

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: RONALD MAIN

CSXT Terminal Yard
Cumberland, Maryland

Thursday,
August 3, 2017

APPEARANCES:

TOMAS TORRES, Chairman, Operations Group
National Transportation Safety Board

MICHAEL BULL, Operations Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

LARRY ROSS, Operations Inspector
FRA

RICHARD RUPP, Operations Rail Safety Inspector
Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission

STEVE AMMONS, System Road Foreman
CSX Transportation

ROD LOGAN
CSX Transportation

JARED CASSITY
SMART Transportation Division

RANDY FANNON, Investigator
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

MICHAEL LOWERY, Chair, Local 340
SMART Transportation Division
(On behalf of Mr. Main)

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I N T E R V I E W

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2 MR. TORRES: This is an NTSB informal interview. My name is
3 Tomas Torres, T-o-m-a-s, T-o-r-r-e-s. Today's date is August 3rd,
4 2017. We are at Cumberland, Maryland, CSXT Terminal, interviewing
5 the engineer in connection with an accident that occurred at
6 Hyndman, on August the 2nd, 2017.

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

10 A transcript or summary of the interview will go in the
11 public docket. The interviewee can have one representative of the
12 interviewee's choice.

13 Do you have somebody?

14 MR. MAIN: I have Mike here.

15 MR. TORRES: Now the representative may not testify for an
16 interviewee or representative comments should be limited. And
17 that's okay?

18 MR. MAIN: Okay. I understand.

19 MR. TORRES: He can't answer for you.

20 MR. MAIN: Right.

21 MR. TORRES: You do understand that the interview is being
22 recorded?

23 MR. MAIN: Yes, I do.

24 MR. TORRES: Okay. Please state your name and spell it.

25 MR. MAIN: Ronald Main, M-a-i-n.

1 MR. TORRES: And your first name?

2 MR. MAIN: Ronald, R-o-n-a-l-d.

3 MR. TORRES: Thank you.

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

6 MR. CASSITY: Jared Cassity, J-a-r-e-d, C-a-s-s-i-t-y. I'm a
7 representative of SMART Transportation Division.

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

9 MR. FANNON: Randy Fannon, R-a-n-d-y, F-a-n-n-o-n, BLET.

10 MR. LOWERY: Michael Lowery, M-i-c-h-a-e-l, L-o-w-e-r-y,
11 Local Chairman SMART Transportation 340.

12 MR. RUPP: Richard Rupp, R-i-c-h-a-r-d, R-u-p-p, OP rail
13 safety inspector, Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission.

14 MR. BULL: Mike Bull, M-i-k-e, B-u-l-l, OP inspector with the
15 FRA.

16 MR. LOGAN: Rod Logan, R-o-d, L-o-g-a-n, CSX.

17 INTERVIEW OF RONALD MAIN

18 BY MR. TORRES:

19 Q. Okay. If you can please tell us that day, you know, from the
20 day -- from the time you went on duty as your day progressed?

21 A. Okay. I'm assigned to the B248 helper or the line switcher
22 now, road switcher they call it, here in Cumberland. We go on
23 duty at 2359 at night. And that particular night, I came into
24 work, my conductor M.J. Bobb. And we got here, talked to the
25 dispatcher. Dispatcher said there's a van there waiting on us to

1 take us up to milepost 205.6, number 2 track, to relieve the 38831
2 crew. And so, we got in the van and took off up the hill and
3 relieved the crew up there. Now would you --

4 Q. Right. Right. Yeah.

5 A. Okay. So we got up there. We finally got up there and I got
6 a job briefing from Donnie, the engineer that was on the train.
7 And he told me that the air released twice on the train. They
8 were tying brakes down, 59 brakes, I believe, and that he had put
9 full service on the second time. So we were sitting there, and
10 when his conductor came back down, they got into the van, took
11 off. And then, of course, I contacted the BB dispatcher, let them
12 know that we were there on the train ready to do what we needed to
13 do.

14 So we had approximately 59 brakes, I think, is what was on
15 the train. The air was released and the BB dispatcher informed me
16 that the car department was on their way. And so, we waited for
17 the car department to get there. That was about 20 minutes after
18 we arrived there. And they went back and they worked on the
19 problem for about, I want to say, 35, 40 minutes. And I could
20 look at the flow on the screen and I saw it go down to 18 and then
21 zero. And at the time when I got on the engine, the air on the
22 engine on the rear was 82 pounds. Well, when they got done, the
23 air went up to about 86, 87.

24 So once they cleared up, I called the BB dispatcher again and
25 said, okay, we're ready to go, Alex. He said, all right, okay to

1 go. So I put first service on the train and then tried to pull it
2 out. It wouldn't pull out. So I called him back and I said, hey,
3 Alex, I'm going to have to knock some brakes off here in order to
4 get this train moving for me to get down the hill.

5 My conductor went back; he knocked off about 25 brakes out of
6 the 59 that was put on. All right. And he knocked those brakes
7 off and we got back on there. Called the BB dispatcher said,
8 okay, Alex, I think I can pull it out of here now; okay to go? He
9 said okay to go.

10 So we started pulling from where we were sitting at, 25.6. I
11 put first service on. The air went down to 81 pounds and I was
12 able to pull it. We went restricted speed down to Philson. Then
13 at Philson we started picking up speed a little bit. Then got
14 into, somewhere down there, the dynamics, because that's the way I
15 like to run. Not pulling on it, but just let the train just shove
16 me, because it was a big train, 18,600 tons. And I knew that it
17 was a key train. And anyway, we just went on, started going down
18 the hill. It was just like any other night. With the brakes on
19 back there and the minimum set, it just coasted down the hill and
20 I was in dynamics most of the time.

21 And then, of course, when we come around to Glencoe, milepost
22 202 down there, the train will start sitting down on you, but it
23 did real good. We were doing about 26 mile an hour on down
24 through there to FO. At FO, we started picking up a little bit
25 but we're still in dynamics. I had 21 brakes in dynamics with the

1 AH on the head end and two SD40s. The 4040 was the second engine
2 and 85-something was the third engine.

3 We got down to Maxwell, and before this I had asked my
4 conductor to make sure that he knew what speed we could go at. So
5 used to be, there used to be a chart in our air brake train
6 handling but they took it out. It's in our timetable now. And he
7 looked at it, and for 21 dynamic brakes and under 19,000 ton we
8 were good for track speed. So that's what we continued on down
9 the rail, probably about 26, 27 miles an hour.

10 Get down to Brackens, and at Brackens 194.4, there's like a
11 little flat area in there and it'll slow you down. All right. So
12 we -- you know, it came down. We got around it and I'm still in
13 dynamics and just kept going on down the hill to the steepest part
14 of hill, which is about 194 down to about 192. And anyway, the
15 train just -- it handled just like any other day that I was on any
16 other train, big train like that, just real nice and easy. It was
17 pushing me a little bit but the dynamics were holding it.

18 And got down to Hogback Road crossing, and before Hogback
19 Road crossing there's a speed change sign there for 40 miles an
20 hour. I always hit my counter, and it had 9800 feet on the
21 counter. I hit the counter, and at half that distance what I
22 usually do is I'll put the extra air on there to give me 10 pounds
23 to condition the brakes, which I did. And it was on the other
24 side of the bridge, the trestle bridge -- truss bridge is where I
25 put that air on. And when I put the air on, we are in the

1 crossings there or whatever, and that's when the train went into
2 emergency and I stopped just past the shanty there in Hyndman.
3 And, of course, I'm doing everything I can then at that point,
4 actuating the brakes; I'm stopping the train, announcing that we
5 are in emergency on number 2 track, 191.2 -- BF191.2.

6 Then I got right on to the dispatcher. I told the
7 dispatcher, hey -- I said, hey, Alex, we are in emergency down
8 here, conductor is getting on the ground. Well, the conductor got
9 on the ground. He started walking back. He says, we got fire
10 back here, Ron, we got cars on the ground. He told me that the
11 34th car is what we had on the end of the -- what we had was the
12 34th car. So I'm looking at the profile here and I see that
13 that's empties behind it and then there was two loaded asphalt
14 Class 9 tankers and there were two molten sulfur tankers, Class 9,
15 they were together there.

16 And so anyway, I got right on the phone with the BB
17 dispatcher. I said, Alex, you need to get emergency personnel out
18 here right now; we have cars on the ground. And then I just
19 prayed because I was afraid that I might have killed somebody.
20 And from that point we assisted the emergency people coming to the
21 train asking me what's back there, what did we have. I informed
22 them from where my conductor said that the break was that we had
23 two molten sulfur, two asphalt tanks back there, Class 9. And the
24 first thing that I could see beyond that was the 51st car, which
25 was the LP gas. And that's the one that concerned me.

