

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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CSX TRAIN DERAILMENT IN HYNDMAN,
PENNSYLVANIA, AUGUST 2, 2017

* Accident No.: DCA17FR011

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Interview of: JAMES BEITZEL

CSXT Terminal Yard
Cumberland, Maryland

Saturday,
August 5, 2017

APPEARANCES:

TOMAS TORRES, Chairman, Operations Group
National Transportation Safety Board

MICHAEL BULL, Operations Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

LARRY ROSS, Operations Inspector
FRA

STEVE AMMONS, System Road Foreman
CSX Transportation

JARED CASSITY
SMART Transportation Division

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Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of James Beitzel:		
By Mr. Torres		5
By Mr. Ammons		12
By Mr. Bull		19
By Mr. Cassity		24
By Mr. Ross		28
By Mr. Fannon		38
By Mr. Torres		41
By Mr. Bull		42
By Mr. Cassity		47
By Mr. Ross		50
By Mr. Fannon		51
By Mr. Torres		52

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. TORRES: Okay. We'll get started.

3 This is an informal NTSB interview. My name is Tomas Torres,
4 T-o-m-a-s, T-o-r-r-e-s. Today's date is August 5th, 2017. We are
5 at Cumberland, Maryland at CSXT yard terminal interviewing a
6 conductor in connection with an accident that occurred in Hyndman,
7 August the 2nd, 2017. The NTSB accident number is DCA17FR011.

8 The purpose of the investigation is to increase safety, not
9 to assign fault, blame or liability. NTSB cannot offer any
10 guarantee of confidentiality or immunity from legal or certificate
11 actions.

12 A transcript or summary of the interview will go in the
13 public docket. The interviewee can have one representative of his
14 choice. Do you have somebody, a union rep?

15 MR. BEITZEL: No.

16 MR. TORRES: Okay. Are you okay with that?

17 MR. BEITZEL: Yes.

18 MR. TORRES: Okay. Thank you. Do you understand this
19 interview is being recorded?

20 MR. BEITZEL: Yes.

21 MR. TORRES: Please state your name and spell it.

22 MR. BEITZEL: James Beitzel, J-a-m-e-s, B-e-i-t-z-e-l.

23 MR. AMMONS: Steve Ammons, S-t-e-v-e, A-m-m-o-n-s, system
24 road foreman CSX.

25 MR. BULL: Mike Bull, M-i-k-e, B-u-l-l, FRA, OP inspector.

1 MR. CASSITY: Jared Cassity, J-a-r-e-d, C-a-s-s-i-t-y. I
2 represent SMART Transportation Division.

3 MR. ROSS: Larry Ross, L-a-r-r-y, R-o-s-s, FRA, OP inspector.

4 MR. FANNON: Randy Fannon, R-a-n-d-y, F-a-n-n-o-n, BLET
5 Safety Task Force.

6 MR. TORRES: Okay. Tomas Torres with the NTSB.

7 INTERVIEW OF JAMES BEITZEL

8 BY MR. TORRES:

9 Q. James, could you please tell us a little bit about your work
10 history, when you hired out?

11 A. Like my -- before I hired here?

12 Q. No, I mean, just railroad experience. When did you hire out
13 for --

14 A. Oh, I hired March 10th, would have been 2014.

15 Q. And you've been a conductor?

16 A. Yeah, I've been a conductor.

17 Q. Okay. Can you tell us the day of the incident, you know,
18 when you went on duty and can you explain that day for us?

19 A. It had been August 1st. I went on duty at -- we were on duty
20 at 01:45 when we first started our tour of duty. That would have
21 been our second train for the day. It would have been 1345.

22 Q. So you went on duty at 1:45 p.m.?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Okay. And where did you go on duty, what location?

25 A. I went on duty at Connellsville, Pennsylvania.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Well, at Cumberland, Maryland, we took a train back to
3 Connellsville, and then we turned and took a train back on the way
4 towards Cumberland.

5 Q. Okay. So when you -- would that be the accident train, the
6 second train?

7 A. Yeah, the second train would have been the train that had the
8 accident.

9 Q. Okay. What time you get on that train?

10 A. Oh, I think it was 19- --

11 Q. Just approximately, you know. You don't have to get into the
12 minute.

13 A. I think it was 1916. I'm not a hundred percent sure on that
14 because I don't have my time book with me.

15 Q. Okay. And when you were assigned that second train, the
16 accident train, what did your engineer talk about? I mean, did
17 you have a job briefing?

18 A. Yeah, we had a job briefing about our orders and what was
19 going on and what we had to do.

20 Q. Did you look at anything else? I mean, what was in your
21 orders? I mean, the --

22 A. It would have been some 25s at Stahl Run, and I think that's
23 the only thing that affected us for the day.

24 Q. You mean 25 speed restriction?

25 A. Yeah, it was speed restriction around Stahl Run. It was two

1 25s.

2 Q. Okay. Is there any other discussion about the train?

3 A. We discussed what our power was good for and how -- or what
4 tonnage rating we had and how we had the helper and stuff.

5 Q. So you left out of there with a helper?

6 A. Yeah, we left with a helper.

7 Q. Okay. So can you describe, as you were going up the hill,
8 what you guys did or, you know, what happened during that trip?

9 A. We were coming up the hill and running around speed, and then
10 we come up the hill, one -- the helper, they -- their second
11 engine ran out of fuel, but we still had enough power to climb up
12 the hill, so we were just coming up the hill real easy. We ended
13 up making it, like, climbing about 10 mile an hour; it decreased,
14 we were down to about maybe 8 mile an hour, but we still made it
15 up to Sand Patch to where the helper could cut away and go back to
16 Connellsville.

17 Q. And then what happened when you got to the top or --

18 A. After he came out of the tunnel, I think he put the air on
19 because we were going slow anyway. So he put the air on after he
20 came out of the tunnel. He put it on, and then he got down a
21 little way, maybe a little ways, and then he said the brakes
22 released on the train so he put the air back -- put the air on.
23 He said you're going to have to tie it down. So that's when --
24 following the rules from between Cooks Mill and Yoder, you have to
25 tie 30 percent hand brakes for him to reset the air on the hill.

1 Q. So -- yeah. So when -- you mean use the air, that's brake
2 application? He made a brake application?

3 A. Yeah. He made brake application. You got to run down the
4 hill with air on, usually minimum service.

5 Q. Okay. And --

6 A. And then the brakes released on the train so he had to go to
7 full service to get the train to stop, to reset the air to see
8 what was wrong with the train.

9 Q. And so he brought the train to a stop?

10 A. Yeah, he brought the train to a stop.

11 Q. And what happened after that?

12 A. We notified dispatch. I went back, started tying my 30
13 percent hand brakes, which would have been 58 cars total I tied in
14 the train.

15 Q. So you applied 58 hand brakes?

16 A. Yeah, 58 hand brakes.

17 Q. And after you applied the hand brakes, what happened next?

18 A. I inspected the rest of the train, and I was looking for any
19 air leaks or anything that -- one car looks like it had maybe a
20 little bunch leak. So I fixed them hoses, knocked them back down,
21 and then I -- he said that the flow was still around 40. So I
22 said -- I said, well, that must not have been it. So I kept
23 walking the rest of the train.

24 I got back to the 159th car, which would have been the car
25 that had that main middle air line had a hole in it. I seen

1 something looked like it was all wet under there. I said, I think
2 this is the car. And the other track was live, it was a live
3 track so I didn't climb over. But then, I walked the rest of our
4 train to see if there was anything else. I checked the EOT to see
5 if it matched his air and he said it was the same.

