 Q. Okay. So again, you did -- you worked with what would -- you
21 did one thing and Chief Decker did the other, repeat that again.

22 A. Yeah, Chief Decker, he handled mostly the EMS side.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. He was landing the helicopters, getting helicopters in
25 flight, landing the helicopters on the interstate, coordinating

1 with them, and then he was coordinating with EMS of how many more
2 ambulances they needed --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- and he was working with dispatch to call more ambulances.
5 My side of it, I dealt with incoming fire units and their
6 placement and staging areas and what job duties we had for them.

7 Q. Okay. That's why I record this, so -- because I can't write
8 fast enough. And so how long were you guys out there?

9 A. I think we finally left, if I look at the report, I think it
10 was somewhere around 7:45 in the morning we left the scene.

11 Q. And that's because you had to wait a while?

12 A. Yeah. We had to wait for reconstruction before we could do
13 body removal.

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. Once the body removal was done, we were on standby until the
16 towing services got there to make sure there was no issues with
17 anything --

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. -- while they were working. We did release, I think, the
20 mutual aid departments and then one of my trucks got released
21 prior to that. But myself and Chief Decker stayed on scene with a
22 couple units --

23 Q. Right.

24 A. -- until 7:45.

25 Q. And then you gave me the list of all those, all those

1 departments and that still looks about right, but -- now, these
2 are EMS, though, right?

3 A. That's EMS. And Chief Decker will be able to help you more
4 with the EMS side.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Fire side --

7 Q. I don't know if you gave me any --

8 A. Here's Grandfork.

9 Q. Oh, Grandfork and Marine, they were released --

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. -- and then --

12 A. Grandfork was -- they stayed probably -- they were there
13 while we did the body extrication and then they were released
14 right after that.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And then --

17 Q. So it was Marine, Grandfork --

18 A. Highland.

19 Q. -- Highland-Pierron and Highland.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And that was it?

22 A. On fire, yes, that's it.

23 Q. Wow. Yeah.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. And you guys are the only full -- that are paid full-time,

1 right?

2 A. None of us are.

3 Q. Oh. I thought that Highland --

4 A. Uh-uh.

5 Q. -- was the paid and the Highland-Pierron was the volunteer.

6 A. No. Highland Fire Department is volunteer. I'm the only
7 full-time employee in the city.

8 Q. You, okay. You are.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. But the rest of the department, the firefighters --

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. They're all volunteer. They're actually considered part-time
14 employees of the city. But all of the departments are volunteer,
15 so we didn't have any paid services there.

16 Q. Okay, okay. But yeah, you guys worked great together --

17 A. Yeah, yeah.

18 Q. -- you know.

19 A. We do a lot of training with us, group.

20 Q. Well, the one gentleman said that he's done some training in
21 Indianapolis that does the extrication.

22 A. Probably Jason.

23 Q. Yeah, it was Jason, yes.

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. Yeah. Yeah, Jason Bange.

1 A. Yeah, we're fortunate at Highland. Matter of fact, you just
2 spoke to him, my assistant chief, Dan Tallman --

3 Q. Um-hum.

4 A. -- with his full-time job with the state fire marshal's
5 office, but he also is an instructor for Illinois Fire Service
6 Institute. Highland-Pierron also has a guy that's an instructor
7 for the Illinois Fire Service Institute.

8 Q. All right.

9 A. So we're very blessed --

10 Q. Oh, yeah.

11 A. -- to have them two guys and then our department has seven
12 certified fire instructors, including myself, and Highland-Pierron
13 has about six or seven certified instructors, so we can do a lot
14 of things that a lot of volunteer departments can't do.

15 Q. Sure, yeah.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Yeah, that makes things a lot -- yeah.

18 A. It helps.

19 Q. Yeah. Because you can teach on the job then, you know.

20 A. Yeah, absolutely. And just to give you the perspective, the
21 Highland Fire Department, we cover the city limits. Highland-
22 Pierron Fire Department is the outskirts, they're the district.

23 Q. Okay, yeah, I was wondering how that worked. Okay.

24 A. Yeah, yeah. They don't -- we run a lot of auto aid together
25 to help each other out, but our jurisdiction is the city limits,

1 which the city annexed in that lake, that lake extends up there
2 and you cross over it on 70, well, because when they annexed that
3 in, we inherited a 1-mile stretch of interstate and the two rest
4 areas for city limits.

5 Q. Oh.

6 A. So there's always been just a handshake that we kind of work
7 both of those --

8 Q. Um-hum.

9 A. -- work that area.

10 MR. KAMINSKI: Yeah. Okay. That will work, I appreciate
11 your time.

12 MR. STRAUB: Yeah, thank you.

13 MR. KAMINSKI: And that will conclude our interview here at
14 approximately 11 -- 10 -- 1:40.

15 (Whereupon, at 1:40 p.m., the interview concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: GREYHOUND BUS CRASH NEAR HIGHLAND,
ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023
Interview of Chris Straub

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY23FH015

PLACE: Highland, Illinois

DATE: July 16, 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.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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GREYHOUND BUS CRASH NEAR HIGHLAND,
ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023

Accident No.: HWY23FH015

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Interview of: JOE JACKSON, Firefighter
Highland-Pierron Fire Department

Highland-Pierron Fire Department
Highland, Illinois

Sunday,
July 16, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RONALD KAMINSKI, Senior Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Joe Jackson:

By Mr. Kaminski

4

I N T E R V I E W

(12:11 p.m.)

1
2
3 MR. KAMINSKI: The date is July 16, 2023. I'm Ronald
4 Kaminski with the National Transportation Safety Board. I'm here
5 at the Iberg station in Highland and we're going to be talking to
6 firefighter Joe Jackson. And Mr. Jackson, you don't mind if I
7 record your -- record this?

8 MR. JACKSON: I do not.

INTERVIEW OF JOE JACKSON

9
10 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

11 Q. Okay. And why don't you just start with -- give me a
12 description of you got the call, you got out there, what you saw
13 and what you did.