1 And anyway, so I relayed that information to them and then
2 the emergency people were all around me. They said, look, we need
3 you to move your train because we can't get through the main
4 crossings here because we had it blocked.

5 All right. So I called the dispatcher, I said, Alex, I said
6 I need permission to move this train from where I'm sitting so
7 that we can clear these crossings up so the emergency personnel
8 can get to the site. So he gave me permission, at 0525 in the
9 morning, and we -- my conductor went back. He tied brakes on the
10 cars back there. We did a brake test on them to make sure that
11 they would hold. He cut it. We pulled down past the -- where we
12 were at, at 191.2. We pulled down to just where on the left side
13 there there's a like a Verizon little squared-in fenced area
14 there. We were right across from it, where we stopped and opened
15 up the crossings for the emergency personnel that were there.

16 And, you know, of course, I'm -- as we were coming through
17 and I put the 10 pounds on, the extra pounds of air, the 2 pounds,
18 it went in -- and I'm watching my air on the back. I got 81 on
19 the rear. And all of a sudden, it wasn't too long after that, we
20 felt this, and back, and that's when we went into emergency. And
21 from that point we waited until CSX personnel and other relief
22 personnel got down there.

23 Q. So when you moved forward, just for -- you know, so it's
24 recorded, you felt a shove, a run-in?

25 A. What I felt was -- you know, you sit there, it's like a tug

1 and then it's like this, you know. And I said, what's that, you
2 know? Then all of a sudden, we're in emergency. Because that new
3 -- the new engine that we had, 3338, the red light comes on inside
4 says you're in emergency. And that's when, you know, I went to
5 actuate the brakes and everything to bring the train to, what I
6 had, to a controlled stop and then alert anybody that might be
7 coming up the tracks that we were in emergency at 191.2, number 2
8 track. And then alert the BB dispatcher that I was in emergency,
9 conductor is getting on the ground.

10 Q. Okay. When you took charge of the train --

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. -- where on the grade was it? Like at the beginning, at the
13 very top?

14 A. No. It's -- the rear end probably was back up there around
15 207. And if you haven't been down the tracks, when you come off
16 of Manila there's a bunch of S-curves. And those S-curves are to
17 slow your train down till you get control of it and everything.
18 And then about -- when you come out past NA, then the track
19 straightens up. So I think that the rear of the train was
20 probably back in there at that first S-curve if you were going up
21 the hill. Okay. The rest of the train is straight down on the
22 grade going straight down to Philson.

23 Q. So that's pretty much top of the hill; is that what you're --

24 A. Well, it's not the top of the hill. It's probably -- the top
25 of the hill would be 209.0. This is -- you know, the rear was

1 about 2 miles down below that. But the problem is, is when you
2 get on that straightaway there, that's when your train will pick
3 up speed. That's when everything just comes at you in a straight
4 line.

5 And then, when you get down into the sag, which is past
6 Philson there, it's made to help slow your train down. It goes
7 down like this, up a little hill, and then it goes around a curve
8 into Glencoe signal there. And that will actually slow you down.
9 And once you get around to Glencoe, most times you're having to
10 get out of dynamics and you're having to get into power to pull
11 the train through the flats there until you get up to about FO,
12 which is about 199.- -- I want to say about 199.4 or whatever.

13 And then it'll start picking up on you again once you get
14 over Fairhope Road crossing. That's when you have to worry
15 because that's -- between there and the bottom of the hill at
16 Hogback Road crossing there, that's the steepest part of our
17 mountain and you just make sure you got control of the train at
18 that time. And, like I said, the train controlled just really,
19 really nice. It -- I didn't have any problems with it. I didn't
20 have to put any additional air on. I was controlling the speed
21 and it was just handling like any other big train that I had
22 brought down the tracks there.

23 Q. Okay. You say once they made -- your carman made the repair,
24 you saw that the air pressure went up?

25 A. Yes, I did.

1 Q. So what was the maximum pressure of the rear?

2 A. The maximum pressure, I believe, was about 87 pounds.

3 Q. Eighty-seven?

4 A. Yes, sir. And when I put the first service on, it went down
5 to 81 pounds and the flow was at -- it would go 18, zero; 18,
6 zero, because I kept watching it to make sure that I didn't have
7 something else back there still blowing. And, of course, the --
8 everything looked good. So, you know, after we knocked off the 25
9 brakes, or whatever, and we could start pulling the train, it just
10 went into a nice handling mode. I didn't have any trouble with it
11 after that.

12 Q. And initially you say when you were ready to depart, when you
13 pulled on it, you couldn't?

14 A. Right. I couldn't pull on it with all the brakes on it and
15 put minimum set on there, that it wouldn't pull. So I went ahead
16 and had the conductor -- gave him protection, called the
17 dispatcher, said, look; I said, we need to knock some brakes off
18 here so I can get this train moving down the hill. And he went
19 back and he knocked off 25 brakes. And I informed the BB
20 dispatcher that we would go down to Ellerslie, and that's where he
21 wanted us to take the train was to Ellerslie, and at that point we
22 would take the brakes off that were still left on the train.
23 We've done this for the 19 years I've been out here.

24 Q. Now do you know which ones he released?

25 A. He released the first 25 brakes, I guess, is what he

1 released.

2 Q. From behind the locomotive?

3 A. Yes, sir. That is correct.

4 Q. And then after the 25th car you still had handbrakes?

5 A. I still had handbrakes on whatever was left there. So if we
6 had 25 that he knocked off and we had 59, we had, what, 34 brakes
7 left on the train, and we were going to take those off when we got
8 down to Ellerslie. And like I said, the train handled very nicely
9 with minimum set on it. It just coasted down the hill. I didn't
10 have any problems with it. And, you know, the problem came when I
11 got into Hyndman itself, went over Hogback Road crossing, got
12 through the truss bridge there.

13 When I got by it, okay, I said, all right, I'm about halfway
14 past the 40 mile-an-hour speed change here. I went ahead and put
15 my extra air on, and that's when, shortly thereafter, we felt this
16 lunge and then we were in emergency.

17 Q. And the -- when you make an additional brake application,
18 what was that for?

19 A. That was for conditioning the brakes so that you have your 10
20 pounds on the brakes there, so that when -- what happens is --
21 normally what I do, and this is what I was going to do with this
22 train, is I make my 10 pound -- make sure I've got 10 pounds of
23 air on the train. And once I know that it has come down on the
24 rear of the train, then I just knock off the air and leave it in
25 full dynamics and let the train -- it's already bunched up, and

1 let it push me down the hill. And I don't have to go into power
2 or anything else. It'll just shove me right on down the hill,
3 right on down into the Bud Board or wherever we're going to go.

4 Q. So the additional brake applications is so you can get a good
5 release?

6 A. Yes, sir. That is for a good release. That is correct.

7 Q. Okay. So when you're coming down the hill, you mostly were
8 in dynamic brake or --

9 A. Dynamic and first service, and we had the other brakes,
10 handbrakes on those cars. That's what we had as our stopping
11 power for controlling the train as it was coming down the
12 mountain.

13 Q. So, in between there, you didn't pull the throttle or --

14 A. No, sir. I don't believe I pulled the throttle at all. I
15 believe that it was pretty much dynamic brakes and it was -- the
16 train was heavy enough that it was shoving me right on down, and I
17 was controlling it with the dynamic brakes I had available to me.

18 Q. Okay. Can you describe the location where it derailed?

19 A. The derailment, what I saw when I got -- when they took me
20 off the engines and stuff, and when I got a chance to see it, the
21 derailment, the LP gas or whatever tank was up near the bridge
22 there, the truss bridge.

23 And I -- you know, they had us out at that time, off the
24 engines -- after we tied them down, locked them up and everything,
25 the transportation officer or the trainmaster, he took me around

1 to where the other trainmaster was and all the other responders
2 were, and they gave us two sheets each and asked us to write down
3 what we had done, what had happened in, you know, the best terms
4 we could put down. And I was standing there and at that time,
5 that's when I saw the LP gas and it sounded like a rocket engine,
6 and you could see the flames shooting straight up. And I looked
7 around and there was probably 100 people or whatever standing out
8 there watching it. And I'm going, why are we standing here
9 watching this? If that thing blows up, we're all dead.

10 And so after that, we got in the van or the car with the
11 transportation officer and he took us to the hospital to do the
12 FRA testing, the toxicology. And we ended up going from there to
13 the Occupational Health over here by the Planet Fitness in order
14 to do the testing because nobody had ever done the testing. Then
15 we found out we didn't have the instructions inside the box that
16 me and my conductor was supposed to read. So they had to send
17 those from, I guess, Jacksonville because they were not in the box
18 at the time. And he wasn't sure either how he was supposed to do
19 this because he had never done it before.