6 So then the helper gave me a ride back and I said let's stop
7 at this car, and I think it's on the other side that has the air
8 lead. And we looked at it and we noticed there was a crack in the
9 middle line. It wasn't a whole lot of air, but it was leaking
10 enough to make the brakes release.

11 Q. Okay. So you can hear the air --

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. -- coming out of it? Is it a rubber hose?

14 A. No. It was a metal line. So I couldn't even replace that
15 line because it was metal.

16 Q. Oh, I see. Okay. When you guys had your job briefing, did
17 you guys look at your train profile?

18 A. Yeah. I looked at the profile, looked to make sure that
19 everything was -- followed the rules of cars and the position of
20 what they should be, make sure our trailing tonnage didn't exceed
21 what we had for the helper and everything, making sure there was
22 no no-bills or any of that stuff on the train. Just normal
23 procedure that we usually do for every train.

24 Q. That's your train profile. Can you take a look at it?

25 Do you recall that's the profile, more or less?

1 A. Yeah. It had another top sheet and stuff to it, but that's
2 basically the whole profile.

3 Q. So describe again, when you look at your train profile what
4 do you look for?

5 A. I follow down here and make sure there ain't no no-bills. It
6 would be like an N if we had it. And look at the restrictions and
7 the profile, see what we have. See there's a 9050 long car, so
8 then I'd look for that and I'd see where the first empty long car
9 is where -- trailing tonnage, which there is only one in here and
10 it's a load. So we didn't have any trailing tonnage, but we just
11 needed the helper because of the power-wise.

12 Q. Uh-huh.

13 A. And then I flipped through (indiscernible) and I see where
14 we're a key train. So I know we can't exceed 50 mile an hour, but
15 that's the max speed we have on our tracks anyway. But that's if
16 we tie it down, we know we got to follow that procedure for a key
17 train and get the information to dispatch if we leave the train
18 there unsecured, so we know that. I check all the hazmats to make
19 sure it has all the information in there, the numbers to be
20 reached and everything, emergency contacts, make sure all that is
21 in there and correct.

22 And there's usually a page -- I don't see it on this one, but
23 there's usually a page it'll say like any restrictions or
24 something. Sometimes it will say like a bad order car and make
25 sure there's none in there. Say a bad order car that got missed

1 and needed to be set out. And check all that, make sure the rules
2 as far as the empties and stuff with the loads, you can't have
3 many -- all that stuff. Make sure all that follows all the rules
4 for CSX, and then if it had the top sheet, I'd calculate all our
5 power out, what the dynamics are, how much power I absolutely
6 have, how much we can have online to be legal and all that.

7 Q. Okay. So on the empties that you see on the head end --

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. -- on the profile --

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. I mean, is that normal? I mean, is this like your standard
12 train that you guys --

13 A. Yeah, everything followed the rules for CSX. It was a legal
14 train to be -- proceed how it was.

15 Q. Did the engineer, when he looked at his paperwork, did he
16 have any concerns or did he express anything?

17 A. He just said that there's a lot of loads on the rear. But
18 that's, like I said --

19 Q. And what was he referring to a lot of loads on the rear?

20 A. He was just referring that he didn't like the loads on the
21 rear, but, I mean, it was still legal procedures, so it was still
22 legal to take how it was.

23 Q. All righty. Is this your typical train, like, you know,
24 lengthwise and tonnage-wise?

25 A. Yeah. Usually anymore they're pretty big trains, so I'm used

1 to having them big tonnage trains, big lengthwise trains and all
2 that.

3 MR. TORRES: Okay. I'll pass it on to Steve.

4 MR. AMMONS: All right.

5 BY MR. AMMONS:

6 Q. You go by James?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. All right. James, when did you say you hired out?

9 A. It would have been March 10th, 2014.

10 Q. Is it safe to assume you haven't been to engineer school yet?

11 A. No. I haven't been to engineer school yet.

12 Q. Did you state that when you came back by -- when you got
13 picked up by the other crew on the other track there when you
14 inspected the train --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. -- and you came back by, you all stopped?

17 A. Yeah. Me -- it would have been Chad Richter, would have been
18 the conductor. And then Aaron Malott (ph.) is the one engineer.
19 He picked me up. Because I got back to the rear of the train, I
20 was -- I only had like 10, 15 minutes before I was on a lull. So
21 they picked me up, gave me a ride back to the head end. Well, we
22 -- I said, let's stop at this car. I said, I'm pretty sure this
23 is the car that was leaking but I think it's on the other side. I
24 said that track was live so I didn't want to go over there while
25 it was still live, so I said I would inspect on the way back.

1 And then we stopped there. I inspected the car and we seen
2 that it wasn't like a hole in it, but it was cracked and that's
3 where it was bleeding the air. That was the cause of the train --

4 Q. Did someone get off that train with you and look at it with
5 you or was it just you?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Chad Richter got off the train with me and we looked at it.

8 Q. He was the conductor on the other train?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. And he agreed with you that there was an issue with that car?

11 A. Yeah. He agreed that there was -- air line was cracked.

12 Q. Okay. And so, at that point who did you notify?

13 A. I told the engineer on the run on the radio. I said it was
14 cracked, and he either notified dispatch then or at the -- when I
15 got back to head end. I can't remember that honestly, but --

16 Q. Okay. But your engineer, you notified your engineer?

17 A. Yeah. I notified the engineer. I said, hey, this air line's
18 cracked.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I said the main middle air line. I said I can't replace it
21 because it's the middle line. We don't replace them. That's only
22 the car department.

23 Q. Sure. And then when you got back to the head end, you guys
24 were pretty close to going on the hours of service?

25 A. Yeah. We got back to head end and we were about to go on

1 hour of service. We had a job briefing with the crew, letting
2 them know what was going on, how many brakes were tied, where the
3 brakes were tied on the train. I had them marked on the profile
4 what was tied.

5 Q. So did you apply the handbrakes before you inspected the
6 train and found that issue?

7 A. Yeah. I tied the brakes because we were close to getting on
8 a lull, and I didn't know if there was another crew coming out
9 there or what was going on. So I wanted to get the brakes tied
10 before I found out where the rest of the train was, because --

11 Q. You wanted to get the brakes tied before what?

12 A. I wanted to get the brakes tied, where he could try to start
13 to reset the air because we didn't know actually what was going on
14 yet. Because he had 40 pounds of flow, which legally you can move
15 the train with 60 pounds of flow -- or no more than 60. So then,
16 it was -- the train was still legal to move, but it just kept
17 releasing the brakes. So he thought it would run away down the
18 hill.

19 Q. So when you stopped --

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. -- when he stopped the train, is that when you dismounted the
22 train, you applied handbrakes first before you completed your
23 inspection?

24 A. Yeah. I tied the brakes first.

25 Q. Okay. You stated you -- are you certain that you applied 58

1 handbrakes? That's -- I think that was the number you said
2 earlier. Is that -- are you certain that's --

3 A. Yeah. Because -- I tied 58 brakes. I thought it was 54
4 brakes when I calculated it out, but the engineer said on the
5 radio, he said, it should be 58 brakes. So I didn't have a
6 calculator or anything with me to recheck my math, but -- so I
7 said, well, I just tie 58 brakes, because you have to have at
8 least 30 percent. So --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. As long as you have at least 30 percent on the train, then
11 it's legal that you stop to reset your air like that.