14 A. So we got there, it will be Jess is the other one that you'll
15 speak to here in a minute. It was her and I on the first truck
16 in.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. We pull up and Chief has me pull --

19 Q. Chief was already there?

20 A. Chief was the first one there.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And he's kind of sizing up the scene and giving us a little
23 intel before we get there. As soon as I pull up, he has me pump
24 the truck and Jess pulls the hand line off because we were told
25 there was a small fire, a small engine fire. So we -- I pumped

1 the truck, charged the line, and we really don't see smoke, we
2 really don't see fire, but we're ready in case it was. And then
3 from that point it was just kind of like determining where the
4 people were, who's injured, how many were injured. We pulled a
5 ladder off of one of the trucks to get in the rear access of the
6 bus. The rear window was already busted out, so we just --

7 Q. It was?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. The rear window, okay.

10 A. The --

11 Q. On the driver's side?

12 A. Driver's side. It was like the second to the back.

13 Q. Um-hum, yeah.

14 A. It was already busted out. So we stuck a ladder in there and
15 Jess started to climb up the ladder and I climbed up on the tire,
16 just to see what we could see. She climbed in and I agreed that I
17 would stay back and get her supplies.

18 And then while she's inside, kind of sizing it up and
19 determining who needs what, we moved the ladder from the back up
20 into one of the front windows and that was not broke out, so we
21 opened that up and kind of propped it and wedged it open and put
22 the ladder up there. And there was a lady, an older lady, didn't
23 speak English, she was very aggressively trying to get out of that
24 bus.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And then we just told her wait, wait, wait and I think she
2 ultimately ended up getting off the back side of the bus.

3 Q. And again, why did you move, I guess, the ladder to the --
4 from the back to the --

5 A. Probably about four or five minutes.

6 Q. No, I mean, what made you do that?

7 A. Why?

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. That's a great question, I don't know. They just said hey,
10 let's go to the front and see what we can see from the front.

11 Q. Okay. When -- because it was all dark in the bus?

12 A. Completely dark.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. No power at all. None at all.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. So we raised it up, we were kind of, again, observing to see
17 what we see to figure out what the deal is and then we ultimately
18 decided to move the ladder back to that original window --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- and that's where we were able to get one of the --

21 Q. Did you get that one woman out then?

22 A. She must have went out the other side, she did not come down
23 on --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. She did not come down the driver's side. She had to get out

1 on the passenger side. And then there was one male, an older
2 gentleman, had a big head wound, broken arm. He came out that
3 back window and that was the only person that I saw come out the
4 driver's side.

5 Q. Had a head wound and a broken -- which arm, do you know?

6 A. It would've been right. I didn't see the break, but when I
7 touched it he screamed my arm's broke.

8 Q. Okay. And what did you do from there?

9 A. So then it became just trying to, you know, help the flight
10 crews, direct -- like he -- there's a guy that we helped off, he
11 would've been the first one that got transported by helicopter.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So we helped get him to the helicopter.

14 Q. So they were already there?

15 A. Yeah, they were there pretty -- I mean, it -- they got there
16 quick and actually, I think, maybe this guy ended up in an
17 ambulance first and then they took him to the helicopter, I don't
18 really remember that, but --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And then from that point it was just kind of assist, help,
21 bring tools, get things ready for the next step, until we realized
22 that the driver was still alive and then it was oh, okay, well,
23 let's deal with this.

24 Q. Yeah, I heard he was slumped over and everybody thought he
25 was -- initially thought he was gone.

1 A. So I did -- when I did my size-up, you know, I walked driver
2 side to the front of the bus and I did see him and the position
3 that he was in, in the front of the bus, I mean, paramedics and
4 EMTs were already there and they assumed he was dead. I saw his
5 position, I'm like he looks dead.

6 And then Shawn, who you'll see here in a little bit, said he
7 went to put a sheet over him and he wasn't dead. But I don't
8 understand -- there's a few things I don't understand. How did he
9 end up on the floor? I mean, if he was wearing a seat belt and
10 was restrained (ph.), I think --

11 Q. Well, the restraint's coming over his left shoulder and I
12 believe, from what I heard, he was leaning way over to the right
13 and leaning towards the entry, the stairwell.

14 A. Yeah, he was. He was like on the floor, though.

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. Like he was -- that was --

17 Q. Well, if he's wearing his --

18 A. Lap belt.

19 Q. -- you know, wearing the lap belt a little loose and it does
20 -- you know, when it's loaded it does tend to expand a little bit
21 and get a little bit looser and --

22 A. And he just ended up -- so he ended up on the floor --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- and then we began trying to figure out how we were going
25 to get him out.

1 Q. Yeah, it's a tight spot there, it's -- yeah.

2 A. Yeah, it was tight, we originally -- you'll interview Ryan,
3 he was there, he helped extricate, popped the door on the driver's
4 side and we realized that's a dead end. And then one of the
5 medics was up in there trying to figure out his condition --

6 Q. How did you guys see him, was there -- because it was totally
7 dark, right?

8 A. We had DeWalt 20-volt tripod lights and we had our big light
9 pole on the truck up, so --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- lighting really wasn't an issue.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Yeah, it was fine, that wasn't an issue.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. The medic, I said okay, I said what do you want and he goes I
16 want all of this gone and extricate all -- I'm like that's not
17 realistic, we got to figure a different way, can we lift him, and
18 he went and tied a sheet around his neck and underneath his arms,
19 one medic, Shawn, who you'll see in a minute, and myself and maybe
20 somebody else, picked him up and they had a back board that they
21 brought in to the front of the truck and we just kind of picked
22 him up and let him go down on the back board and --

23 Q. So that was out the front windshield, then?

24 A. Out the front windshield on the passenger side.

25 Q. Okay. Okay. And did you see what kind of injuries he had?

1 A. I did not see a scratch or any blood. He was not -- he was
2 not responsive. He was gasping, making sounds with his mouth --

3 Q. Um-hum.

4 A. -- but no words, no verbals, no -- and when they stood him
5 up, he made a loud sound and I went from head to toe and I was
6 like there's nothing -- there's no blood, I saw no blood.

7 Q. Um-hum.

8 A. And then I saw the medics start to cut his clothes off and I
9 didn't see -- I kind of walked away at that point, but I didn't
10 see anything, I was surprised that I didn't see more.

11 Q. Right. Okay. So you just -- other than the one person you
12 removed out there, out the rear --

13 A. The rear.

14 Q. -- the guy with the head wound --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. -- and the broken arm, and you did help with the driver, that
17 was pretty much the only person you helped and then you started
18 doing what, triage or --

19 A. Yes. So yeah, I helped get that person out and then helped
20 get the driver out.

21 Q. Okay. Okay.

22 A. And then at that point, it was just kind of get tools out and
23 begin the process to extricate the -- the ones that were killed.

24 Q. Okay. And so did you partake in that?

25 A. A little bit.

1 Q. Okay. What did you do with that?

2 A. I mean, it was just gather tools, bring tools, you'll see
3 Jason and Shawn, they were the big ones in the extricating of
4 those, so --

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. -- you'll get that full --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- from them.