20 So we spent about 2 -- I'd say about 2 hours or better we
21 spent at the Occupational Health there were they took our blood,
22 our urine, and then had to fill out, I think, five forms, he said,
23 and then he took us back to the office here and we marked off and
24 went home.

25 Q. So right there at the derailment, can you describe the

1 terrain, the track --

2 A. The terrain, as we're coming down from milepost 194, that's
3 where the steepest part of it is. It comes pretty much straight
4 down, 193. You got all these greasers -- there's like three or
5 four greasers down through there to protect the track, I guess.
6 They're really a pain in our rear end as we're trying to go up the
7 track because when it's raining and stuff, traction.

8 But, anyway, we came down. Then it goes straight. And then
9 as we come into where the change of speed sign is, it'll go around
10 -- let's see. It's goes around like this, and then it goes back
11 around this way, go over Hogback, go into the bridge there, and
12 then it comes back around this way to the crossings. So it's a
13 slight S-curve, I guess you could say, in there where it goes
14 down, around, and then back this way.

15 Q. So you're at the steepest grade?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. And it has S-curve left, then right-hand?

18 A. Yeah, then right-hand. That is correct. And that takes me
19 back in to the bridge and to the crossings there in Hyndman, their
20 two main road crossings.

21 Q. And is that where you planned to stop and release the brakes?

22 A. No, sir. No, sir, I did not. What I did is, when I get to
23 that point, I'm looking at the air on the rear of my train. I
24 know I've got to get my 10 pounds to condition the brakes. So I
25 put the additional air on the brakes at that time. And what I'm

1 looking at is I'm looking, okay, I still got probably 3,000 feet
2 of my train back up here on the steep part of the hill. And the
3 reason I do that is, once that air applies on the rear of the
4 train, then I can release that air, be in full dynamics. And that
5 train's already bunched up, and all it will do is, it'll just
6 shove me right down into wherever I'm going to.

7 Q. So right after you make the additional brake application --

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. -- it shortly went into emergency, or --

10 A. After I put the 2 pounds on or -- it was either 2 or 3
11 pounds, because I noticed that the equalizing reservoir on that
12 main engine 3338 had 91 on it. And so -- and I looked at the
13 brake handle over here, and on minimum set it had 84 on it. So
14 I'm looking at the rear of the train knowing that I've got 81
15 pounds on there and I'm trying to determine, okay, 2 or 3 pounds
16 that I need to put on this train in order to get the 10 pounds to
17 condition the brakes before I knock them off.

18 Q. So you wanted an additional 3 pounds on the rear? That's
19 what you're --

20 A. Well, either 2 or 3 pounds. Yes, sir. I'm looking at the
21 data that's in front of me there and trying to figure out what I
22 need in order to get that 10 pounds on the train before I release
23 it.

24 Q. Did you see it register before, or --

25 A. No, sir. It was 81 pounds when I was looking at it. I put

1 the additional air on there and it was several seconds after that
2 is when we felt the thud and then we went into emergency.

3 MR. TORRES: Okay. Thank you.

4 MR. AMMONS: Is it Ronald or Ron?

5 MR. MAIN: Ronald. Well, Ron is what they call me.

6 MR. AMMONS: Ron?

7 MR. MAIN: Yeah.

8 MR. AMMONS: Is that okay if I call you Ron?

9 MR. MAIN: Yes, Ron will be fine.

10 MR. AMMONS: Okay. Ron, Steve Ammons, CSX, just a few
11 questions.

12 BY MR. AMMONS:

13 Q. Can you speak about your engineer training, your length of
14 service as an engineer with CSX?

15 A. Yes, sir. I was hired April 27, 1998. I was marked up in
16 May of 1999 when we had the Conrail merger. And I had training,
17 well, on August -- I think it was August the 8th, or whatever, I
18 went into my engineer training school there in Cumberland. And
19 then once I got out of that, I trained with several engineers
20 until May of 1999, and that's when they marked us up because of
21 the delay that was requested by Norfolk Southern on the Conrail
22 merger.

23 So they marked me up in May of 1999, then I was an engineer
24 at that time. But all that other time I was with engineers,
25 training up and down this mountain, that had been out here for 30

1 years or more. And I learned a lot from those fellows on how to
2 handle a train coming down it, and I appreciate that very much.

3 But I have been an engineer ever since. I've never been a
4 conductor. I came in on a Saturday morning at 0100 on my trainman
5 training and they marked me up as a conductor, and Monday morning
6 I went to engineer school.

7 Q. Okay. So you answered my next question. So your training
8 was here at this location --

9 A. Yes, sir. That's correct.

10 Q. -- across the Keystone Subdivision?

11 A. Absolutely.

12 Q. Okay. And you're regular assigned to this pusher that you
13 were working?

14 A. The road switcher B248. Yeah, I can hold it when one of the
15 other senior engineers goes over to Rockwood, or whatever, or
16 they're on vacation. I'm the senior guy on the road here and I
17 usually try to get onto the switcher whenever I can. Right now,
18 I'm able to hold the switcher job because Steve Laser, who's the
19 senior engineer here, he's over in Rockwood working the work
20 train.

21 Q. So what do you do on this switcher/pusher/helper?

22 A. The switcher, the line road switcher, it's whatever the BB
23 dispatcher tells -- we move power. We go out here to the Bud
24 Board and get on trains that have been sitting out there for 24
25 hours, and we sit on them until the hump can take us in and then

1 we put that train away. We take and cut the power away. We do
2 whatever moves they request us to do, is what we do.

3 Then we come back in and we may have to go out and get
4 another train, bring it in. Or we may come in and they say get on
5 the power, if we have any power down the city track, you're going
6 to be shoving the Q015; you're going to shove the 389; you're
7 going to shove the 277. Usually those trains are the ones that
8 have to have a push up the hill because of their trailing tonnage
9 and stuff.

10 Q. Got you. So the first move of the night for you the other
11 night -- I guess it would have been the night of the 1st because
12 you went on the B2359.

13 A. Yeah, that was on the 1st. Yeah.

14 Q. But this was actually the morning of the 2nd with this crew?

15 A. That is correct, when we got to the train.

16 Q. So that was your first move. Did you consider that a typical
17 move --

18 A. Oh, yes, sir.

19 Q. -- to come out and get a train like that?

20 A. Oh, absolutely. That's -- I mean, the dispatcher tells us
21 where they need us and, you know, we go wherever they need us.
22 Yeah, sometimes they'll tell you to go over to the shop, get
23 power, take it to Rockwood sometimes for a train that's coming out
24 up there. But most time, it's either to get on a train that's
25 sitting at the Bud Board, the Hobos at Ellerslie there, or we get

1 on a power shove train up the hill. It's just whatever they need
2 at that time.

3 Q. And when you boarded the train you said a mechanical
4 department was just getting out there?

5 A. Oh, the car department, yes.

6 Q. The car department. And you noticed some changes in your
7 gauges there as they were working on the --

8 A. Absolutely.

9 Q. And you had a good briefing of what was going on back there?

10 A. Oh, absolutely. I was talking to the car department. We
11 spoke back and forth. He said, you make sure you let me know if
12 anybody is coming. But I know Alex gave him protection on number
13 1 track because he stopped the Q352 in Manila. He put the B291 in
14 the helper pocket at Manila. And the B291 was up there in case we
15 needed any assistance with this train because of the problems that
16 were occurring on it. And then we had the Q- -- let's see, I
17 believe it was the 277, and the Q015 behind them. They were
18 stopped down at Hyndman waiting for us to get fixed and for us to
19 clear up.

20 Q. You stated when the problem was fixed you noticed your air
21 flow go to zero.

22 A. It went from -- it went down from, you know, like 28, 30,
23 whatever, it went down to 18. And then it would go 18, zero, and
24 it pretty much would stay at zero. It would go 18 every now and
25 then, but then back to zero. So I knew the air flow was good. I

1 knew that they pretty much, I believe, took care of the problem.

2 Q. You believe the problem was fixed?

3 A. Yeah. It was the 159th car had a cracked air line, is what I
4 understand.

5 Q. Now you mentioned also that you saw the pressure -- once the
6 airflow went to zero, you saw the pressure go up to 87?

7 A. Yes, on the EOT. That is correct.

8 Q. That's what I was going to ask you. That was the EOT you
9 were speaking about?

10 A. That is correct. That's what I'm looking at. I'm looking at
11 the rear of the train. The EOT was working. It showed me from 82
12 to 87, so I knew that I had good air on the train then. I didn't
13 have the flow problem which I would have had if that pipe had not
14 been fixed. And, of course, we've all experienced that where the
15 air releases on those trains coming down the hill.