12 Q. And when you guys left the train there, you left the train
13 with 58 handbrakes applied?

14 A. Yeah. We left the train with 58 handbrakes applied.

15 Q. Did you -- when you left there, did you -- did the other --
16 had the other crew shown up yet?

17 A. Yeah, the other crew was there. I got back to the head end,
18 another crew was getting out of their van or whatever they were
19 getting over there. And that's when we had -- that's when we had
20 a -- we had a job briefing with the whole crew before we -- the
21 van went to turn around, or whatever, so we were waiting on that
22 van to turn around. So we had a job briefing with the crew on
23 letting them know what was going on, how many brakes was tied,
24 what happened to the train, why we were stopped and all that.

25 Q. So what did the job briefing entail? What did you discuss

1 with them? What did you tell them?

2 A. I told them I had 58 brakes tied in the train. I said, I
3 tied the first 27 cars and then there was 6 cars the brakes was
4 clear at the top. So I was trying to save time, so I skipped six
5 cars, because it doesn't say that -- the rule doesn't say that
6 they have to be all in a row. It just says you have to tie 30
7 percent brakes. So I tied 27 cars and then I skipped 6 cars, and
8 I notated on the profile which cars was not tied. And then I
9 added six more cars to the rear end of what would have been tied.

10 Q. All right. So you tied the first 27 cars?

11 A. Yeah. First 27 cars, and then there was 6 that was, you
12 know, them brakes clear at the top, you got to climb clear all the
13 way to the top of the car; took time. So I was trying to save
14 time because we were running on our lull. I didn't climb clear to
15 the top.

16 Q. So is it safe to say that cars 28 through 33 --

17 A. Yeah. It would have been 28 through 33, and then --

18 Q. -- is the ones that you skipped, you did not put a handbrake
19 on?

20 A. Yes. And then 58 would be -- 1,2,3 -- should have been 63 --
21 64th car should have been the last car that had a handbrake tied
22 on.

23 Q. So cars 34 through 60- -- I don't want to speak for you.

24 A. Twenty-seven. So it would be 28 through -- 1,2,3,4,5,6 -- 28
25 through 33 didn't have a brake tied on them.

1 Q. Okay. And then cars 34 through what you put --

2 A. Thirty-four through -- oh, let's see -- it would be till 64,
3 the 64th car. Then that would have added up to 58 brakes.

4 Q. Those six cars that had the high handbrake, was there any
5 other cars in that group that had those, but you went ahead and
6 applied them? In other words, were there other cars with a
7 similar type of handbrake high up but you --

8 A. No. There was none that high up.

9 Q. That was the only six like that?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. You were trying to save time is the reason you didn't put
12 those six on?

13 A. Yeah. I just didn't want to climb clear to the top because
14 then that would have taken more extra minutes.

15 Q. Okay. And when you had this job briefing with the other
16 crew, was it engineer and conductor both or was it the conductor?

17 A. It was engineer and -- both, they were both up there.

18 Q. And you're pretty certain that during -- are you pretty
19 certain or are you certain that during that briefing that you
20 described to them the six handbrakes that you didn't apply?

21 A. Yeah. I actually had it (indiscernible) on my profile for I
22 knew myself when I came back up which ones wasn't tied and which
23 ones -- I had it all marked on these first -- I had the first
24 couple sheets of the profile, I took them with me back to the
25 train. I marked down which cars wasn't tied in and then I put a

1 line and I gave that to the conductor that was taking over. And I
2 said -- I said, put this in your pocket and make sure you take
3 this with you when you go back and knock them brakes off --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- so you know which ones there are and which ones doesn't.

6 Q. How many times did the engineer tell you or how many times
7 did you observe the brakes releasing unintended?

8 A. It only released one time. That was the first time it
9 released coming down, because we never put the air on -- we never
10 put the air on until we come -- came through the tunnel. That's
11 when you usually use your air because we didn't have -- we never
12 -- we didn't have to stop anywhere or anything like that too.
13 That was the first time we had put the air on coming through the
14 tunnel. That's when he put it on, and then he said -- he said, I
15 think he said we're around 75 on the rear, which is legal. You
16 can take the train down 75 on the rear. And then he said, my
17 brakes just released. He said the air is climbing back up.

18 And then he said, we're going to have to go -- he said, we're
19 going to have to stop. So he went to full service and he stopped
20 the train. He said, you're going to have to go back and tie
21 brakes. I was like, yeah, that's 30 percent. So I went and
22 calculated out what it was and then grabbed my light and gloves
23 and went back and started tying them.

24 Q. So when he made a full service application and you started
25 tying handbrakes with that full service application was on,

1 applied to the train?

2 A. Yeah. He has to -- I had to tie all the brakes first, 30
3 percent, before he can reset the air so the train holds itself
4 that it doesn't, you know, run away down the hill.

5 Q. Sure. So during that time that you were tying the brakes,
6 when he had the full-service application on, did he indicate to
7 you that the brakes were leaking off at that time? Or did you see
8 or hear of any sign of that?

9 A. No. I didn't hear about that.

10 Q. Okay.

11 MR. AMMONS: Mike, that's all I've got.

12 MR. BULL: Okay. Thank you. Mike Bull, FRA.

13 BY MR. BULL:

14 Q. You said you saw the 159th car had air leaked. So what does
15 that tell you, if a car is leaking air, what happens to the brake
16 system at that point?

17 A. It was causing it -- the air would all leak, it would leak
18 out, and then that's when the brakes -- the brakes wouldn't hold
19 all that air and then that's when it -- it leaks out and then the
20 brakes release. So whatever the air you have on the train, the
21 brakes are releasing, causing that -- causing whatever -- like say
22 if you are trying to slow down and the brakes release, then that
23 air is not on the car so then it's not -- you know, it's not
24 holding back like it should.

25 Q. Okay. Would it be typical, if air is coming out of the brake

1 plate, for the brakes to apply instead of release? I'm confused
2 here.

3 A. (No response.)

4 Q. In other words, in order to cause a release of the brakes
5 there has to be something maybe obstructing that brake pipe, as
6 opposed to the air just leaking out into the atmosphere. When you
7 reduce that brake pipe, the brakes come on instead of release.

8 I guess what I'm looking for is, was it just a straight air
9 leak or was there something else going on with that hose that --
10 like was it kinked up or was it --

11 A. It was a middle line and it looked -- everything around it, I
12 thought it kind of looked like oil, but I guess it was just like
13 just the water all like, you know, from condensation in the air.
14 Everything around there was all wet underneath the car. That's
15 how I noticed -- I heard air, and then I looked under and I
16 thought maybe it was just like a seal or something on the main
17 cylinder or something causing it to do that.

18 Q. But you could hear the air coming --

19 A. But I knew there was something wrong with that car --

20 Q. Okay. So you heard the air coming out --

21 A. -- and that was what was the train to do what it was doing.

22 Q. Okay. So that was that the --

23 A. Because usually, when have that -- usually when you have that
24 much flow in your train, there's something causing that to have
25 that flow. But the train was legal to move because it only had 40

1 instead of over 60.

2 Q. I believe an earlier statement was made that there was a --
3 the rear end showed a release of the brakes. It went from 74
4 pounds, I think, to 79 or something like that, which indicates a
5 release.

6 A. Yeah. He said it was like 75 and then he said the brakes was
7 released. It went up to like, I think, 77 or something like -- it
8 started to climb up and that's when he knew it was going to --
9 before it was too late, you know, that we released all the way, he
10 put the air on.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Because if he wouldn't did it -- if he wouldn't have made an
13 application, then the brakes would've released and the train would
14 have took off.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. Like ran away.