9 Q. Because I had heard all the seats that were on the passenger
10 side, those were already torn out.

11 A. So I was on the driver's side --

12 Q. Right.

13 A. -- and I had heard the exact same thing.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Because we went to cut, they went to cut some of the seats
16 out on the driver's side, but --

17 Q. In order to get that one deceased that was kind of stuck
18 underneath?

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. Yeah.

22 MR. KAMINSKI: Okay. Okay, great. That concludes our
23 interview here at approximately 12:20.

24 (Whereupon, at 12:20 p.m., the interview concluded.)

25

CERTIFICATE

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


IN THE MATTER OF: GREYHOUND BUS CRASH NEAR HIGHLAND,
ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023
Interview of Joe Jackson

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY23FH015

PLACE: Highland, Illinois

DATE: July 16, 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.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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GREYHOUND BUS CRASH NEAR HIGHLAND,
ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023

Accident No.: HWY23FH015

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Interview of: JESSICA ZOBRIST, Paramedic/Firefighter
Highland-Pierron Fire Department

Highland-Pierron Fire Department
Highland, Illinois

Sunday,
July 16, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RONALD KAMINSKI, Senior Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Jessica Zobrist:

By Mr. Kaminski

4

I N T E R V I E W

(12:42 p.m.)

1
2
3 MR. KAMINSKI: Today's date is July 16th, Ronald Kaminski
4 with the NTSB. I'm going to talk -- I'll be talking with
5 Highland-Pierron paramedic/firefighter Jessica Zobrist,
6 Z-o-b-r-i-s-t. And Ms. Zobrist, you don't mind if I -- if we
7 record this?

8 MS. ZOBRIST: That's fine.

INTERVIEW OF JESSICA ZOBRIST

9
10 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

11 Q. Okay. So why don't you just give us a brief description of
12 what you saw and what you did when you got on scene?

13 A. Okay. So I was on the first engine with driver --

14 Q. Engine number was?

15 A. Forty eleven. As we were approaching the scene was when
16 Phil, the chief, arrived on scene and radioed that he was on
17 scene, did his 360 and declared that it was a mass casualty with
18 at least one black, so prior to arriving we kind of had that
19 information. After we parked the apparatus and met with him, he
20 said to pull a hand line because there was word that there was a
21 small fire somewhere --

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. -- so Joe and I worked on doing that. And as we got the hose
24 ready and got water, basically realized if there had a been fire,
25 it was already out and by then a couple of other people were

1 walking up and with my background as being a paramedic, the EMS
2 crew was starting to walk up so I said if you guys are good with
3 the hose, if there's a fire somewhere but we haven't found it, I'm
4 going to go with the EMS crew. So approached the bus with the EMS
5 crew, trying to make a plan of attack and it was decided by
6 somebody for somebody to go in through the back window on the
7 driver's side of the bus that was already busted out. So we got a
8 ladder and I was the one that went in through there first, just
9 with them saying what do you see, what do you need.

10 Initially, where I climbed in, didn't see anybody right
11 there, kind of looked to the back of the bus, which the back seat
12 was kind of behind me, there was nobody there, so then I was
13 moving forward, that's when I saw a body on that driver's side to
14 my left, kind of bent over in half. Did a quick assessment of him
15 or what I presumed was him, I didn't have much access, but there
16 were no pulses or anything like that, so I moved on.

17 Q. Is that the one that was upside down, wedged under the seat?

18 A. Yeah. Like bent in half.

19 Q. Under the seat, somehow got -- yeah.

20 A. Yeah, yeah. Couldn't hardly get to him.

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. So moved on from them, him, well, like I said, I was assuming
23 it was a him. That's when there was a passenger on the right-hand
24 side still in his seat who had a thick accent but he said, "Ma'am,
25 ma'am, I'm bleeding very badly and I can't move my arm." Well --

1 Q. So he was in -- he was behind the area that was already torn
2 out.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. And I know there was one deceased that was in the first seat,
5 so approximately where was he? Because I believe that he would've
6 been --

7 A. He was like --

8 Q. If the seat was in seventh, that's the seventh row because
9 the first six rows were out.

10 A. Okay.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. So maybe he was in like the first seat not affected by all
13 the debris, so I don't know how many rows back --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- but probably -- or how many rows are on a bus?

16 Q. There's 12, there's 12 on that side.

17 A. So probably --

18 Q. Eight, nine, ten, eleven?

19 A. Like eight or nine.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Because then there's also the bathroom on that side.

24 Q. Yes.

25 A. Okay. So he was at least a few seats up from the bathroom.

1 Q. Okay, okay. So maybe around nine or ten, then.

2 A. Yeah, I mean, I -- from what I can recall, the seat --
3 whatever seat in front of him was inaccessible and just debris, so
4 how everything stopped at him, I don't know.

5 Q. Was he wearing a seatbelt?

6 A. Not that I saw --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- or was told.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. But he was still in his seat and obviously conscious and
11 talking and was making sense, so I said we're going to be back for
12 you and keep trying to move forward, and that's where there was no
13 further access in an aisle, so then I climbed over the seats on
14 the passenger side or sorry, on the driver's side, and that's
15 where there was a gentleman who apparently was a passenger but
16 must have been largely uninjured and he was talking to some of the
17 other passengers.

18 There was an elderly lady that was ambulatory that we were
19 going to try to figure out how to get her off and then that's
20 where also there was a female kind of in the aisle who -- it
21 seemed obvious to me that she had some serious injuries.

22 Q. Alive, though?

23 A. Alive, yes.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And so by then there were some people that had climbed in on

1 the front end through the opening on that passenger side.

2 Q. Was she laying down?

3 A. She was on her back --

4 Q. On her back, okay.

5 A. -- laying down, yeah. So where I climbed from the back of
6 the bus was kind of her feet and so like where her feet were,
7 because we were trying figure out how can we move her quickly
8 because there was so much debris over our heads, like we couldn't
9 stand up, and I saw a foot right by her feet of somebody stuck
10 underneath everything --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- that, from where I was, was inaccessible and other people
13 had, I guess, triaged that area of the bus since I came from the
14 back. So I ended up helping with getting that bad, the critical
15 female onto a blanket and onto a backboard and down a ladder on
16 that passenger side.

17 And once we had her off and I knew that the gentleman who was
18 -- like I said, appeared to be largely uninjured, he was getting
19 help off that side, so then I went back again and we worked on
20 getting the elderly male off through the back -- or the back
21 window where I had come in, we --

22 Q. On the driver's side?

23 A. -- helped him down the ladder. On the driver's side.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. He was the only patient that went out there.