16 Q. So I was going to ask you about that. So you have
17 experienced that?

18 A. Oh, yes, sir, I have.

19 Q. Okay. You trained on how to handle that situation?

20 A. Yes, sir. As soon as we see it -- I mean, you have to be
21 attentive to what's in front of you there as you're going down the
22 hill. If you see that air -- all of a sudden your EOT beeps and
23 it goes from, say, 78 up to 81, you know the air released on your
24 train and you've got to be grabbing more air, 2 to 3 pounds, in
25 order to set that train back down; otherwise, it's going to take

1 off on you. And some of these big trains, they'll get you before
2 you know what's going on. Then you got to go to big air to --

3 Q. So going back to the EOT being an 87 psi on the rear a
4 10,000-foot train. Would you say that's pretty good?

5 A. Oh, absolutely. It's great.

6 Q. Okay. You talked about conditioning your brakes there. Were
7 you trained to do that?

8 A. Well, basically, yes. I mean, we had to have the 10 pounds
9 of air on our train before we knocked the air off, before we go
10 over the detector at Cooks Mill, because then you get sticking
11 brakes or you get brakes that may set off the detector. And also,
12 the car department here at Cumberland complained to the, I don't
13 know, road foreman or whatever, about the I-1 crews not -- or the
14 crews. I won't say I-1, but the crews not putting a good 10
15 pounds on the air and conditioning the brakes before knocking them
16 off, because they had problems with them when they inspected them
17 here in the terminal.

18 So we're all conditioned that we've got to have the 10 pounds
19 on. And basically, that's where you do it at, right there in
20 Hyndman there, you put the 10 pounds on. And then, as the 10
21 pounds gets on the rear of the train -- the way I deal with these
22 big heavy trains is I let the 10 pounds get on. I knock the air
23 off. I'm already in dynamics. So everything is bunched up, I
24 don't have to pull on the train. As the air releases, the train
25 will just shove me down the hill very easy.

1 Sometimes I even have to come out of dynamics to get up a
2 little speed. But it's the best way I have found in 19 years to
3 bring a big train like that down the hill. Because you start
4 pulling on it and the air hasn't released back there, then usually
5 you'll get a knuckle or you'll get something else back there.

6 Q. And just to clarify, earlier when Mr. Torres was asking you
7 some questions there to describe the events, when you initially
8 tried to leave from there you couldn't pull away from there?

9 A. That is correct

10 Q. So you knocked off or the conductor knocked off approximately
11 25 handbrakes from the head end. Then you started to pull away
12 from there. Did you use some throttle to put --

13 A. Yes, absolutely. I had to use throttle in order to get it
14 moving. And once I got it moving and we got it up to the
15 restricted speed of about 20 mile an hour when we got to Philson,
16 and then after I got by the clear signal at Philson, then I
17 just -- it just -- right there at Philson, once you get past that
18 signal there, 204 -- was it 204, whatever, it will take off on
19 you. But when you get past the signal and before you go into the
20 sag down there, it will push you and it will come at you real
21 good. Sometimes, you know, you'll get up faster than you want to,
22 but, you know, you --

23 Q. So you have to supplement with dynamic brakes?

24 A. Absolutely. Supplement with dynamic until I can get it into
25 the sag, I can get over the little hill and make my left-hand turn

1 going into Glencoe, and then it goes back to the right after I get
2 past the signal there to go down that little flat area there, and
3 that's usually where you have to be getting out of dynamics in
4 order to pull on the train, in order to get it through there. And
5 then once you get down to FO, then usually it'll start picking up
6 on you again. But in this case, it pretty much, it just shoved me
7 right on down there because of the size of the train.

8 Q. There's a couple places there coming down the mountain where
9 it sags and you have to go back up, where you may have to come
10 back out on the throttle?

11 A. That is correct. Yes, sir. That is correct.

12 Q. And you said this train, once the air problem was fixed, you
13 guys started moving, that it was doing real good, I think is what
14 you said?

15 A. It felt like any other normal train. I've brought hundreds
16 of trains like this down that hill, and it just felt good. I
17 mean, it just, you know, it was just coasting down the hill. I'm
18 in dynamics. I didn't feel any problems. I didn't feel any
19 problems until I put the extra 2 pounds on, and shortly thereafter
20 I felt the tug and then we went into emergency.

21 MR. AMMONS: All right. Thank you, Ron.

22 MR. MAIN: Uh-huh.

23 MR. CASSITY: Jared Cassity with SMART.

24 BY MR. CASSITY:

25 Q. We just got through speaking with the engineer of the Q38831

1 that you re-crewed. Sounds like you have a considerable bit more
2 experience than he does on this territory and as an engineer in
3 general.

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. So I guess I'm going to ask you: Can you describe what the
6 job briefing was like when you all turned the train over to each
7 other?

8 A. Yeah. When I got up on the engine, Donnie was there and --
9 Donnie Sager -- we started talking about the train because I
10 needed to know because I'm taking over down the middle of the hill
11 there, you know. And he told me, he said, yeah, Ron, he said,
12 I've had the air release on me twice. He said the second time I
13 put full service on and Beitzel, his conductor, had gone back and
14 put 59, I think 59 brakes on because of the number of cars. We
15 had to have 30 percent brakes, handbrakes on that side, that part
16 of the hill there. And so he went back and he put the brakes on.
17 He knocked the air off and it was up to 82 pounds. We still had
18 the flow back there because the problem hadn't been fixed with
19 159th car.

20 And so, he said it's the 159th car back there is where the
21 air is blowing out. That's where the car department went back and
22 that's where they fixed that problem. It took them about 40
23 minutes, I think. And then we waited till they cleared up on the
24 side of the road there to go home, is when I talked to the
25 dispatcher to say, hey, we're ready to go now.

1 Q. Did you -- I don't know if concern is the right word, but did
2 you pay any more particular attention or were you, for lack of a
3 better term, any more concerned with the size of the train? Did
4 it grab your attention with how big the train was, or --

5 A. No, sir. I mean, the trains that we have been getting lately
6 here, this is normal. There are bigger trains than this. I just
7 got a 352 down here at the Bud Board the other day that was 11,600
8 feet, I think. It was 19- or 20,000 ton that we took into the
9 yard that had been sitting out there for a day.

10 So, no, it -- I mean, I just go out there and I look at my
11 profile. I look at -- you know, if there's somebody to talk to, I
12 look at any notes that they may have left and see what I have.
13 And then, you know, I'm just used to running trains. I just --
14 that's what I do.

15 Q. Yes. Looks like you've done a bunch of them. You keep
16 referring to it as a big train. Has the common occurrence or has
17 the occurrence of big trains become more common here recently? I
18 mean, obviously, it's happened in the past --

19 A. Well, I tell you, before recent management changes and stuff,
20 I think the biggest train I had was 169 cars and it was a 394 and
21 it was like 19,000 -- it was 18,000 ton. But the trains we're
22 getting now I do believe are bigger, that they're more tonnage,
23 they're longer. I know that they've had -- Donnie Sager, I know
24 he had one train one night that was 209 cars, and I mean, that's a
25 large train.

1 But the thing is, if you have a good train line and you have
2 good power, you can come over the hill, put minimum set on, and it
3 will drift down the hill without any trouble.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. And I've had many of those, where you just drift down the
6 hill and you never hardly have to get into power. You just barely
7 have to get into dynamics, because the train's so big and you have
8 so many brakes. It's when you have train line problems where you
9 have kickers in the train that big, you put the air on and it
10 kicks, then you're -- you know, it happens in the Sand Patch
11 Tunnel up there sometimes. Now you got to go back in the tunnel,
12 you got to put brakes on; you got a helper on the rear, you got to
13 be yelling at the helper.

14 PTC has somewhat made it a little bit more difficult because
15 -- I've had this problem with a Q016 that was 11,600 feet coming
16 into Philson. Well, first of all, I had PTC put me in
17 suppression, which put me into emergency at Indian Creek because
18 it lost a signal. I called the PTC desk, I go, you know, what's
19 the weather like there? And then I've had the one, that same
20 train, we came into Philson and, again, green signal; it's green
21 on the PTC. I lost the signal, suppression, went into emergency.

22 But the trains are bigger. They're longer. But as long as
23 you've got quality train line, as long as you got quality power up
24 there with dynamics it's really not too much of a problem.

25 Q. Did you do a sitting release when the car department was

1 sent out there?

2 A. The air was already released when the car department was
3 there. We had the 59 brakes on there, it was sitting still.