17 Q. Okay. I just wanted to clear that up because it kind of
18 confused me a little bit. When air comes out, it seems to me the
19 brakes apply. Okay. Definitely that was the problem, though? I
20 mean --

21 A. Yeah, that was the problem. That was the only -- the main
22 factor why we had to stop.

23 Q. Okay. You said you had a job briefing when you first took
24 over this train, and at that point --

25 A. Yeah. We had a job briefing with the other crew, even the

1 other crew that we got -- took the train off of and whatever, and
2 all the stuff that was -- how the train was, how the power was and
3 all that.

4 Q. And did they report any problems?

5 A. They didn't report any problems. He just said they had to
6 switch out the train at New Castle, had to pick up tracks and
7 stuff, and he said everything should be good and all that.

8 Q. Okay. And then you had a separate job briefing with your
9 engineer discussing the makeup of the train?

10 A. Yeah. We discussed -- I got on the train because I didn't
11 have a profile at the time and I checked their profile they had.
12 I checked everything on there. We looked at everything, checked
13 the brake slips make sure the brake slips and all that stuff was
14 good, legal. And then we calculated all our -- what we was good
15 for and then like restrictions coming down the hill. I even
16 figured out like the dynamic restrictions what we would have been
17 good for if we took it all the way down the hill, all that.

18 Q. This is what you discussed with your engineer --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. -- before you took off?

21 A. Yeah. We discussed.

22 Q. I'm going to ask a silly question here. I have a copy of the
23 train profile, and in that first column -- actually the second
24 column, there's a four-digit number. I don't know what that
25 number means. The ninth car says it's a 9250, the 10th car is a

1 9250, then the 11th car has nothing.

2 A. You're talking about that? If you go to restriction keys at
3 the end of the thing, it will say like 9250 would be hazmat.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. If you go to the bottom of your profile, it says Restriction
6 Keys, and then that's your hazmat. That's the restrictions on the
7 train. It will like tell you like special instructions like --

8 Q. I see it.

9 A. -- if it has any restrictions on the car for speed or if it's
10 a long car or any of that.

11 Q. Okay, because you had mentioned earlier you saw a 9050?

12 A. It would have been a 9050. That's where -- what you do you,
13 you find the first empty long car on the train to find trailing
14 tonnage, and you have to be under a certain tonnage to be legal to
15 move. And then if you know, if you're over some amount, then you
16 have to get a helper and all that. Then the helper can take over
17 so much. You just have to be legal to move. We just had to make
18 sure everything was right before we left Connellsville and make
19 sure we didn't have to switch the train out or anything.

20 Q. Okay. Thank you. Was your helper on your rear end?

21 A. Yeah. The helper was at the rear end of the train.

22 Q. How long have you worked on that particular railroad, that
23 territory?

24 A. Ever since I hired out.

25 Q. Okay. And you said you skipped six cars. You did not apply

1 handbrakes on those six because they were high handbrakes; is that
2 correct?

3 A. Yeah, that's correct.

4 Q. Okay. What type of cars were those? Were they flat cars or
5 bulkhead flats or --

6 A. They were real tall like --

7 Q. I don't know what -- by looking at --

8 A. Kind of like really big trash cars. I don't know if they
9 were like a (indiscernible) or something.

10 Q. Okay. High side --

11 A. Like them big coke empty cars they have real brakes, real
12 high up train. It was kind of like one of them cars, but they
13 weren't coke empty cars.

14 MR. BULL: Okay. That's all I have for now. Thank you.

15 MR. CASSITY: Jared Cassity with SMART Transportation
16 Division.

17 BY MR. CASSITY:

18 Q. Kind of start at the beginning of the trip. You had took
19 over and got your job -- your profile and had your job briefing
20 with your engineer. You made a comment a little bit ago that the
21 engineer said there's a lot of loads on the rear and that he
22 didn't particularly like loads being on the rear like that. Do
23 you know why he would say something like that?

24 A. It's just how the train handles itself. How the train is
25 built would be how -- certain ways cars are built where the train

1 handles certain different ways. Like you, if you look -- usually
2 like a good engineer, he'll know how the train's going to handle
3 just by how looking at the profile.

4 Q. Okay. So placement of loads and empties actually changes the
5 way the train can act or react?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. I'm going to ask you about slack action then. Is that pretty
8 much what you're referring to in how the train is acting or
9 reacting? Are you referring to slack action in another sense?

10 A. Yeah, slack action and how the train will set down if you put
11 the air on and certain things like that.

12 Q. Okay. For the transcriber, do you care to talk about or to
13 detail what slack action actually is, the different states,
14 whether it be buff or bunched up or stretched out?

15 A. Yeah, the train can stretch out or it can be bunched up.
16 That's with the -- there's play between the draw bars and the
17 train and they can move in and out the way it -- the train is
18 stretched out, or bunched would be the cars all together. Then
19 all the draw heads would unstop -- they only go in so much and
20 everything, the train would be all tight. So then the train would
21 be shorter in length. And then when it's stretched out, it would
22 be longer in length is basically how you would describe it.

23 Q. Okay. So when you're stretching, then the force is --
24 literally it's the train is stretched out, so it's being pulled at
25 that time?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. And then if it's bunched up, it's because you're putting some
3 kind of braking force on the train so they all bunch up, right,
4 they come in together?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. When you were going down the hill you said that it's common
7 practice, and I believe operating rules as well, to go down the
8 hill with a minimum set of brakes on as far as the air is going to
9 first service, it'll be --

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Does that put the train -- does that stretch the train out or
12 does it actually bunch up when you start retarding the train like
13 that? Does it bunch them up, I guess is my question?

14 A. It kind of depends how fast he was going at the time or how
15 the train was -- how it was before he stuck it on, the air on and
16 stuff.

17 Q. I know you're not an engineer, but I'll ask it this way. Do
18 you recall if the train was bunched or not going down the hill?

19 A. I don't recall it being bunched up.

20 Q. Okay. When the loads are on the rear, does that affect the
21 way that the train comes in or bunches up on you? Does it -- can
22 it increase the forces of the bunch?

23 A. It could -- the empties could set down more and then cause
24 the loads to maybe slam against the empties.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. But I'm not a hundred percent sure on that, so --

2 Q. I understand. I understand. I know you've never sat in that
3 seat, so -- I just forgot what I was fixing to ask you.

4 Do you recall -- we spoke to the engineers. It sounds like
5 they handled the train magnificently well. But do you recall any
6 out of the ordinary slack action on that day?

7 A. No, I didn't -- I did not encounter any slack action. Like,
8 if it has a lot, then you can -- it's like you can feel it like in
9 your seat, it'll -- came against you.

10 Q. Okay. Tomas was asking you earlier about the makeup of your
11 train. He asked you if it was fairly common. You actually
12 answered here recently it's become fairly common. Has there been
13 a change? Have you seen a change in the size of trains lately in
14 the last so much time period?

15 A. They have been that big actually probably for the last couple
16 years.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Like when I first hired out, they were around 7,000 feet or
19 whatever. But then they were trying to do fuel conservative and
20 the trains started getting bigger. But they've probably been that
21 size for at least the last 2 years.

22 Q. Okay. The unintended brake release, is that something fairly
23 common on this subdivision?

24 A. What did you say again?

25 Q. The unintended brake release, when the air started coming up,

1 when he actually had the brakes applied and had unintended
2 release, is that fairly common on this subdivision?