1 Q. Okay. It sounds like most of them were taken out on the --

2 A. Yeah, through the hole.

3 Q. Through the hole, yeah.

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. Okay. Did you talk to any passengers or was there -- by
6 chance or --

7 A. Just talking to the gentleman that we helped out the back,
8 but it was more focused on his injuries and like I said --

9 Q. And what kind of injuries did he have?

10 A. He had bleeding from his head that was nowhere particularly
11 obvious, so I assume more minor lacerations and abrasions.

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. He was complaining of having arm pain and chest pain. But we
14 walked him from his seat and were able to help him down the
15 ladder, so --

16 Q. On the outside, on the passenger --

17 A. Um-hum. On the driver's side.

18 Q. Oh, on the --

19 A. On the ladder.

20 (Crosstalk)

21 MS. SOBRIST: That was -- yeah, he --

22 MR. KAMINSKI: Okay.

23 MS. SOBRIST: He went out the ladder that I went in.

24 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

25 Q. Okay. Boy, it sounds like you -- how did you see? Was

1 it totally dark --

2 A. Yeah, I have a flashlight on my bunker gear.

3 Q. Okay, great. And you guys are all equipped with that?

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. Oh. And you just flip it on and off if you need it?

6 A. It's just got a button on top, yeah.

7 Q. Nice.

8 A. And then just kind of shine around and I mean, I'm sure
9 through all of this more trucks came and people had lights and
10 that helped, too, but --

11 Q. Um-hum, um-hum.

12 A. -- initially it was just flashlight.

13 Q. Sounds like you did a great job out there.

14 A. Thanks.

15 Q. Hope you're not too traumatized because I'm sure it was --

16 A. No, I mean, I've told other people the worst thing was when
17 Shawn said that the bathroom was locked and that -- and so we were
18 like oh, my God, is someone in the bathroom and then he was able
19 to pry off the vent above it --

20 Q. Um-hum.

21 A. -- but he said well, I can't fit my fat head through there,
22 you fit your head in there and I just like -- like what are we
23 going to find, and nobody was in the bathroom, so --

24 Q. Thankfully.

25 A. Yes.

1 MR. KAMINSKI: Okay. Okay. Great, I think that concludes
2 our interview here. It is approximately 10 minutes to 1 o'clock.

3 (Whereupon, at 12:50 p.m., the interview concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: GREYHOUND BUS CRASH NEAR HIGHLAND,
ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023
Interview of Jessica Zobrist

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY23FH015

PLACE: Highland, Illinois

DATE: July 16, 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.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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GREYHOUND BUS CRASH NEAR HIGHLAND,
ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023

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Accident No.: HWY23FH015

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Interview of: SHAWN HOGG, Captain

Highland-Pierron Fire Department

Highland-Pierron Fire Department
Highland, Illinois

Sunday,
July 16, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RONALD KAMINSKI, Senior Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

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PAGE

Interview of Shawn Hogg:

By Mr. Kiminski

4

I N T E R V I E W

(12:20 p.m.)

1
2
3 MR. KAMINSKI: Today's date is July 16, 2023, Ronald Kaminski
4 with the NTSB and I'm going to be talking to Captain Shawn,
5 S-h-a-w-n, Hogg, Hogg?

6 MR. HOGG: Hoag (ph.).

7 MR. KAMINSKI: Hogg, H-o-g-g. He is a captain with the
8 Highland-Pierron fire protection district. Mr. Hogg, you're okay
9 with me recording?

10 MR. HOGG: Yes, sir.

INTERVIEW OF SHAWN HOGG

11
12 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

13 Q. Okay. So why don't you just start with giving me a
14 description of you got the call and got out there, what you saw
15 and what you did.

16 A. I was on the 4010, our engine out of the Highland station.
17 We arrived on scene exactly behind 4011, which is the Pierron
18 engine.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Our chief gave me and another fireman assignment to go in the
21 back window and do a --

22 Q. Because the back window was already broken, right?

23 A. The back window was already broke out of the bus, yes. So we
24 put a ladder to it and we went in the back window to see exactly
25 what we had as far as patients.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. We assessed the situation, we had only one that -- we had one
3 deceased, wedged -- he was wedged under a seat. And then we had
4 one on the driver's side that was roughly row seat 10 and we
5 assisted him, got him out, we had to go back out the window
6 because the middle of the bus was all smashed together where we
7 could not get to the front.

8 Q. And that was because all the seats that were there?

9 A. The seats and, you know, the whole side of the bus was
10 crushed in from the semi.

11 Q. And all the seats remained in there, they were just, you
12 know, piled up, kind of?

13 A. Yes. I don't know exactly how it was, you know, I was doing
14 my assignment, the guys in the front were doing, obviously,
15 theirs.

16 Q. Okay, okay.

17 A. So that was the only alive victim in the back. Then we --
18 after we got him out, we got out ourselves.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Then we -- we did a second assessment on the driver.
21 Originally, we thought he was going to be a black, but he had a
22 pulse, so we extricated him and he was the fourth helicopter out.
23 That's what I was told, he was the fourth helicopter, I wasn't in
24 charge of that, I was just --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And then we pretty much -- we were on idle then until they
2 did the reconstruction before we did the extrication of the
3 deceased.

4 Q. Okay. So you kind of waited, got everybody -- once everybody
5 got out, you just waited to get the okay from the --

6 A. The coroners, yes.

7 Q. -- police? From the coroners, okay.

8 A. And then when they got all the reconstruction crew, then we
9 -- I went back in the back window and cut seats out to get the
10 deceased patient out, but then we actually took him out of the
11 right side because they had all that cut out.

12 Q. Is that the one that was stuck underneath the seat there and
13 you guys --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- cut the one seat out, cut the one seat out, I noticed, and
16 there was damage to the one behind it that was just --

17 A. So we cut the one -- the one that was damaged was the one he
18 was wedged underneath. We cut the one out in front so we could
19 get him out and then we just actually cut the second seat and
20 raised it up --

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. -- and then we slid him out.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. By that time, the crew that was doing the front side had the
25 whole right side of the bus completely gone, so we just took him

1 right out the big 12-foot hole on the side instead of trying to
2 get him out the window.

3 Q. Right. And how was he wedged under that seat, do you recall?

4 A. I was trying to picture how he did it, but it almost was like
5 he was standing up and when they hit something, he went over the
6 back rest of the seat in front because he was wedged --

7 Q. Flip, like flipped over.

8 A. -- head first under the seat.

9 Q. Hmm.

10 A. If he was sitting in the seat, I don't know how possibly it
11 could've happened but, you know, the -- it's mind-blowing, you
12 know.