4 Q. When you put first service on or minimum reduction, you
5 didn't have any kicker issues?

6 A. No. No. When I put first service on it went down to 81
7 pounds. After I saw it go up to 87 and I saw the air flow go down
8 to zero, then I knew I was okay and -- but I couldn't pull it out
9 of there with all the handbrakes on it. So that's why I had my
10 conductor go back and knock off 25 handbrakes and then we were
11 able to pull it out of there.

12 Q. Okay. Sounds like when you're operating on that mountain you
13 prefer to keep it bunched up. Did you feel like you stretched
14 them out at any time and --

15 A. Well, any time you go into power, that's when you run into
16 trouble, especially with the autorack trains. They get knuckles.
17 They get draw bars. And it's usually because somebody knocked the
18 air off thinking the 10 pounds is on the rear and you got 11,000
19 feet of train, and they start pulling on it on the head end, and
20 next thing you know they're in emergency. They got knuckles or
21 they got draw bars. And what I've learned through my experience
22 out here is just leave the dynamics on, full dynamics, put your 10
23 pounds of air on, knock the air off and just let it drift down the
24 hill.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. It'll shove you down the hill. You don't have to pull on it.
2 And that way you don't have those problems.

3 Q. Now when you made that last reduction right there before it
4 went into emergency, your 2- to 3-pound reduction, I know from an
5 engineer's standpoint -- and this can be kind of tricky, but did
6 you feel like the air kicked on the head end or did it feel like
7 it was more towards the rear end?

8 A. No. I didn't feel the air kicked at all. What I felt was,
9 is that -- I could hear the air going through. I put the air on
10 and I'm watching the 81 pounds on the rear and I'm waiting for it
11 to come down. What I felt was, is as we are going, all of a
12 sudden, I felt a yank and then we came back, and then we were in
13 emergency.

14 Q. Did you pay attention if it was the brake pipe that had zero
15 first or the EOT --

16 A. No, I didn't. It was 81 pounds when I looked at it, when I
17 put the air on.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. So I know it wasn't from the head end. I know that it was
20 something behind me that was like a yank and then we -- and then
21 it went into emergency on the head end.

22 Q. And then the car department, when they fixed that car, did
23 they happen to tell you exactly what they did other than they just
24 corrected the situation?

25 A. I don't know exactly what they did. I know that the -- there

1 was a helper crew, the B247 helper crew. They stopped and looked
2 at the car. They said it had a cracked air line on it. And so,
3 whatever they did back there, they fixed the cracked air line. I
4 don't know if they have a bandage-type thing that they put on it
5 or they had to replace the pipe. I don't know. They didn't go
6 into details.

7 MR. CASSITY: I think I'm good. I appreciate it.

8 MR. MAIN: Yes, sir.

9 MR. ROSS: Larry Ross, FRA.

10 BY MR. ROSS:

11 Q. When you left the top of the hill, with a train that has been
12 stopped on a mountain like that, do you normally leave the
13 handbrakes on some of the cars?

14 A. Yes, sir. We've done that since I've been out here. Many of
15 times, if we are having trouble with the air, we put handbrakes on
16 and we leave those handbrakes on in case there is a problem
17 further down the hill, then at least we got those brakes there to
18 help us stop the train. And then what we normally do is we go
19 down to either Cooks Mill or we'll go down to Ellerslie, and then
20 we'll knock those brakes off and then we'll continue our trip.

21 Q. Is there much difference in the train handling -- you said
22 your conductor took about 25 brakes off and there were probably 59
23 on, at least that's the number we have been hearing.

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Is there any substantial difference in the train handling or

1 the way you would handle the train or this train felt from one
2 without it, or --

3 A. No, sir. I handled this train like I would handle it if
4 there weren't any brakes on it and I just had my -- the air brakes
5 on it from the head end. If I had 81 pounds on there, that's the
6 way I would've handled it.

7 I didn't really notice anything back there, you know, coming
8 down the hill with those brakes being on there. And usually you
9 don't with a train that heavy. But it helped stop the train from
10 getting out of control and me controlling it up there in the head
11 end, because really, I only had 21 dynamic brakes and I had plenty
12 -- I mean that AH was -- you know, if I had two of those that'd
13 been real nice. But those SD40s, they did real good and I was
14 able to control the train very comfortably.

15 Q. Okay. When you got there the air was released on the train?

16 A. Yes, sir. That is correct. They had just put the 59 brakes
17 on.

18 Q. Okay. What -- do you know what time it was you went out of
19 there? Just -- if you don't remember that's fine.

20 A. It -- I'm trying to think about what time. It was probably
21 after about 3:30 in the morning or something like that, 3:40 in
22 the morning. It was probably when, after he went up there and
23 knocked off the 25 brakes and he came back up to the head end and
24 we just -- we took off from there.

25 Q. Okay. And how long were you up there? What time do you --

1 A. Let's see, we left here about 12:15, 12:20 on the van. You
2 have to go up 160 and you got to take this dirt road way back into
3 Neverland to get to it. And just fortunately my conductor knew
4 where that was at and he'd been up there before. And we finally
5 got there probably about -- I want to say, probably an hour or an
6 hour and 15 minutes after we left we got to the train. And that's
7 when we had our job briefing and that's when the -- Conductor
8 Beitzel was coming back on board after having put the brakes on
9 the train.

10 Q. Okay. And you were called at, what, around midnight?

11 A. Well, we were called for midnight and it was probably 0015,
12 0020 in the morning when we got the van and took off.

13 Q. Okay. Now, after you were ready to go up there, did you put
14 the air on while he was knocking the brakes off or before?

15 A. No. I had the -- I had the air on. I had the minimum set
16 on. And then he went back and knocked off 25 brakes.

17 Q. So you were going to -- what you were going to do, because
18 the train was bunched, you were going to put the air on, pull it
19 out with the air brakes on?

20 A. Yes. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Absolutely. You don't want to knock the air off --

23 Q. And you left them on -- and you left -- yeah, I understand.
24 And so, then when he knocked them off, he just come back and then
25 away you went?

1 A. Yes, sir. Once he got back on board, I contacted the BB
2 dispatcher and I let Alex know that, okay, we got the brakes off;
3 I'm ready to go. He says, come on down. And so, we started
4 pulling and the train started moving with the first set on and the
5 other brakes that were still on the cars, the handbrakes on the
6 cars, and we started down the hill.

7 Q. And you said you probably left 3:30, 3:40?

8 A. Yes, sir. Probably, I would say around that time. I mean, I
9 wasn't paying really attention to what time it was in the morning,
10 but I know it had to be about that time because we had to wait on
11 the car department. It took them about 40 minutes to repair the
12 car. And then my conductor had to walk back and knock off 25
13 brakes.

14 Q. How long you think it took him to knock off the brakes?

15 A. Probably about 25, 30 minutes at the most.

16 Q. Okay. Do you have any loss of com with your ETD?

17 A. No, sir. That was -- the EOT and the head end, it was good
18 all the way. I never had -- I don't remember ever having the
19 front rear or rear front "no com." It was always 81 pounds on the
20 back there, you know, and going down the hill. Because one of the
21 things I do watch is to make sure that, hey, I'm not losing
22 communication or whatever. And then, of course, you have the 30
23 mile-an-hour rule if you do have front rear "no com."

24 And so, anyway, I'm watching my screens as closely as I can.
25 Trip Optimizer is on, but, again, you can't use it there. It has

1 the gray bars in there and stuff, and I'm not sure I'd want to use
2 Trip Optimizer in there. I prefer to run the train myself and
3 handle it because of my past experience up there.

4 Q. And no active PTC?

5 A. No, sir. The PTC was out until 5 August. It was in our
6 orders. And, again, I think maybe that was a blessing too.

7 Q. It was broke up?

8 A. Well, yeah, because I've had trouble with the PTC out here
9 and I keep thinking that one of these days it's going to put a
10 train on the ground. Because when the signal is lost you have
11 suppression right now. You've got a two-unit helper shoving you
12 from behind, you're trying to do what you have to do up in the
13 front there to get the brakes off, you're trying to yell at the
14 guy in the back quit shoving, because he won't see that air -- if
15 it's 10,000, 11,000 feet, he's not going to see the air until he
16 shoves right into you.

17 And I had a 37-car ballast train the other day I shoved on
18 this 248, 37 cars, and I was in the tunnel and, all of a sudden,
19 I'm -- and, of course, I'm back there on the helper watching my
20 air on the brake pipe. And all of a sudden, I seen that air going
21 down and we're still in the tunnel. And I know exactly what
22 happened; he had a problem with the PTC on the head end. And we
23 sat in there for 5 or 6 minutes until I saw the air coming back
24 up, and then I started shoving again. Once I got outside, he
25 said, yeah, Ron, PTC, it had put me in suppression; it said defect

1 noted or something. And so we're sitting back there in the tunnel
2 with 37 cars, you know, we can't even get out of the tunnel before
3 it goes into suppression. And it occurs a lot out here.