3 A. Yeah. It happened before to guys.

4 Q. Okay. Is that how the system is supposed to work; do you
5 know?

6 A. No, the brakes ain't supposed to release. That means there
7 was something wrong with the train.

8 Q. Okay. It's all over the news; it's pretty common stuff
9 there's been a lot of changes at CSX lately. Do you think that's
10 affected anything beyond the train size? Safety, has it changed
11 the safety in any way around here? Do you feel like safety has
12 become more important or less important?

13 A. The rules that changed, I haven't seen anything that could
14 affect -- it just made things faster, made things easier on us,
15 the way I look at it.

16 Q. Good.

17 MR. CASSITY: I don't have anything else right now.

18 MR. ROSS: Okay. Larry Ross, FRA.

19 BY MR. ROSS:

20 Q. James, when you and your engineer went on duty -- or, well,
21 you took a westbound at Connellsville --

22 A. Yeah. We took a -- it would have been 217 out of the hotel.
23 Took it back to Connellsville, and they were already out of guys.
24 So the chief, I guess he talked to the yardmaster and he said --
25 he said, do you know want to take another train down to

1 Cumberland? He said, we'll give you another ticket. And that's
2 when we took that 388.

3 Q. Was the train there or did you have to wait for it?

4 A. We had to wait a little bit, but it wasn't -- by the time we
5 got our orders and profile and the ticket and everything, it
6 wasn't that long of a wait.

7 Q. So you got a new consist profile with all the paperwork for
8 your train prior to getting onto the train then?

9 A. No. I didn't get the profile till I got on the train, but I
10 -- we had to get our time ticket to show that we were on duty and
11 -- to show we were on duty and we had to get new orders like
12 showing what the speed restrictions was and all that.

13 Q. Dispatch -- is that what you call the dispatchable release
14 form?

15 A. Yeah. Dispatchable, yeah.

16 Q. So you got the dispatchable release form, time ticket, but
17 you did not get a new consist?

18 A. Yeah. Because I went in the system and typed in WPR, which
19 is the profile thing, and nothing came up for the profile. So
20 then that's when I got on the train. That's when I inspected
21 everything on the profile because nothing came up when I did type
22 it in the system.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Because I usually -- prior, I usually always print a profile
25 and take it with me, but that day I couldn't get anything in the

1 system. So I checked the train, the profile on the train and it
2 was actually good. So --

3 Q. No, that's why I was curious. Did you get new paperwork for
4 the train so you had a chance to look at it before you got to the
5 train, that's why. Nothing nefarious there.

6 So you looked at the consist paperwork on the train?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Did you get on the train at the yard office there or up at --

9 A. It would have been at the hump across the -- where you go
10 across that little bridge.

11 Q. Okay. And was the outbound crew -- excuse me -- inbound crew
12 still on the train?

13 A. Yeah, the outbound crew -- I mean, the inbound crew would
14 have been still on the train when we got on it. And we talked to
15 them. You know, every train you get you have a job briefing with
16 the other crew and tell how everything was; is the paperwork good
17 and everything. They said it was, but you always double check it
18 because they could have made a mistake.

19 Q. Did the inbound crew say they had any problems with the train
20 coming in?

21 A. No. They didn't say they had any problems.

22 Q. Did they ever mention any problem about the train being
23 sluggish or the air coming up slow on it?

24 A. They just said the train was heavy, mentioned that, but we
25 knew that from just looking at the profile.

1 Q. Did you have to pull up and get the helper on the rear of the
2 train or was the helper already on the train?

3 A. The helper was already attached when we got on the train.

4 Q. Okay. So the train was there ready to go then?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Okay. When you left Connellsville, do you remember what time
7 that was? It's not important really because I can get that off
8 the train sheet, but just give me a shoot from hip.

9 A. I always write it down in the book, but -- I meant to bring
10 it with me, but I don't have it with me.

11 Q. Did you have any trouble with the train leaving
12 Connellsville, between there and Sand Patch, any trouble with air
13 leaks, stretch, brakes applying or releasing?

14 A. No, we never had any trouble. The only trouble was when the
15 helper, their one engine ran out of fuel and then we were like,
16 well, we'll still give it a shot. If we make it, we make it or we
17 don't. So we ended up making it, and then they cut away and they
18 went back to Connellsville.

19 Q. Where did -- where was your head end at when the helper
20 started having trouble running out of fuel?

21 A. I think we were maybe Yoder, Yoder when we ran out -- it
22 started happening.

23 Q. Down around --

24 A. I can't be a hundred sure on that.

25 Q. Okay. So you were still coming up against the steep part --

1 A. Yeah. We were still coming up the hill.

2 Q. Okay. Did the helper have to cut off on the fly?

3 A. Yeah. They cut off on the fly at the helper link.

4 Q. The helper link cut off on fly. Now did you notice any slack
5 or anything when the helper cut off?

6 A. No, I never noticed anything. They just -- we came out the
7 other end of the tunnel we were long, so we were stretched out.
8 We had to go a little past that and then they said they're all cut
9 away, said, have a safe trip, you know, they usually say.

10 Q. Yeah. Were you -- you were out of the tunnel when the helper
11 cut off then?

12 A. Our head end was out of the tunnel, yeah.

13 Q. Okay. That's what I wanted. I meant you physically.

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. So you were out of the tunnel. Okay. When your engineer --
16 and I'm curious, was there any slack or did you feel anything in
17 the train when the helper cut away?

18 A. No. I didn't really feel anything.

19 Q. You were still kind of like this with the train then?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Still on, half and half on each side of the --

22 A. Still like stretched out.

23 Q. Do you remember where your engineer started -- he was still
24 -- what brought -- do you remember if he was in motoring yet,
25 still pulling the train when the helper cut off?

1 A. I don't how he was because I couldn't see what he -- what,
2 you know, what power he was in or anything.

3 Q. Okay. When the engineer said he was having brakes start to
4 release on him, do you remember where the head end of the train
5 was?

6 A. We were probably around NA. As soon as he said the brakes
7 were releasing, that's when he -- so we stopped pretty quick from
8 the time that he knew the air released, because he knew he had to
9 do something quick before the brakes released completely and then,
10 you know, the train starts to run away.

11 Q. Okay. When your engineer went to full service or just prior
12 to that, did you feel any slack or any change in the train? I
13 know you didn't have the gauges in front of you, but did you feel
14 anything?

15 A. No. I didn't feel anything.

16 Q. Did the train stop fairly quick or did it take a while to get
17 it stopped?

18 A. Yeah. It stopped fairly quick.

19 Q. Now, after you came to a stop and started tying the
20 handbrakes -- and you already answered some of the questions about
21 the type of cars. But the car that -- the 159th car, what kind of
22 car was that?

23 A. It was an empty long car.

24 Q. Flat car, bulkhead flat, or what?

25 A. Yeah. It was flat, yeah. Well, it wouldn't have been long,

1 but it was -- it was a flat car, empty flat car.

2 Q. Was this one of the ones with the sliding center sill one,
3 when you said it had a center piece where the leak was?

4 A. It had a what?

5 Q. Was this -- had the sliding center? Was this a cushioned
6 under --

7 A. That I can't remember, honestly.

8 Q. And you said it was a center piece of metal. Was this toward
9 the end of the car or was this up under the car where the air was
10 leaking and you saw the condensation?

11 A. It would have been up under the car.

12 Q. It was leaking up under the car, the frame itself?

13 A. It was the main metal air line you connect to the rubber
14 hose, but it was back under a good ways.

15 Q. You couldn't fix that with your hammer and chisel?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Okay. No, I was a little confused before some of the other
18 folks was it, you know, at the end of the car because some of
19 these seal, you know, sliding centers -- so it was a rigid piece
20 of the steel line that was leaking?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And then it was all, it was all wet under there. So it was
24 like blowing out condensation from in the air or something.