13 Q. Right. So his head and upper body was underneath the seat?

14 A. Head and arms, yes. And then it was like his butt was kind
15 of in the air with one foot.

16 Q. Okay. And then -- that's been great. So okay, you moved to
17 cut the -- the one row of seats that was in front of him and then
18 with that, the row he was under, you kind of lifted it up.

19 A. We cut one side and then we lifted it all up, just -- and
20 then we just slid it forward.

21 Q. Slid him out, okay.

22 A. We had sheets under it just because of the sharp edges from
23 the -- cutting the seats --

24 Q. Sure.

25 A. -- and then we just carried him right off the right side.

1 Q. And you took him out the right side. The open right side.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Okay. Anything else you feel is --

4 A. No, I mean, it was --

5 Q. You doing okay, I mean, there was --

6 A. Yeah, it was --

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. It worked out, I mean --

9 Q. I mean, it wasn't too traumatic for you, I mean --

10 A. No, I mean, it was just -- it was a bloody mess.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. I was kind of expecting a mass casualty incident.

13 Q. Right, right. Yeah, it's pretty amazing there wasn't more.

14 A. If the bus, if the bus would've been full, it would've been
15 terrible.

16 MR. KAMINSKI: Yeah. No doubt about that. Okay. Captain, I
17 appreciate your time. It is approximately 12:26, that concludes
18 our interview.

19 (Whereupon, at 12:26 p.m., the interview concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: GREYHOUND BUS CRASH NEAR HIGHLAND,
ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023
Interview of Shawn Hogg

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY23FH015

PLACE: Highland, Illinois

DATE: July 16, 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.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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GREYHOUND BUS CRASH NEAR HIGHLAND,
ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023

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Accident No.: HWY23FH015

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Interview of: ZACH SPENGLER, Captain
City of Highland Fire Department

Highland-Pierron Fire Department
Highland, Illinois

Sunday,
July 16, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RONALD KAMINSKI, Senior Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Zach Spengler:

By Mr. Kiminski

4

I N T E R V I E W

(12:30 p.m.)

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2
3 MR. KAMINSKI: Today's date is July 16, 2023, my name is
4 Ronald Kaminski, NTSB. I'm here at the Highland-Pierron Fire
5 Department and we're going to be talking to Captain Zach Spengler,
6 S-p-e-n-g-l-e-r. And you're okay with us recording this?

7 MR. SPENGLER: Yes, sir.

INTERVIEW OF ZACH SPENGLER

8
9 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

10 Q. And so why don't you just give us a brief description of when
11 you got the call, you got out there, what you saw and what you
12 did.

13 A. Okay. Well, when I got off the truck, I did notice a bus and
14 it was piled up against a semi. The first semi trailer was ripped
15 open. We approached the bus. One medic was on the ladder handing
16 supplies to a crew inside. We were then instructed to go around
17 to the passenger side of the bus. The passenger side was
18 completely open, ripped open from top to bottom, front to back.
19 We, my crew and myself, helped Highland-Pierron's crew package a
20 patient, took her out. I noticed there was two dead -- DOAs to my
21 left. Then after that, she was the last one in the bus, we then
22 switched to the people in the field and started packaging them and
23 getting them loaded into helicopters and ambulances.

24 Q. So what truck were you on?

25 A. Seventeen, 1517.

1 Q. It's a fire --

2 A. Engine.

3 Q. It's a fire engine?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. And so you saw the crew was already on the driver's side, so
6 you were instructed to go on the passenger side, did you climb in
7 or were you just --

8 A. No, just stayed on the ground. We had a ladder set -- a roof
9 ladder set up with a backboard ready and as we put one on we would
10 just get another one ready, but by the time we got there,
11 everybody -- a lot of the people had already self-extricated and
12 was out of the bus already.

13 Q. Did you happen to see them, how they were getting out, by
14 chance or --

15 A. No clue. They were all --

16 Q. They were already out.

17 A. -- standing there, yeah.

18 Q. Okay. And so you were kind of dealing with the -- what was
19 the serious and the fatals that were kind of --

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. Okay. Did you just leave the fatals in there?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And then you just -- okay.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. So how many did you remove that were just seriously injured?

1 A. I just removed one.

2 Q. Okay. And what kind of injuries did that -- was it male,
3 female?

4 A. It was a female. She looked like she had some head trauma.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. That's all you could see then and she was weak pretty much,
7 just packed her and put her in a helicopter, so --

8 Q. Okay, so she did go out on a helo?

9 A. Yes, um-hum.

10 Q. Okay. Okay. Did you talk to anybody, was there any
11 communication issues with any of the --

12 A. There was a lot of Spanish-speaking people. ISP did have a
13 couple that could speak Spanish and just pretty much translated
14 what was -- you know, what hurt or -- so --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. But the ones that -- the three that we loaded, I know I think
17 there was four loaded in helicopters, the three that we loaded
18 didn't -- I mean, they were nonverbal, they were just moaning,
19 so --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. -- to talk to them, they might have --

22 Q. Including this woman?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Yes.

25 A. Um-hum. So I mean, they might have been able to speak

1 English, but they weren't, at that time, speaking anything, so --

2 Q. Right, right. Okay. Okay, that's pretty much it.

3 A. Okay. Yeah, we did -- and the driver, we did extricate the
4 driver out the front windshield.

5 Q. Okay, you helped with that?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. So you just removed the one from the passenger side?

10 A. Um-hum.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And then myself and a Highland-Pierron guy and a medic all
13 got into the -- through the front windshield and then extricated
14 him out, but we just lifted him up and got him on a backboard
15 and --

16 Q. Right.

17 A. -- he got put into an ambulance and then where he went, I
18 think he flew out in a helicopter?

19 MR. KAMINSKI: Yeah, he did. Okay, great. I appreciate it,
20 Captain.

21 MR. SPENGLER: That's it? All right. Appreciate it. Thank
22 you, sir.

23 MR. KAMINSKI: Thank you. That concludes our interview here
24 at approximately 12:35.

25 (Whereupon, at 12:35 p.m., the interview concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: GREYHOUND BUS CRASH NEAR HIGHLAND,
ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023
Interview of Zach Spengler

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY23FH015

PLACE: Highland, Illinois

DATE: July 16, 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.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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GREYHOUND BUS CRASH NEAR HIGHLAND,
ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023

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Accident No.: HWY23FH015

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Interview of: JASON BANGE, Captain
Highland-Pierron Fire Department

Highland-Pierron Fire Department
Highland, Illinois

Sunday,
July 16, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RONALD KAMINSKI, Senior Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

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Interview of Jason Bange:

By Mr. Kaminski

4

I N T E R V I E W

(12:52 p.m.)