4 If you hit a greaser with a wheel, which happened on me on
5 the Q015 at Glencoe on a rainy night, and it went from 25 to 31
6 mile an hour in suppression right now. And my conductor or my
7 helper at that time, Al Telyer (ph.), I felt him run into me. And
8 I go, oh, my God; thank God, he ain't got two units, otherwise
9 we'd been on the ground.

10 Q. Okay. No, I just was curious was this working for the setup
11 for the train, the Trip Optimizer?

12 A. Yeah, the Trip Optimizer was set up. And, of course, you
13 can't use it up on the mountain there. You can't use it till you
14 really get down past Hyndman there. It'll come back in, and then
15 you can go back to the Trip Optimizer and let it run the train if
16 you want.

17 Q. Is it starting to come back in yet at Hyndman or does it wait
18 until the whole train is on the --

19 A. No, sir. You have to wait till the head end gets down there
20 past Hyndman and then, all of a sudden, it'll start -- you'll see
21 it come back. It says Trip Optimizer available, and then you just
22 -- if you want to go to it, you hit the button and let it run the
23 train.

24 Q. So it didn't even -- you wasn't even close --

25 A. No, sir. We were in the gray area the whole time.

1 Q. Just a couple other quick questions. And you gave us a
2 little bit about your background. At least for now, this is a
3 regular job that you're on?

4 A. Yes, sir. For right now it is. I worked last night. Of
5 course, there wasn't much to do, but we were here. And because
6 it's assigned job, 2359, you got the 1800 helper, you got the 0600
7 helper, the 1200 helper. And they're called road switchers now.
8 And anyway, we just report for the time of duty that we are
9 assigned to. And it's for a week at a time, and that's what I've
10 been on the last 2 weeks, is this 2359 helper, the B248.

11 Q. You have assigned off days?

12 A. No, sir. Usually we work 6 days and then get off 2 because
13 of the FRA rules. Now there -- I take it back. There is a Friday
14 off day. A lot of times the guys will just work through that so
15 they can get the 6 days and get 2 days off.

16 Q. And I'm going to ask you just a real -- couple quick
17 questions about your sleep cycles and stuff like that --

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. -- for -- we always, any time there's a major accident, we do
20 a sleep study and see if --

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. A sleep -- we keep changing the name. We used to call it a
23 fatigue analysis study.

24 A. Right.

25 Q. But anyway, that's -- do you have normal sleeping times?

1 A. Well, it's like this. With this 2359, and usually we work 12
2 hours and sometimes over 12 hours before we get in to mark off the
3 time card. I go home immediately. I eat something and I just lay
4 down. I know that I've got to get my rest because this is about
5 the most difficult shift, is that 2359, the 1200.

6 Now I do have a CPAP machine. I do have sleep apnea so I
7 sleep with a CPAP machine, and my wife and everybody knows to
8 leave me alone when I go home because I need to get my rest so
9 that I'm ready and available when I come in at night.

10 Q. Now, do you sleep good?

11 A. Yes, sir. Most time I sleep very good.

12 Q. What's a good sleep or a bad sleep for you?

13 A. About 6, 7 hours and I'm good. And then I'll usually get up,
14 go eat some dinner, and then just go back lay down for another
15 hour and a half or two. And then get back up, get a shower and
16 come to work.

17 Q. Take an hour, hour and a half nap?

18 A. Yes. That is correct.

19 Q. You're a confirmed napper?

20 A. Oh, absolutely. Got to.

21 Q. Aging does something like that.

22 A. Well, I'm going to be 65 next month, so, yeah, it does take a
23 little bit.

24 Q. Yeah. Do you take any prescription medications?

25 A. Yes, I do. I have Invokana. I have Metformin because I have

1 diabetes 2 since I've been out here. Glyburide -- let's see --
2 Lisinopril and -- but those are my medications I usually take.

3 Q. You take any over-the-counter stuff?

4 A. Yes, sir, I do. I take Aleve most of the time, because I was
5 in a bad car accident in 2006 with my dad. It crushed my right
6 knee, so I have a problem with arthritis in my knees. And if I
7 stand up on my legs for a very long time, it really gives me pain.
8 But I usually take Aleve. Now, I do have hydrocodone that my
9 doctor has prescribed for me, but I don't take that very often. I
10 try to stay off my legs as much as I can when I'm not working.

11 MR. ROSS: Well, that's all I have for now.

12 MR. MAIN: Okay.

13 MR. ROSS: Thank you.

14 MR. MAIN: Yes, sir.

15 MR. FANNON: Ron, Randy Fannon.

16 BY MR. FANNON:

17 Q. Just a couple of questions. Being last in line everybody
18 bets me to them.

19 A. Okay.

20 Q. Is it normal when you -- in your 19 years, I'm going to
21 assume that you've had to have trains with the handbrakes on the
22 side of that mountain.

23 A. Oh, yes, sir. I've had to have them up in Manila before.
24 Grain trains and stuff, you just leave them on and you get --
25 that's when we didn't have this nice power we have today, these

1 AHs and these nice ACs. We had SD40s and stuff. And you wanted
2 to leave those brakes on because otherwise you're grabbing more
3 air than what you want, and the dynamics and stuff are just not
4 like they are today.

5 Q. I think you said that your conductor released the head 25?

6 A. Yeah, the head 25 is what -- it was either 24 or 25 brakes
7 that he released.

8 Q. Is that normal to release them on the head end?

9 A. Well, yeah -- well, he was having to walk back up the
10 mountain there, and he got up there and he's -- he's a little bit
11 out of shape, and I didn't want -- I thought about his safety back
12 there. He knocked off 25, and I knew that would be enough for me
13 to get the train moving.

14 Q. Okay. Now let's go to the -- let's come down to the bottom
15 of the hill. You spoke that you have lunge.

16 A. Yes, I did. Once I put the 2 pounds on, it was a couple
17 seconds after that we felt that lunge and then that's when we went
18 into emergency.

19 Q. Okay. Well, that point there, let's concentrate a second.
20 When you -- you said it was just a couple of seconds -- from the
21 time you finished the 10 pounds, it was just a couple seconds --

22 A. It was when I put the air on, and it was a couple seconds
23 after that is when I felt the lunge and then we went into
24 emergency.

25 Q. Did you happen to think -- you may have to think about this.

1 But did you happen to feel at any point like a drag just prior to
2 that lunge?

3 A. No, not really. I mean, it was -- you know, it was just -- I
4 don't remember that. I just remember that when I put the air on,
5 it was a couple seconds after that and it felt -- the lunge and
6 then back, and then we were in emergency.

7 Q. Now that, the lunge that you got there is different than --

8 A. Oh, absolutely.

9 Q. -- what would be a run-in from the rear of the train?

10 A. Oh, absolutely. I mean, it was -- when I feel something like
11 that, usually it's a draw bar or something. And I, in my 19
12 years, I only got one and that was my first year.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And it was autoracks and I learned my lesson about that.

15 MR. FANNON: You've answered all my questions. Thank you.

16 MR. MAIN: Yes, sir.

17 MR. TORRES: Mike?

18 MR. LOWERY: No, sir. No, questions. Thank you.

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

20 BY MR. TORRES:

21 Q. You said a good train requires a good train line, brake line?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Good power?

24 A. Good power, good train line, it helps immensely. When you're
25 fighting the train because you have bad air, you have bad

1 dynamics, bad power or you have this situation, we're releasing --
2 I got a train down one time that was a key train, got it halfway
3 down the mountain, got it into the flats between Glencoe and Falls
4 Cut Tunnel, and the air released on me twice. And I put full
5 service on it and we tied brakes down, and we were on the law at
6 that time, because I was getting ready to go into the steepest
7 grade. So I've had situations and you learn from your experiences
8 out there, you know, what you need to do.

9 Q. How about train makeup?

10 A. Train makeup, yes, sir. I always look at train makeup. Now,
11 you know, I don't have any say in it, but I do look at it. I look
12 at the train, the cars, the way they are. There was a lot of
13 empties up in the front of this train. Then there was a lot of
14 loads, hazmat loads behind it and loaded tank cars and stuff.
15 And, yes, I do look at that, you know, as part of my train
16 handling when I'm coming down the hill, what kind of problems I
17 might have.