25 Q. I got you. Do you remember who your helper crew was, out of

1 curiosity?

2 A. The crew that picked us up or -- I mean, picked me up or the
3 crew?

4 Q. No, no, the (indiscernible), these guys.

5 A. Oh, yeah, I know they had a couple crew. I don't know what
6 the train ID was, but I know who the names.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Jeremy O'Dell (ph.) --

9 Q. Who?

10 A. Jeremy O'Dell, and Tom Rice would have been the brakeman, I
11 guess, or conductor, however you consider it.

12 Q. Okay. I got a couple other questions and these are basically
13 for -- we do a study, any type of a major derailment, on sleep
14 cycles and rest cycles and things like that. And this is kind of
15 -- I don't know, we changed the name over the years, but it's kind
16 of a --

17 What the heck do we call it now, Mike?

18 MR. BULL: Fatigue Analysis.

19 BY MR. ROSS:

20 Q. Fatigue analysis. I think the paperwork is the same
21 essentially. What kind of rest were you getting prior to this?
22 Do you remember how many hours you had off before you got on the
23 first westbound train, the 217?

24 A. We had reported at least 10 for 12. I think we actually had
25 extra rest because we didn't get called out right away.

1 Q. Now where is your regular home terminal?

2 A. Home terminal would be Connellsville. I usually work the
3 extra boards there or I work both directions from Connellsville to
4 Cumberland or Connellsville to New Castle. But the wait terminal
5 for that train would have been Cumberland, down there.

6 Q. Now are you getting out quite a bit? Are you getting out
7 every day? Are you getting long/short rest periods between
8 getting called to work?

9 A. I get adequate rest because I look at the board and I know
10 when I'm going to get called out. And I know what I can do and
11 what I can't do for I'm rest for the train.

12 Q. Okay. And how long does it take you to drive to work? Do
13 you live in the Connellsville area?

14 A. To drive to Connellsville? Like I average about an hour.

15 Q. About an hour drive?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. So when you were called for this, you had to drive -- well,
18 you've gone over --

19 A. Yeah. I came out of the hotel. I didn't have to drive at
20 all.

21 Q. Oh, you came out of the hotel at Cumberland. Okay. I got
22 you now. Didn't they just change the pools around a little bit
23 again there? So you come out of Cumberland and how long do you
24 usually lay at Cumberland then? Are you getting in and out on a
25 regular basis, long layover, short layover?

1 A. You're usually out of there at least within -- from the time
2 -- like the hours would be, like before you go on duty, you're
3 usually hours anywhere from -- you know, 12 would be the minimum
4 to maybe 14 or 15, but that's usually the max is usually around --
5 you usually get out pretty quick.

6 Q. Now when you are off, do you go to sleep right away or -- you
7 know, do you go to sleep before the job or go get something to
8 eat? What's your routine? And when do you sleep and how long?
9 That's what I'm getting at.

10 A. I just judge it by the position I'm on the board. You know,
11 I look and see who's -- when I'm going to get called out. Then
12 I'll see like --

13 Q. When you were called for the 217, had you had pretty good
14 rest?

15 A. Yeah, because I was in the hotel. I was --

16 Q. And what's normal rest for you? I mean, what do you need to
17 function, feel good and what do you -- I mean, what do you really
18 get?

19 A. I mean, if I get out -- if I get at least -- if I get a good
20 5 hours, I mean, I'm good. I'm not tired or anything.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. But I'm still young. I mean, it depends on your age.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, Larry.

24 BY MR. ROSS:

25 Q. Do you nap any?

1 A. No.

2 Q. You know, some guys nap when they get off work and then sleep
3 later, take a nap before they go to work. I'm just curious.
4 You're not a napper?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay. That's good.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's not that young.

8 MR. ROSS: Huh?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's not that young.

10 MR. ROSS: He's not that young.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Or old.

12 BY MR. ROSS:

13 Q. What else? Do you take any prescription drugs?

14 A. No, I don't.

15 Q. Do you take any over-the-counter drugs?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Okay. How many hours of sleep do you think you had prior to
18 the 2217?

19 A. Honestly, I probably had at least probably 8 hours.

20 Q. Okay.

21 MR. ROSS: Okay. That's all I have. Thanks, James.

22 MR. FANNON: My name is Randy Fannon, BLE.

23 BY MR. FANNON:

24 Q. I just have a couple questions for you. Have you personally
25 been involved in experiencing an air problem on the mountain prior

1 to the --

2 A. Yeah. I mean, I've probably tied 100 trains down on that.

3 It seems like I always have the bad luck, but --

4 Q. Sometimes it runs in that.

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. So you've tied a lot of handbrakes there before?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. On this train, on the brakes that you applied, did you really
9 put your muscle into really tie them good or just snug?

10 A. I just tied them tight enough that I felt that it would hold
11 the train when he released the brakes.

12 Q. Did you give them an extra crank? Did you reach in and give
13 them an extra crank every now and then?

14 A. Some of them might have been tied maybe a little tighter than
15 others, but I just tied them enough so that I knew that it would
16 hold the train when he --

17 Q. You didn't want any problems, right?

18 A. Oh, yeah. I didn't want, you know, him to release the air
19 then the whole train take off down the hill.

20 Q. Okay. And I think Connellsville, when you went -- you got on
21 board the power, you had your job briefing, you started looking at
22 the train profile, are you aware of the block of 30 empties
23 instructions for this territory?

24 A. Yeah. They just recently changed that rule.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. You got to have consecutive so many loads at the time to be
2 counted as.

3 Q. Do you know how many empties you had in a block in your
4 paperwork? Do you recall how many empties you had in the one
5 block?

6 A. I don't recall how much it actually was, but I know we looked
7 over everything and everything was legal. And then if we have any
8 -- if we look at something and we're not -- we know -- we remember
9 the rule but we don't remember like if it's 100 -- like what's
10 going on, then we'll look the rule up, you know, make sure
11 everything is legal. But we didn't have that problem then, but
12 sometimes I have to look a rule up maybe, make sure we're still
13 legal.

14 Q. No, that's understandable. I mean, that's why you carry the
15 big set of rule books, right?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. So in the 30 empties, would it be safe to say that there's a
18 lot of empties that was on the head end of this train?

19 A. I mean, I seen them before like that so it's not like this is
20 the first train ever was like that.

21 Q. Okay. But you don't recall how many empties there were? Can
22 you count those right there on the --

23 A. It was the first eight was empties, then there was a load.
24 And then there's some more loads and then there's -- there's 27
25 empties in this block.

1 Q. Okay. You don't have to go through the rest of --

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. But that -- you didn't go -- you didn't have to double check
4 your counting when you got on the train? You didn't go and count
5 those empties?

6 A. Yeah. I checked the empties and everything, counted them and
7 checked the loads and all that whenever I got on the train.

8 Q. Okay. All right.

9 MR. FANNON: That's all the questions I have. Thanks.

10 MR. TORRES: Tomas Torres with the NTSB.

11 BY MR. TORRES:

12 Q. You said you skipped some handbrakes when you --

13 A. Yeah. I skipped six cars.

14 Q. You guys are permitted to have a brake stick?

15 A. No, we're not. We don't use a brake stick. But we never
16 have brake sticks anyway on the hill when we did have them, so --

17 Q. Okay. So you don't use brake sticks at all on the railroad?

18 A. No. We don't use brake sticks.

19 Q. Now you just said that the rules changes made it easier and
20 faster for you. What are you referring to?

21 A. I was just saying like you can get on and off moving
22 equipment, so the engineer don't have to stop the train completely
23 before I can grab a, you know, grab a switch. Or he can -- I can
24 get off. He can start pulling by where I'm ready to make the
25 cuts. It just saves times that way.