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2
3 MR. KAMINSKI: Today's date is July 16th, I'm Ronald Kaminski
4 with the NTSB. I'm here at the Highland-Pierron Fire Department
5 and we're going to be talking to Captain Jason Bange, B-a-n-g-e,
6 who is also with the Highland-Pierron Fire Protection District.

7 (Emergency communications.)

8 MR. KAMINSKI: Is that a call, do you guys got to go?

9 MR. BANGE: We'll find out.

10 (Emergency communications.)

11 MR. BANGE: No, they're good. They can handle it.

12 MR. KAMINSKI: Okay. And so do you mind if we record this?

13 MR. BANGE: Absolutely, go ahead.

INTERVIEW OF JASON BANGE

14
15 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

16 Q. Okay. So why don't you just give us a brief description of
17 you got the call, you got out there, what you saw and what you
18 did?

19 A. So that morning, we received that call. It sounded -- it was
20 kind of vague on the description, it just said a bus versus semi
21 at the rest area, which led us to believe --

22 Q. With a back injury, I heard?

23 A. With a back injury, yeah. Which led you to believe that
24 whenever they said it was in the rest area, you just thought of
25 just a little side swipe in the rest area.

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. Whenever our fire chief arrived on scene, I was on my way and
3 heard him give a description of we have multiple injuries,
4 confirmed fatalities, this is going to be a mass casualty
5 incident, so we knew at that point it was going to be pretty
6 lengthy and the severity of the incident.

7 Q. What engine were you in or what truck were you --

8 A. So I was in my personal vehicle at that point, yeah.

9 Q. Okay. Because this is a volunteer --

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. -- department, right?

12 A. This is a volunteer fire service, yes. And the way where I
13 live versus where the incident was, it would've made more sense
14 for me to just drive straight to the scene. So as I arrived on
15 scene, I noticed a very large incident with a Greyhound bus still
16 partially on the roadway, a semi jack-knifed in the ditch.

17 Listening to the -- to the incident the entire way there, I,
18 you know, was just running things through my mind on what we were
19 going to do whenever we got there, if we had enough, were we going
20 to need to call additional bigger rescue teams and stuff like
21 that. So --

22 Q. But you guys really didn't, just between Highland and --

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. -- Highland-Pierron --

25 A. Um-hum.

1 Q. -- you guys handled it all.

2 A. Right.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. So with my background in extrication, we -- I always went to
5 Indianapolis to FDIC conference and we always do hands-on
6 extrication training of large-scale incidents and when you're
7 doing those, they teach you to think outside of the box and, you
8 know, wreckers and townships and just all kinds of stuff, so
9 that's the type of stuff that comes to my mind whenever these
10 types of incidents happen. So that's just a little background of
11 why I was thinking that way.

12 Q. Sure, sure.

13 A. So when I get there --

14 Q. Somebody's got to think out of the box --

15 A. Right, right.

16 Q. -- and think of those things, sure.

17 A. And since Chief was the first on scene, like he -- he did a
18 phenomenal job of just relaying information, getting resources
19 coming, and had painted a good picture for me before I even got
20 there, so -- previously, I was an EMT with the City of Highland,
21 so Highland EMS was also out there, so being on Highland EMS,
22 Highland-Pierron Fire Department, I know how both systems work, so
23 to say, both departments work.

24 Q. So you're also an EMT.

25 A. I was. I just got off last month.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Two months ago I resigned --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- because I started a new job, so --

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. So when I got there, EMS says hey, with you being an EMT, I
7 want you to help with patient care, as well --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- along with the extrication that was going to be needed to
10 be done. It was later found that there wasn't going to be any
11 extrication for any survivable patients, anybody that was in there
12 that needed extricated, they were fatalities. So at that point, I
13 just assisted with patient packaging, so to say, I guess you would
14 say --

15 Q. Um-hum.

16 A. -- and getting patients where they needed to go, helping with
17 the -- the triage portion of it, mainly getting patients that
18 required the helicopters, getting them going. And then I did help
19 extricate the driver.

20 Q. Helped lift him out?

21 A. Helped lift the driver out, yeah, I did assist with that.
22 After we got him out and on the way -- we got him out and got him
23 in the ambulance while we were waiting on our fourth helicopter to
24 show up on scene. As they worked with him, we just -- pretty much
25 that was our -- the driver was essentially our last patient that

1 was still alive, that we were waiting to leave the scene and then
2 we could all kind of like relax and start talking a little bit,
3 you know.

4 Q. Sure.

5 A. Is everybody doing okay, not that we weren't doing that the
6 whole time, we were watching for our own safety, our own guys. I
7 got 16 years and this isn't nearly as fatal as the crashes I've
8 seen, so I've seen it before but a lot of guys, this is the first
9 time they've seen something like that, so always watch out for
10 those guys, so we were doing that. But after the driver was in
11 the helicopter and gone, at that point, we were getting a game
12 plan together because we had to wait for accident reconstruction
13 to do their thing.

14 And at that point, the fire chief, Phil, I approached him,
15 Phil Decker, and I said how are you going to want to handle this
16 extrication on getting these people out of here, he's like I want
17 you and Jerod Kampwerth to handle that, okay, so me and Captain
18 Jerod Kampwerth, we did a 360 of the bus, got a plan of attack, I
19 was going to do the -- what would be the south side of the bus and
20 Jerod --

21 Q. On the driver's side?

22 A. On the driver's side, correct, yeah. So I had driver's side
23 extrication, Jerod had passenger side extrication. I did speak
24 with Jerod yesterday on the phone if there's anything he needed
25 brought up today and he didn't think that there was anything

1 really to discuss. His side of the crash, the way the -- the
2 victims were laying, their heads, it appeared as if they could've
3 been laying down in the seats because their heads were pretty much
4 out the bus, whenever it sideswiped the semis, it ripped that bus
5 open and their heads were hanging out of the bus.

6 Q. Okay. So would you consider those two people like partially
7 ejected with their head outside the perimeter of the bus?

8 A. It's hard to say yes to that because they could've just been
9 laying in the seats and then just sheared all the metal off the
10 side of the bus and they were open and hanging out. I don't -- I
11 don't know that you could say it was an actual ejection because I
12 feel like if they were hanging out further, they would have like
13 head amputations or something from hitting the other semi.