18 Q. Did the train makeup concern you or didn't?

19 A. Yes, sir. It sort of did concern me, because we did have a
20 lot of -- we had empties, I think 28 empties in the front there,
21 and then we had these loaded tank cars and stuff behind it and
22 stuff. And we had about 9800 feet of train, and you can see --
23 and I went back and -- like right here. And then you see all
24 these loads behind it. Yeah, that concerned me because these cars
25 are going to sit down. When you put the air on them, they're

1 going to sit down. The other ones behind it, they don't so much
2 sit down, they will shove those cars. So, yes, sir, I do look at
3 that and keep that I mind when I'm trying to handle a train down
4 the road.

5 Q. And what's the train makeup requirements; do you know?

6 A. Well, the biggest thing is that we don't have any hazmat next
7 to the engines and that we don't have -- if we have a helper on
8 the back, that we don't have any hazmat within six cars of the
9 rear that would be other than Class 9, that's exempt from that.

10 And that's basically about all that I look at, is the front
11 and the rear, to make sure I don't have any hazmat right next to
12 the engines, don't have any hazmat on the rear where I have to get
13 a helper, because sometimes they have to remove those or they have
14 to add buffer cars.

15 Q. But was there any requirements with loads and empties, you
16 know, how it's built?

17 A. No, sir. I don't know of any requirements because, you know,
18 that's out of my job description. I just get on them and I run
19 them. I look at what they're made up of and then I go, okay, this
20 is what I need to do; I got good power, you know, I can handle
21 this.

22 And then, of course, I'm feeling the train as I'm going down
23 the mountain. If I feel something that doesn't feel good, then,
24 you know -- or if I start slowing down for some reason, hey, I'm
25 going to stop and then, you know, we're going to find out what's

1 going on. And that's why I say I'm monitoring my -- the
2 information I have in front of me on the screen, my flow, the rear
3 of my train. I'm looking at the speed. I'm looking at, hey, how
4 much -- all of a sudden, I had to go into my dynamics from 5 to 8,
5 why did I have to do that? Did the air release on the rear? You
6 know, these are the things that I'm always looking at to make my
7 adjustments to what I need to do.

8 Q. So you're not aware of any rule, air brake rule, operating
9 rule, that addresses train makeup?

10 A. The air brake rule, no, sir, not that I know or. I mean, not
11 -- you know, as long as I've got, you know, 75 pounds on the rear
12 of the train, which is what my timetable says that I have to have
13 coming over the top of the mountain, and other than that, you
14 know, I just look at -- make sure I don't have any cars that
15 shouldn't be where they are supposed to be. Like, long flats and
16 stuff like that, I've had problems with that where we've had to
17 move them out and switch them because they were in the wrong
18 position. So we do look at the equipment handling rules and about
19 long cars and that sort of stuff.

20 Q. Anything that addresses loads and empties?

21 A. No, sir. I'm trying to think about loads and empties. Not
22 that I know of that, you know, that -- well, let me back up.

23 New rule says I can have 30 empties, 5 loads behind it; 30
24 empties, 5 loads behind it. I cannot have 6 loads behind 30
25 empties. If that's what you're asking me, yes, sir. There is the

1 rule that has changed that says that I can have 30 empties with 5
2 loads behind it. But then if I have a break up there, with 30
3 loads or, you know, empties, and then 30 -- you know, I can have
4 that issue, I can -- but it's 30 empties that I have to worry
5 about and look at the loads behind them to see if I meet the
6 requirement of bringing that train out.

7 Q. So, to be legal, it would have to be like 35 -- I mean, 30
8 and 5?

9 A. No, it would have to be 30 and 5, and then it could be an
10 empty car, and it could be 10 loads; it could be 20 empties and it
11 could be 5 loads, and it would be okay. It's the 30 that we have
12 to concern ourselves with, that we cannot have 6 loads behind 30
13 cars, directly behind them. And that came out this year with the
14 rule changes and stuff.

15 Q. So on this particular train, how was it built from the head
16 end?

17 A. Yes, sir. Well, I looked at it. I think there was like
18 20 -- because I looked at this right here to see how many empties
19 I had with these loads behind it, and it met the requirements for
20 what our rules say.

21 Q. Oh, so how many empties did you have behind the locomotive?

22 A. The locomotive I had, what, eight cars there that were
23 empties.

24 Q. And then after that?

25 A. Then I had the loaded hazmat, and you got another hazmat,

1 then you have an empty to break that up. But here's the block
2 that I was interested in because I wanted to make sure there was
3 no more than 30 in there. And I did look at this before I came
4 down the hill. And I saw that we only had, I think, 25 or
5 whatever, and then we had the loads behind it, which was allowed
6 by my company.

7 Q. So the first cars were loads?

8 A. No, sir. The first cars were empties.

9 Q. How many empties?

10 A. We had 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

11 Q. And then you had how many loads?

12 A. Well, then I had one, one load -- we have two loads behind
13 it. So we had eight and two loads. Then we have an empty, we
14 have three loads. And then after that, we have I think it's 25
15 empties, and then we have loads behind it. They go pretty much
16 till we get to 93, and then we have like 4 or 5 loads there -- or
17 4 or 5 empties there, and loads behind it.

18 But, yes, I do look at the profile, sir, and make sure that
19 we are in compliance with the empties, that you don't have more
20 than 30 with more than 6 loads behind it.

21 MR. TORRES: Okay. Thank you.

22 MR. MAIN: Yes, sir.

23 MR. AMMONS: Ron, thank you so so much for your patience with
24 these questions and everything.

25 MR. MAIN: No, no, I'm fine with that. I'll tell you, you

1 know, like I said, I want to know what happened because, in 19½
2 years, this is the first time I've had a derailment.

3 MR. AMMONS: Yes, sir. All right. So just, I think, two
4 quick questions. They sort of go together.

5 BY MR. AMMONS:

6 Q. In your 19 years of experience, do you feel like you've got
7 pretty good feel for the train, if the slack is bunched or
8 stretched?

9 A. Oh, absolutely. Yeah, I'm always -- you sit in that seat
10 long enough, you feel that train and you know -- you can tell when
11 there's a problem.

12 And I didn't feel any problems with this train. It just --
13 it was just like any other big train that I've taken down the
14 hill. And, you know, minimum set and the handbrakes on it and
15 doing the dynamics, it just -- it was just coasting right on down
16 the hill till I got down there and I put the extra air on there,
17 and then it was a couple seconds after that, that's when I felt
18 the tug and then we went into emergency.

19 Q. Okay. So you feel like you got a good feel for where your
20 slack's at in the train?

21 A. Oh, yes, sir. Because you'll feel the slack. I mean, you'll
22 feel it coming in on you. And I didn't feel that and I was in
23 dynamics the whole time, so the train, I know, was bunched up
24 behind me.

25 Q. That's the second part of my question. So what was the state

1 of your slack?

2 A. The state of my slack? It was bunched. Everything was
3 bunched up against me.

4 MR. AMMONS: Thank you.

5 MR. TORRES: Okay.

6 MR. CASSITY: Jared Cassity with SMART.

7 BY MR. CASSITY:

8 Q. If you don't care, I'm going to ask you about that work order
9 again, the train profile. Mr. Torres was asking you quite a bit
10 about the empties and the loads.

11 A. Right, right. And I didn't understand at first what he
12 wanted, but --

13 Q. Oh, that's okay. Looking at the work order, that big block
14 of empties you were concerned with, where did it end at?

15 A. It ends at number 42. The break behind our train when we
16 went into emergency was the 34th car, was the last car we had with
17 us.

18 Q. Can you -- do you have the tonnage record? Can you tell me
19 what the tonnage was right there on that car?

20 A. On the last car?

21 Q. On the -- of the empty block that you were concerned about?

22 A. Well, let's see, you'd have to look at -- yeah, it's the
23 tonnage --

24 Q. If it takes a lot of math, don't worry about it.

25 A. Yeah, yeah. Well, you got 1880 -- well, let's see, 1883, but

1 you'd have to subtract above the 900. So probably had about
2 1,000, probably, tons.

3 Q. You think about 1,000 tons?

4 A. Yes, sir. That's about right.

5 Q. The train weighed 18,000 tons?

6 A. Yeah, that's right.

7 Q. So the first 40 some cars basically --

8 A. The empties -- I didn't like the way this train was built.
9 That's my personal opinion, but that's not my responsibility. My
10 responsibility is that we don't have 30 empties and 6 loads behind
11 it, and that we don't have any hazmat up against the engines, that
12 they had to be in their place, and on the rear if we had a helper.
13 So, you know, when I looked at it, it -- you know, there's nothing
14 I can do about it. It's just the way the train was built.

15 Q. You said a little bit about slack action and you said
16 something here about it too. Do you care to just break down slack
17 action in a generic term for me, just what it is as far as being
18 stretched or bunched up?