1 And then like the three-step, now he could be looking at the
2 engines because the train -- he said that he's not going to move
3 the train. So he could be looking at the engines and stuff and I
4 can be back there knocking off the brakes. So then that saves
5 time. We get out of there quicker and freight gets moved quicker.

6 Q. So he no longer has to sit at the controls while you're back
7 there? I mean, he can be doing other duties?

8 A. Yeah. There's no three-step anymore. He just has to say --
9 he guarantees with me that the train is not going to be moved when
10 I'm back there.

11 Q. And that saves quite a bit of time?

12 A. Yeah. I mean, it's not a whole amount of time, but I mean if
13 you calculate it over a whole year, I mean, that's a good bit of
14 time.

15 Q. Okay.

16 MR. AMMONS: I don't have any questions.

17 MR. BULL: Mike Bull, again. I have a couple follow-ups.

18 BY MR. BULL:

19 Q. To follow-up one more question with the various fatigue
20 thing. On the day of the incident were you fully alert when you
21 were at the end of your tour of duty when you were --

22 A. Yeah. I was wide awake.

23 Q. Okay. Very alert?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Okay. You mentioned the new rule for 30 empties and loads

1 ahead of them and whatnot. I think it's Rule 4466.1 in the new
2 instructions. And the first part of that says: "For the purposes
3 of these rules, the following 80 feet or longer cars must be
4 considered as empty." And then it lists four different types of
5 cars that should be considered empty if they're 80 foot long,
6 right?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. My question is, and I -- the only thing I have in front of me
9 is the tonnage graph. Is there any way on the tonnage graph you
10 can tell how long a car is --

11 A. Yeah. It'll --

12 Q. -- without doing a lot of subtraction?

13 A. I mean, it will actually say -- like 9050, it will say long
14 core and then it will be notes about it. You know like you asked
15 earlier what the 9250 meant? It will have like a 9050 right
16 beside it.

17 Q. Okay. So 9050 --

18 A. Would be an empty long car -- I mean it would be a long car
19 and then you got to check to see if it's loaded or not.

20 Q. But what's the definition of long; 80 feet?

21 A. Yeah, 80 feet.

22 Q. Okay. All right. I'm not rules qualified on your railroad
23 so I have to ask these questions. All right. Because I'm sitting
24 over here looking at the train length and then I have to subtract
25 the length to get the total length of the previous car, and that

1 just seems to me like a waste of time. Okay.

2 All right. So, you already knew; you looked at your long
3 cars and --

4 A. Yeah. We checked all that out before we got to moving and
5 anything.

6 Q. All right. That clears that up for me, so --

7 You said you applied many handbrakes on trains in this
8 territory.

9 A. Yeah. I seem like, I don't know --

10 Q. It seems like that's when you call you for the job?

11 A. Yeah. I get the bad luck trains.

12 Q. So you've had a lot of trains that have had air release
13 problems apparently, that's why you're tying handbrakes on them?

14 A. Or -- either that or they go in emergency on the hill or, you
15 know, knuckle or draw head, or any of that stuff.

16 Q. All right. Do you recall any issues you had with those
17 trains? Have you taken any of those trains all the way down the
18 hill, or --

19 A. What do you mean? Like left the brakes on and took them down
20 the hill? Yeah, we took --

21 Q. Yeah, whatever your method of operation is. Did you ever
22 have any incidents related to those trains that you had to have
23 handbrakes tied on and -- I guess an easier way to put it would
24 be, this particular train you relieved it, you gave it up and gave
25 it to somebody else.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. So previous trains, did you take all the way down after you
3 had problems with it?

4 A. Yeah, we took them all the way down. We made it in.

5 Q. No issues?

6 A. Yeah. No issues.

7 Q. Okay. And do you recall leaving handbrakes on any of those
8 trains?

9 A. Sometimes we left them on; sometimes we knocked them all the
10 way off.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. It depends on the situation.

13 Q. What type of situation?

14 A. Like this situation, like we knew there was something wrong
15 with the air so then we -- like I'm guessing that crew -- I'm not
16 sure if they left them on or not. I haven't talked to them. But
17 they said they were going to leave them on because of the air, how
18 it was.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And then sometimes you inspect the train and you find there's
21 no -- you don't see any problems but maybe you missed something.
22 So then you're like, there's -- maybe there's something still
23 wrong, so you leave the brakes on and then maybe drag them down,
24 see what's going on, and then you might stop and knock them off.
25 Like in the sag or something like that. But then sometimes you

1 might drag them all the way down the hill with the brakes on. It
2 just depends on the situation, how it is.

3 Q. Okay. So it's normal operating procedures?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Okay. What set up a red flag to us and this panel here is
6 the rule that says you're not to leave -- you're supposed to avoid
7 leaving handbrakes on empty cars. Are you familiar with that
8 rule?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. It's in the timetable. Okay. So, in the past, do you recall
11 ever leaving any handbrakes on empty cars to pull down the hill?

12 A. (No response.)

13 Q. It's not an entrapment question. We're not trying to --
14 we're just saying -- we're just asking the question if it's
15 happened before. We don't know.

16 A. Yeah. I mean, sometimes you have to leave them on because
17 that's maybe all you have is all empties, and it just depends
18 on --

19 Q. The reason the rule is worded the way it is, the way I
20 understand, is they use the word "avoid" applying handbrakes --
21 leaving handbrakes on empty cars. It doesn't say prohibited.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. It just says avoid it. So one would have to assume that you
24 should avoid it when possible, but if need be, then you have to do
25 it. Is that how you understand the rule?

1 A. Yeah, that's how I understand that rule.

2 Q. Was that taught to you in a rules class or just by talking
3 with other employees? I mean, first of all, what comes to your
4 mind when you see the words "avoid putting handbrakes on empty
5 cars"? What's your definition of that?

6 A. It's like depends on the situation. Like say -- say, if you
7 have all empties and you can't avoid it, so you have to -- you
8 have to tie, you know what I mean.

9 Q. Good answer. There was no right or wrong answer, by the way.
10 I'm just trying to get your feeling for it.

11 MR. BULL: I think that's all I got. Thank you.

12 MR. CASSITY: Jared Cassity with SMART Transportation
13 Division.

14 BY MR. CASSITY:

15 Q. I want to go back to the air brake issue on 159th car just
16 real quick. You said you saw what probably was condensation on
17 the ground. Was the condensation --

18 A. It wasn't on the ground. It was actually underneath the car.
19 I shined my light up under there and there was like -- it was all
20 wet. At first I thought, when I inspected the car, that it may be
21 the main cylinder was -- I don't know, there was something wrong,
22 maybe that was all oil or something.

23 So then I mentioned to the engineer, I said, there's
24 something wrong with this car. I'm not a hundred percent sure
25 what's going on and I said I'm going to finish inspecting the rest

1 of the train, and I said, on my way back up, then we'll see what's
2 going on. Then that's when there happened to be a helper coming
3 down the other tracks and they gave me a ride. I said, let's stop
4 at this car, I think it's on the other side, and let's look at it.
5 So we shined the light under there and we could see it was leaking
6 and it was cracked.

7 Q. Okay. What first drew you to that car? Was it the sound of
8 air blowing?

9 A. Yeah. I could hear some air flowing. Then I shined my light
10 under there and I seen it was all wet so I knew there was
11 something going on with the car.