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. So I would say that they were just laying in the seat
16 possibly and it just sheared all the metal off.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. So we seen them, all the blood come down on the bus and a
19 massive pile of blood on the ground, so -- and they were all
20 stacked in there between material. I couldn't really tell you
21 what it was because I didn't focus on it too much because that was
22 Jerod's extrication, but it was like seats and roof and everything
23 just piled below them and above them. So Jerod handled that and
24 then --

25 Q. So what kind of extrications, on the driver's side, was that

1 -- you started cutting because I did see there were some cuts --

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. -- in the sidewall.

4 A. Yeah, so going back to my side now, so now driver's side
5 extrication, my victim was --

6 Q. Is that the one that was wedged under the seat?

7 A. He was upside down, yeah, head down, his head was resting on
8 the ground and he was between two seats, so -- but his feet were
9 up over the seat with his foot resting against the window. So it
10 was kind of a weird -- the way he was laying was kind of weird to
11 me.

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. And Shawn, that was in here, did an interview earlier --

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. -- I asked him if he mentioned anything because after we got
16 done doing that extrication, he made a comment about the bottom of
17 that guy's feet had blood on them.

18 Q. I've heard that before. Maybe one of the chiefs mentioned
19 it.

20 A. Yeah. So he's like it's kind of weird how he would have
21 blood on the bottom of his feet if he was upside down.

22 Q. Unless another victim or somebody else hit his foot when he
23 was --

24 A. Walking by, that's the only thing that makes sense. Because
25 the foot that was by the window didn't have anything on it, but

1 the foot that had blood on it would've been by the walkway. So --

2 Q. Yeah, that's strange.

3 A. Yeah. So at that point, whenever Jerod and I were getting
4 together, talking about my extrication, so where the guy was
5 laying, we obviously didn't want to cut the walls there because we
6 don't want to hit him, so we went to the seat forward to the
7 window sill and the plan was to cut down the side of that and just
8 pull the side of the bus open, cut the seats out and pull him out
9 that way.

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. But we were having a difficult time cutting through the
12 window frame and we tried -- we tried a bunch of tools. We didn't
13 get to try all of our tools, but we did try three different
14 methods and all three of them were a failure.

15 Q. They're just taking up too much time, right?

16 A. Yeah, and taking too much time. And that was one thing I
17 brought up in our debriefing, so before we even started any
18 extrication, state police gave us the okay, I held a little
19 debriefing with everybody before we started and said listen, no
20 one's getting hurt here, I mean, people are deceased, we're not
21 saving anything, so if this takes 2 hours, it takes 2 hours, take
22 your time, everyone's going to work safe.

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. And I said I want to see gloves, safety glasses and
25 everything, I said there's way too many important people out here

1 and there's going to be pictures everywhere and we don't want to
2 be seen not working safe, so -- so that's what we did, so we got
3 that plan of attack together, went in there and we tried executing
4 it. So there was more tools that we could've used, but by the
5 time -- we already wasted time trying to get that cut, the guys on
6 the passenger side were already done and all of that was open, all
7 that debris and everything, they removed all of that because they
8 had like 10 guys on that other side. So they removed it all and
9 laid it there on the ground and got it --

10 Q. Kind of opened up that whole side.

11 A. Opened it all up.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. So Captain Hogg that you interviewed earlier, he says hey, is
14 there a way that we could just take this guy out that way now, and
15 I'm like -- I looked up around the scene, I'm like absolutely, I
16 said because we're not making any progress here, we could try more
17 things, but we're wasting time, let's just get him out over there
18 and that's what we did. So pulled him out from where he was and
19 brought him out the other side and put him in the body bag there
20 and then went on his way.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. So -- yeah.

23 Q. So did you say you did help with the driver, lift him out?

24 A. Yes, um-hum.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Okay. So what kind of questions you said you had for me?

3 A. So one thing I thought was kind of suspicious was where we
4 were doing the extrication on my side, the driver's side, there
5 was a door that was right there in front of the rear tire that was
6 all duct taped shut, it was all -- it was just duct taped on
7 there.

8 So when you're doing an extrication, you always want to peel
9 and peek before you do any cutting to see what's back there, so I
10 removed that duct tape to try seeing what was back there because
11 we didn't know where the fuel tank was located at this point --

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. -- because the other side was all smashed up, you couldn't
14 get in there. So trying to pull, peel and peek, and this door,
15 you could like kind of almost pull it out, wedge it out, but it
16 was still hung up on something but I just thought it was kind of
17 odd that it was all duct taped up. I don't know that that's --

18 Q. It's an easy body work, I guess.

19 A. Right. So I don't know -- I mean, I don't think that that
20 was a contributing factor by any means, but it was just something
21 I saw that was kind of suspicious that I was like I should
22 probably bring it up.

23 Q. Yeah. We have our vehicle guys looking at all that and we
24 have a Greyhound representative out there, you know, answering any
25 questions we have, so --

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. -- the vehicle guys will --

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. -- be able to figure that out.

5 A. And since I was the one that peeled it off, I wanted to be
6 the one to bring it up --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- so I didn't want anyone else getting questioned on that.

9 Q. Sure.

10 A. Another thing was like I didn't see anything happen as far as
11 like the tow truck towing it away, but he just like pulled up to
12 it, hooked up to it and it just rolled away nice and neat, like
13 with the tow truck. You would think that if he crashed with that
14 bus in gear, that if he hooked up that tow truck and pulled away,
15 the tires wouldn't spin, it would still be in gear, the brakes
16 would be engaged or something, but he just hooked it up and pulled
17 away, so I thought that was kind of odd, too. Maybe the -- maybe
18 the tow truck operator did something I didn't know about, I don't
19 know.

20 Q. Yeah, he would have had to release the brakes.

21 A. Yeah, something. But I don't -- I mean, we were all sitting
22 there watching him and never saw him do anything, so --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- I don't know. It was weird, the passenger side --

25 Q. You know, that -- yeah, that's a good point you mention that,

1 I'll mention it to our vehicle guys because we did notice the
2 tires on one side were almost like they were burning or kind of
3 stuck, so that may be -- that may be why, yeah.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. And that was -- okay. Tow guy. Just hooked up and
6 removed --

7 A. The bus. I'm not sure that he disengaged any brakes or
8 anything.

9 Q. Okay, what else you got?

10 A. Another thing I thought was -- I mean, there's nothing really
11 odd about this, but as hard as that impact was on the passenger
12 side, that front steer tire didn't really have any damage to it,
13 it didn't seem like. I mean, it had a little bit, but you
14 would've thought that that would've been removed or something, so
15 I mean --

16 Q. Or flattened.

17 A. Yeah. And I think it may have been flattened, but I'm not a
18 hundred percent sure on that, either, because it was still kind of
19 dark, but -- but it just seemed like that impact, for the bus
20 being impacted, as hard as that impact was, I feel like the bus
21 held up somewhat good.