19 A. Well, slack -- you know, when you got it stretched out --
20 usually if you're pulling on it and you're in number 8 throttle,
21 things are pretty much stretched out back there if you've got
22 minimum set on it and you're just trying to get the thing down
23 between Glencoe and Falls Cut. Once you get over the hill there
24 at Fairhope Road crossing and you start down, then that train
25 starts coming at you. And you can feel it, it just -- you know,

1 you can feel it coming into you, bumping into you. Then, of
2 course, you're going into dynamics now because speed's picking up.
3 So you know you've got to get out of power, you've got to go back
4 to your dynamics and get ready for it. And then you just ease
5 into your dynamics, and you can feel those cars coming in on you,
6 the slack coming in and bunching back up to your train.

7 Q. So, if you have a solid unit train and it's an empty train,
8 do those empty cars still bunch up a little bit?

9 A. I'm not sure what --

10 Q. Let me ask it this way. An empty train versus a loaded
11 train, does -- the bunching up action, does it --

12 A. Oh, yeah, you can feel the empty cars. If you've got like an
13 empty coal hopper and you're going into dynamics, you can feel
14 those things coming in on you. But you don't have that much
15 movement in the draw bars as you do like the multi-levels.

16 Q. Okay. Do the loads bunch harder, I guess really is what I
17 want to ask?

18 A. Yes, they do.

19 Q. So on a train built like this, when you have the air on and
20 the handbrakes are going, you have all that weight, in essence,
21 pushing on those empty cars, correct?

22 A. Yeah. All these tank cars back here that are hazmat, those,
23 to me, they push the worst. I mean, they're heavy and you can
24 feel them coming into you. If you don't have it bunched up and
25 then you are bunching it up, you can feel them things hit you in

1 the back as you're going down the hill, as you're in dynamics.

2 Q. Okay. So you were bunched and all the force was coming in
3 towards the locomotive, for lack of a better term --

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. -- and then you put 2, 3 more pounds on there to get your
6 first service -- not your full service, you know your first
7 service.

8 A. Ten pounds.

9 Q. So you have your 10 pounds to release it, but that would have
10 actually -- even though they're bunched up, that would have
11 increased the force just a little bit more, correct?

12 A. Yes, it would.

13 Q. I'm going to switch gears here completely. Maintenance on
14 the track, have you all had any issues with temporary speed
15 restrictions or anything here recently?

16 A. I'm trying to think. I know that they -- several months ago
17 they did a lot of -- they were doing a lot of work up there and
18 stuff, but -- there were temporary speed restrictions or whatever,
19 but I don't remember anything of a serious nature or whatever.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. You know, they were just out there with their machines
22 cleaning up the track and stuff and --

23 Q. You don't recall any excess speed restrictions or anything of
24 that sort?

25 A. No, no. I do not.

1 MR. CASSITY: Okay. I don't have anything else. Thank you.

2 MR. BULL: Can I ask a question? Mike Bull.

3 BY MR. BULL:

4 Q. I'm still a little confused on your reduction. You did a
5 first service when you first started out.

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Or you took off with a first service. Then you made another
8 one to get to 10 pounds?

9 A. Yeah. Once I get down into Hyndman, there's -- where the 40
10 mile-an-hour speed starts picking up, back there at 192.7 or
11 whatever, at that point I hit my counter. I wait till half the
12 train gets by it. Then I put on my other 2 pounds or whatever,
13 and I'm dynamics the whole time. I put in my other 2 pounds to
14 get my 10 pounds. Once I know the 10 pounds is going on the rear
15 of the train, because I'm watching the rear of the train on the
16 EOT -- once I know that that's occurred, then I will knock the air
17 off and just keep it in dynamics, and it's all bunched up and it
18 will just push me right on down the hill.

19 Q. So you made two reductions?

20 A. Yes, sir. One at the top of the hill, I made the first --
21 you have to have air on the train when you come over the mountain.

22 Q. And did your speed increase at all after you made any of the
23 reductions or did it immediately decrease?

24 A. No, the train was -- we were doing about 30 mile -- we were
25 doing 30 mile an hour, if I'm not mistaken, and I made the 2

1 pounds and it just kept, you know, at 30 mile an hour. And then
2 all of a sudden, that's when I felt the yank or whatever, and then
3 that's when we went into emergency.

4 Q. Okay. So your top speed the whole trip was 30 mile an hour?

5 A. The 30 mile an hour is what the speed is down the track that
6 we were on, and you could go 35 down through the sag because 35,
7 and then as you come around the curve and go into Glencoe, it goes
8 to 30 mile an hour there. But most of the time I was just -- I
9 don't get in a hurry with these trains because they're just too
10 big and too many things can happen. So I always try to take my
11 time with them and make sure that I've got them under control
12 before I do anything.

13 Q. Okay. Train makeup is a big issue these days and apparently
14 you had some concern about it. Are you getting a lot of big
15 trains that are made up like this or --

16 A. Yes, sir. You're getting a -- I know that when I worked the
17 I-1 pool and I worked over there in Connellsville, a lot of these
18 trains you'll have 140 loads and maybe 20 empties. Twenty empties
19 may be spread out all through that and, of course, the empty cars,
20 you know, they're going to sit down and the loads, they're just
21 going to shove everything.

22 Q. And this new rule came out within the last couple weeks or
23 month?

24 A. No. It's come out within, I think, the first quarter or
25 second quarter is where the rule came out that said that -- it

1 used to be 30 cars and 5 loads, you couldn't have that; you
2 couldn't have more than 5 loads behind 30 empties. But then they
3 changed it, where now we can have 30 empties, we can have no more
4 than 6 loads behind it, and as long as you got 5 loads you can
5 have empties again and, you know, 5 loads or even more, if you
6 don't have a block of 30.

7 Q. I was looking for that in the rules before I came down today
8 and I couldn't find it, because I have a stack of papers like that
9 trying to figure out which ones are which.

10 A. Yes, sir. I'd have to go back in my rules there, but it did
11 change and --

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. Yeah, system bulletin is what Mike's telling me.

14 But anyway, it did change and, of course, we look at those
15 things, just like the helper requirements now that we can match
16 the power on the head end of the train. Well, that just changed
17 here recently too, where they cannot have more than 18 axels and
18 power on the head of the train above what we have, and we cannot
19 have more than 9 axels on the rear of what they have when we're
20 shoving the train. So, I mean, we try to keep up with all this
21 and, you know, these are things that --

22 Q. You seem do a pretty good job with it. It's rough, I'm sure.

23 A. Yes, sir, it is.

24 Q. One other thing I just wanted to follow up on that Larry was
25 asking for the fatigue analysis thing that we do. What's your

1 commute time from your residence to -- here's your home terminal,
2 right?

3 A. Twenty-five minutes. I come right out my house, get right on
4 68, come down here. It takes me 25 minutes. It's 25 miles.

5 Q. And your napping is like right before you come to work?

6 A. No, sir. My napping is when I get off after 12 hours or 12
7 hours and 20 minutes in the morning. From midnight to 12:20 in
8 the morning -- or in the afternoon, I go straight home, I grab
9 something to eat and then I go lay down.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. I know -- I tried to train myself, I don't care if it's
12 daylight or if it's night, I know that, hey, if I got this regular
13 scheduled job, I've got to get my rest. And that's what I do and
14 my family knows not to bother me once I go upstairs.

15 Q. You have them conditioned, right?

16 A. Oh, absolutely, they know.

17 MR. BULL: Okay. Thank you, Ron. I appreciate that.

18 MR. MAIN: Yes, sir, Mike.

19 MR. TORRES: I don't have any questions. Anybody else?

20 Okay. Tomas Torres with NTSB, this will conclude the
21 interview. Thank you.

22 MR. MAIN: Yes, sir.

23 MR. TORRES: Appreciate it.

24 MR. MAIN: You're welcome.

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

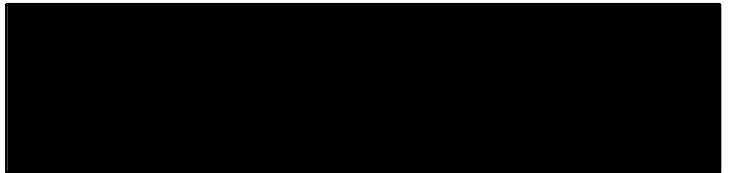
IN THE MATTER OF: CSX TRAIN DERAILMENT IN HYNDMAN,
PENNSYLVANIA, AUGUST 2, 2017
Interview of Ronald Main

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA17FR011

PLACE: Cumberland, Maryland

DATE: August 3, 2017

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