12 Q. So you didn't just actually see the water; you actually heard
13 the sound and then that made you look underneath the car?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay. And you -- that's where the air was coming from, in
16 your opinion, the sound of the air was coming from underneath
17 right there?

18 A. Yeah. It was coming right from that hose.

19 Q. It wasn't behind the angle cock or anywhere in that area?

20 A. No. It was coming out of that main middle line.

21 Q. Okay. The handbrake rule, and you were talking about the
22 skipping brakes, the requirement is just 30 percent period? It
23 doesn't specify the exact placement of those brakes, correct?

24 A. No, it just says (indiscernible) and 30 percent.

25 Q. Okay. So it's at the crews' discretion where those brakes

1 are tied as long as you have them 30 percent?

2 A. Yeah. Like sometimes you might have a -- the helper might
3 gear down the hill with you because they didn't have no helper
4 link. So they -- say, if the train goes in an emergency or
5 whatever, then maybe they might tie half the brakes on the rear to
6 save you and you tie the other half on the front end of the train.

7 Q. Okay. So, I mean, the only thing you're worried about is
8 making that 30 percent mark, you're in compliance with the
9 rules --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. -- and you're good from there?

12 A. Following the rules.

13 Q. Okay. And then you -- talking about the -- Tomas referred to
14 a little bit there too about the rules and making things faster.
15 You think that's the intent of all these rule changes -- and again
16 I'm going to refer to articles in the news media about the new
17 precision model railroading. The intent now has become to move
18 freight faster. I mean, that's ultimately the ultimate goal now
19 with the management changes at CSX?

20 A. Yeah, to move freight faster, get more stuff to haul, try to
21 get the customers to have their freight more -- I mean, on time
22 and stuff like that. Try to speed up the process.

23 Q. And I'm sure the train was Class 1, had a Class 1 air brake
24 test in Chicago. Do you know if the train got a Class 1 anywhere
25 along -- the entire train along the rest of the rail, by chance?

1 A. That I'm not sure. All I know is I checked the brake slips
2 on the train and they were legal. They said they picked up tracks
3 at New Castle, the previous crew. So the tracks -- they're either
4 Class 1 them cars theirselves or they were Class 1 -- they were on
5 air up there. So, I don't know if the car department up there
6 inspected them or -- because they do have a couple guys left up
7 there.

8 Q. Okay. And then your work order that had the notation, you
9 said you left it on the head end, I'm sure, for the other relief
10 crew?

11 A. About where the brakes were tied and everything?

12 Q. Yeah. The notations you made on your tonnage graph and
13 things, did you leave it on the head end with the relief crew or
14 did you take it with you?

15 A. I left the profile there, that page, and then the two pages
16 -- two or three pages I took with me, I handed them to the relief
17 conductor on the helper and I said, put this in your pocket and --
18 for you don't forget it when you go back there and you know what's
19 tied and what's, you know, not tied.

20 MR. CASSITY: Okay. That tells me what I was asking.

21 Appreciate it. I have nothing else.

22 MR. ROSS: Larry Ross, FRA again.

23 BY MR. ROSS:

24 Q. I just got a quick one for you, James. Now, that we know
25 that the storm clouds tend to follow you around, you say you've

1 tied a lot of trains down on the mountain. But what were you
2 tying them down for? Air problems?

3 A. Just like they -- the air hoses came apart or we got a
4 knuckle or a bunch leak, the train would bunch up and cause it or
5 -- there's just certain -- I think I even had a draw head on the
6 hill. There's, I bet, a bunch of times if I -- I think at least
7 100 times.

8 Q. As far as after an emergency, you've had to apply brakes on
9 the trains are coming down the hill. On a scale of, you know, 100
10 trains, how many trains would you have problems with either air
11 problems, happen to leave handbrakes on, walk the train, replace
12 them? This is just a guesstimate. I'm not even going to write it
13 down. I'm just curious.

14 A. You mean over all the trains of my career?

15 Q. On a scale of 1 to 100, would you have problems?

16 A. I don't know.

17 Q. I know you always pray for no problems.

18 A. I'd say maybe like 40 percent. I don't know.

19 MR. ROSS: That's all I have.

20 MR. FANNON: Randy Fannon. I just have one question.

21 BY MR. FANNON:

22 Q. I'm going to tag along with Mr. Ross now. After you've had
23 problems, you tied the train down, how many of those that you had
24 problems with did you release all the handbrakes, partially
25 release the handbrakes, or leave the handbrakes on? I mean, have

1 you done all three?

2 A. Yeah. I've done all three.

3 Q. So you've experienced all three of those situations?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. And there was no issues prior?

6 A. No issues. We made it all -- we made it in there and took
7 the train where it was supposed to be.

8 Q. You stopped at the bottom, released the handbrakes that you
9 had left on?

10 A. Yeah.

11 MR. FANNON: No further questions. Thanks.

12 MR. TORRES: Tomas Torres with the NTSB. I've got a couple
13 more.

14 BY MR. TORRES:

15 Q. What's your conductor certification date? When's the last
16 time you certified?

17 A. Let's see. It says issued 12/31/2016.

18 Q. So you just got recertified?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. When is the last time a supervisor rode with you?

21 A. What did you say again?

22 Q. The last time a supervisor, you know, a manager rode with you
23 on a train?

24 A. I'm going to guess maybe 6 months ago.

25 Q. When is the last time you got tested, efficiency test?

1 A. That I'm not sure without looking at the air test on the
2 Gateway. I would have to look at the Gateway because sometimes
3 you're tested and you don't know you've been tested.

4 Q. So you don't always get notified or you never get notified?

5 A. You get notified if you have a failure, but you don't have to
6 be notified if they're just testing you.

7 Q. Do they perform like -- do they set up a test, you know, like
8 a prearranged test?

9 A. I guess sometimes they could set up prearranged tests or they
10 could just be out there in their pickup truck just watching you
11 and then listen to how you do your radios or how you follow the
12 rules while you're switching out the train or what you're doing on
13 the ground, or they could check your speed coming up the hill or
14 whatever. That's -- because if you're still -- efficiency test,
15 they're testing basically at that time if you're -- checking your
16 speed.

17 Q. Okay. Do you feel it's a safe place to work?

18 A. Yeah. It's a safe place to work.

19 Q. Anything else you'd like to add?

20 A. No. No further comments.

21 MR. AMMONS: I'm good.

22 MR. BULL: I'm good thanks.

23 MR. CASSITY: Good.

24 MR. TORRES: Okay. Then, no more questions, this will
25 conclude the interview. Thank you. Appreciate it.

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MR. BEITZEL: You're welcome.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

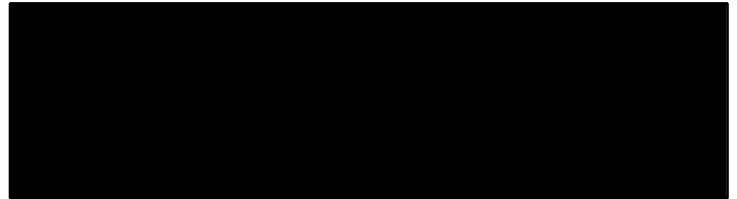
IN THE MATTER OF: CSX TRAIN DERAILMENT IN HYNDMAN,
PENNSYLVANIA, AUGUST 2, 2017
Interview of James Beitzel

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA17FR011

PLACE: Cumberland, Maryland

DATE: August 5, 2017

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complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
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Transcriber