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. So I mean, that was --

24 Q. And you tried cutting through it, so you know --

25 A. Right, right.

1 Q. -- it was pretty stiff, yeah.

2 A. And that was a couple things I was going to bring up here, so
3 kudos to that bus manufacturer for that window frame because, I
4 mean, that -- I mean, that was sturdy --

5 Q. Pretty stout, yeah.

6 A. -- and, you know, our cutters can cut through a lot and they
7 wouldn't budge on that. The seats were also really hard to
8 remove, but supposedly those are supposed to shear off pretty
9 easy, which they did on the passenger side, but it was a heck of a
10 time for us to cut them on the driver's side.

11 Q. Oh. So they shear easier than they cut.

12 A. Exactly, yeah. So I'm not sure it's a good thing or a bad
13 thing, but --

14 Q. Right.

15 A. If there's anything that we could, you know, pass along to
16 the manufacturers of the bus company is those windows, they're so
17 heavy --

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. -- and for an emergency standpoint, whether it be for
20 emergency response, for the responders, or just the victims
21 themselves, their fight or flight is going to come out of them,
22 they'll be able to get those windows open, but they're so heavy.

23 Q. Sixty pounds.

24 A. I believe every bit of that.

25 Q. Um-hum.

1 A. So it would be nice if they had a latch on them at the top,
2 kind of like a basketball hoop in your driveway, you push it up
3 and it latches, you push it a little bit further and it releases.

4 Q. Well, here's a tip for the future, if you keep pushing it up,
5 they'll disengage and they'll just fall out.

6 A. The whole window will fall?

7 Q. Yeah. It's kind of a hook up there, so if you push it up
8 high enough, it will just disengage and it will just fall out, but
9 you got to push it, you know, pretty much --

10 A. That scares me, I mean, that's 60 pounds like way up there --

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. -- and so what we did is we took two pipe poles and put the
13 window up there as far as we could and held them. Me, being the
14 team leader, I didn't want to put somebody else in that position
15 in that pinch point. I didn't want to be there, either --

16 Q. Sure.

17 A. -- but somebody had to do it, to tell them what these guys
18 needed inside.

19 Q. Um-hum.

20 A. So that was something that really worried me, so like I need
21 to bring it up, see if there's some kind of latch or something
22 they can get put in there.

23 Q. We brought that up many times, yeah.

24 A. Yeah. That would be nice.

25 Q. Because we've had some -- did a crash in Orland, you can look

1 it up, there was a school -- high school students that were going
2 up in a motor coach in Orland, California and a FedEx truck came
3 across, hit them, started on fire and so the kids are trying to
4 get out and that's one of the main things they all mentioned is
5 how difficult it was to try to hold up and push up those
6 windows --

7 A. Right.

8 Q. -- in order for them to -- even to jump out.

9 A. And it appeared as if not all of the windows opened, just
10 some of them or do they all open?

11 Q. Majority of them should open, there's one at the front that,
12 on the driver's side --

13 A. And that one was opened.

14 Q. That one. It was broken, I think.

15 A. Okay. Well, there was one that was wedged open whenever I
16 got there.

17 Q. Okay, okay. And then the only other one, there's one on the
18 other -- on the passenger side, of course, those were all ripped
19 out, but yeah, the majority of the windows--

20 A. Right.

21 Q. -- do open.

22 A. So the one behind my victim, a seat behind my victim, was --
23 we had that one -- that one was broken out because we had the
24 ladder up in there and people were getting in and out, that's how
25 they were getting in and out of the bus was right there, but the

1 one in front of my patient, I was able to -- two windows in front
2 of him because I wanted to open the one where he was at, but it
3 wouldn't open, they said, from the inside, so I had to go to the
4 one in front of it, which is where we started our extrication, but
5 -- but yeah, all in all, I mean, from -- not trying to pat
6 ourselves on the back, but I think all in all, from the very
7 beginning to the very end, the Highland and Highland-Pierron fire
8 departments did phenomenal, I mean, bang-up job. I don't know if
9 anybody could say anything otherwise, like it went -- obviously,
10 everything doesn't go textbook --

11 Q. Sure.

12 A. -- but I would say it was pretty close.

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. So, I mean, we did -- there was a complaint about fire at one
15 point, the truck driver was like oh, the bus is on fire, I didn't
16 see anywhere where there was a fire initiated, but like you were
17 talking about, with the tire still spinning, I'm assuming that's
18 where the smoke was coming from --

19 Q. Um-hum.

20 A. -- because whenever we moved the bus, we did see some
21 extinguisher agent on the ground, so that's probably where he
22 discharged his extinguisher, on that.

23 Q. Right.

24 A. But, you know, all things considered, heaven forbid that bus
25 did catch fire with that truck right next to it, the fuel tank on

1 that truck wasn't ruptured, thank God. Two semis up ahead in the
2 rest area was a tanker truck, so that could've been bad.

3 Q. Yeah, that could've been really bad, yes.

4 A. So all things considered, we did -- we did very well and I
5 would --

6 Q. Especially since this is a volunteer fire department --

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. -- you know.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. But obviously, they sent you guys some training.

11 A. Yeah, so -- and that's one thing we strive to do. So
12 whenever I go take these classes like in Indianapolis, I'll bring
13 that back and I'll set up an extrication here and I mean, it's
14 going to be a Saturday because there's just so much leg work
15 involved.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. Obviously, we don't have the equipment. All the equipment
18 that they have there, we don't have that here, so we got to make
19 do with what we got, so -- but I mean, luckily, that day we didn't
20 really need a whole lot, so it --

21 Q. You had that opening on the right side of the bus.

22 A. Right, right. So yeah, it -- it worked out pretty good for
23 what we had, so --

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. -- it could've been a lot, lot worse, so --

1 MR. KAMINSKI: Yeah, I agree. Okay, well, I appreciate your
2 questions and giving me a real good description here and that will
3 conclude our interview here at approximately 1:14.

4 (Whereupon, at 1:14 p.m., the interview concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: GREYHOUND BUS CRASH NEAR HIGHLAND,
ILLINOIS ON JULY 12, 2023
Interview of Jason Bange

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY23FH015

PLACE: Highland, Illinois

DATE: July 16, 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.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber