

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: DONALD SAGER

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. Sager)

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I N T E R V I E W

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2 MR. TORRES: Okay. We are going to get started. This is an
3 informal NTSB interview. My name is Tomas Torres, T-o-m-a-s, T-o-
4 r-r-e-s. Today's date, August 3rd, 2017. We are at Cumberland,
5 Maryland on the CSXT Terminal Yard interviewing the engineer in
6 connection with an accident that occurred at Hyndman, on August
7 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
14 interviewee's choice. Do you have somebody?

15 MR. SAGER: Yes.

16 MR. TORRES: Okay. Do you understand this interview is being
17 recorded?

18 MR. SAGER: Yes.

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

20 MR. SAGER: Donald Sager, D-o-n-a-l-d, S-a-g-e-r.

21 MR. AMMONS: Steve Ammons, S-t-e-v-e, A-m-m-o-n-s.

22 MR. CASSITY: Jared Cassity, J-a-r-e-d, C-a-s-s-i-t-y.

23 MR. ROSS: Larry Ross, L-a-r-r-y, R-o-s-s.

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

25 MR. LOWERY: Michael Lowery, M-i-c-h-a-e-l, L-o-w-e-r-y,

1 SMART Transportation Division, Local Chairman.

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

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

5 INTERVIEW OF DONALD SAGER

6 BY MR. TORRES:

7 Q. Okay. Donald, if you can please tell us, on that day, you
8 know, time you went on duty, what happened from the time you went
9 on duty, when you got your call, and all that stuff? Can you
10 please describe that to us?

11 A. Yes. That day there I brought in -- I was called at -- what
12 time was I called for the Q217? 1345. I took the Q21701 from
13 Cumberland to Connellsville. When I got to Connellsville, we went
14 into the yard office and they was turning us back to Cumberland on
15 the Q38831. And we ended up getting on that train, it would have
16 been roughly around, I'm going to say, 9:00, 2100 or 9:00.

17 Q. 2100?

18 A. Yeah. Went out, we had a train come in, briefed with the
19 inbound crew on the train. Everything was pretty regular. He
20 said he was -- had a little bit of a flow, but everything seemed
21 to work okay.

22 Got on the train. The helper was already attaching to the
23 rear end of the train. I briefed with the helper. At that point
24 I released my brakes. We did a helper brake test. I got like 76
25 on the rear. I drew the train down. Brakes applied on the

1 helper. Talked to the dispatcher. Had permission east from where
2 we stand. Picking up a signal indication at Greene Junction.
3 Released the brakes. Brakes released on the helper. We proceeded
4 east on 2 track out of Connellsville.

5 The air on the train, it was -- it came up slow. Most of the
6 trip it just gradually kept climbing clear up to -- from
7 Connellsville to BFJ2.0, I think it was, right around in there is
8 where I got finally 83 pounds on the rear, which is as high as the
9 rear end got. My flow was at 28 CFM at that point.

10 Proceeded, got all good signals. I came up to Sand Patch,
11 topped over the hill, the other side of the tunnel, around 5-,
12 6,000 feet of my train over the grade, I applied minimum service.
13 At that time I was reading 79 pounds on the rear. It went from 83
14 to 79 pounds on the rear.

15 I started down into Manilla. At that point there is where
16 the helper cut away. Everything was good. Coming down into Mance
17 around 8. -- probably around 8.5, the train came up 1 pound on the
18 rear; it went to 80. At that point I took, I believe, 2 to 3 more
19 pounds of air -- I believe 2, 2 more pounds of air, which gave me
20 77 again on the rear coming down into Mance. The train tightened
21 back up.

22 Come down, and there was no real problems there. The train
23 was fighting pretty good. I believe I went to power to start
24 pulling it a little bit. When I did that, I pulled down below the
25 NA signal and my rear end at that point dropped to 75 pounds, from

1 77 to 75. And I started pulling -- then all of a sudden, my rear
2 end jumped. It was like 2 to 3 pound increments. I mean, it was
3 fast. It went to like, from 75 back to 77 to 79. I think the
4 last time I seen it it was like around 81.

5 At that point I went into dynamics because I figured the
6 train brakes were releasing, and they were. The train
7 (indiscernible), I put in dynos and I went to full service to stop
8 the train. And at that point I stopped the train at the mile pole
9 205.6, was where my head end was. And notified the dispatcher
10 train brakes released, I went full service, stopped the train and
11 the conductor was off tying brakes.

12 Conductor tied brakes. I ain't sure how many. He had it all
13 figured out what the 30 percent that we needed for on the side of
14 the hill. And he went back -- it probably took him 45 to 50
15 minutes. He notified me all the brakes were tied. At that point
16 I released the air on the train, started charging the train back
17 up again. And he continued to walk the train and he found --
18 notified me he found an air leak in the 159th car. And he didn't
19 crawl under the car. He was going to continue to walk back and
20 finish the rest of the train, then he'd check the car out on the
21 way up.

22 He walked to the rear and he said that's the only thing he
23 found. On his way back up, he got under the car and seen that
24 there was a crack in the main brake line of that car. And at that
25 point another helper was coming down the hill on 1 track, gave him

1 a ride to the head end and we were out of time. Relief crew
2 showed up, we briefed and we left.

3 Q. Okay. So when you took charge of that train, what did you
4 guys do, you and your conductor? I mean, did you review your
5 paperwork and all that stuff or what?

6 A. Yes. Yes. We did that while we was waiting on the train,
7 because we waited like over an hour till we actually got on the
8 train from -- after getting off the first one. Yes, we had a job
9 briefing in the office and, like I said, we did brief with the
10 inbound crew when they got off the train.

11 Q. And what did you guys discuss?

12 A. Just how the train was, like what we usually discuss. How
13 the air was, if they had any kickers, you know, puts the train in
14 emergency when you put the air on, anything like that, is what
15 we --

16 Q. So for us that don't know, what's a kicker?

17 A. It's if you put the air on, sometimes when you first take
18 first service it puts your train in emergency.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's a faulty valve in the car.

20 MR. SAGER: A faulty valve in the car. Yeah, pretty much
21 that.

22 BY MR. TORRES:

23 Q. So I know it is a dynamiter.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Is that a dynamiter?

1 A. Yeah. Yeah.

2 Q. So when you're making a brake application, it goes into
3 emergency?

4 A. Right. Right.

5 Q. It's an emergency application?

6 A. Right.

7 Q. When you looked at the profile of the train, you know --

8 A. It was big. It was big. It was -- I believe we had -- part
9 of the train I didn't like was we had like, I believe it was, I
10 counted 42 empties on the head end of all that tonnage behind it.
11 That's the only -- as an engineer, that really stinks because it
12 hits you a lot. It's just -- I don't like it.

13 Q. Yeah. And what's the requirement on train makeup?

14 A. Thirty -- you can't have more than 30 empties with 5 loads
15 behind, which it qualified for all that on the train makeup. It
16 did have a load here and a load there to break up the empties.
17 That was about it. It was a hazardous key train, so we had
18 hazardous materials.

19 Q. So the train makeup requirements was you can't have more than
20 30 empties with loaded cars behind it. Is that trailing tons?

21 A. Yeah, and we didn't have none of that. We looked at all
22 that. It was all good to go as far as the makeup.

23 Q. As far as the requirements, it's good to go?

24 A. Yeah. As far as --

25 Q. But you're not supposed to have like 30 empties and then

1 loaded cars behind it?

2 A. Six loads or more behind.

3 Q. Oh, behind the empties?

4 A. Yes. Directly behind it.

5 MR. TORRES: Okay. I'm going to pass it on to the other
6 guys.

7 BY MR. AMMONS:

8 Q. Hey, Donald, Steve Ammons, CSX system road foreman.

9 Can you talk a little bit about your experience as a
10 locomotive engineer with CSX?

11 A. Sure. I enjoy the job.

12 Q. I'm sorry. Let me rephrase that. So how many years you've
13 been working, things like that? How long have you been running
14 this locomotive?

15 A. Since I hired out in April 11th of 2004 to CSX. I was a
16 conductor up until -- I think 2012 is when I became an engineer.
17 And at that point, yeah.

18 Q. So you've got roughly 5 years' service as a locomotive
19 engineer?

20 A. Yes. Yes.

21 Q. All that out of the Cumberland area?

22 A. Yes. I've worked out of Cumberland for my first part. And
23 then I couldn't hold as an engineer, I went to Connellsville and
24 worked to Cumberland from Connellsville.

25 Q. Would you consider yourself qualified on the Keystone

1 Subdivision?

2 A. Yes, sir. Yes, I do.

3 Q. And is the Keystone Subdivision the subdivision you were on
4 the night of the -- or the morning of the 2nd, yesterday morning,
5 I guess it was, on the Q38831?

6 A. Yes. I actually started out Connellsville on the Pittsburgh
7 Subdivision, then came on to the Keystone Subdivision.

8 Q. Okay. And so, what you were just speaking about to
9 Mr. Torres there with the NTSB, this all occurred on the Keystone
10 Subdivision?

11 A. Yes. Yes, it did.

12 Q. Have you run -- do you run trains regularly over the Keystone
13 Subdivision?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. In that same direction?

16 A. Yes. Yes.

17 Q. The train that you were on, you talked about the mixed or the
18 amount of empties. Was this a -- what type of train was this?

19 A. This was a manifest train, a mixed freight train.

20 Q. Mixed freight train?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And do you run those types of trains often across the
23 Keystone Subdivision?

24 A. Yes, I do. Yes.

25 Q. That's a regular type of train that you would operate?

1 A. Absolutely. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. Talk about your training as a locomotive engineer
3 trainee.

4 A. The train, it was big. It was over 10,000 tons.

5 Q. No. Your training.

6 A. Oh, my training.

7 Q. Engineer training.

8 A. Oh, my training, I went to Atlanta, Georgia. Went through a
9 5-week course there. Came back and had months of training under a
10 regular engineer and -- yeah, that was my training. We road test
11 and all kinds of stuff all the time.

12 Q. Take a bunch of tests?

13 A. Take a bunch of tests, yes.

14 Q. Did you get a lot of rides in? Did you do a lot of --

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Get a lot of trips in?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Did you consider your training adequate?

19 A. Oh, yes. Yes, absolutely.

20 Q. Did you feel like you were ready to be promoted as an
21 engineer when you took your qualifying trip?

22 A. Yes. Yes, I did.

23 Q. Okay. You were talking about the air issues there yesterday
24 morning, the morning of the 2nd, and can you go over that again?
25 When you started noticing some issues there, you said you felt a

1 bump or something. I can't remember exactly what you said there.

2 Can you talk about that?

3 A. Yeah. When the air started climbing from, you know, from 75
4 to 77 to 79, wherever it ended up, it was the -- actually the
5 brakes releasing is when I started to go into dynamic, because I
6 knew the brakes had released on the train.

7 Q. Was that an intended or unintended release of the brakes?

8 A. Oh, that was definitely an unintended release of the brakes,
9 yeah.

10 Q. You didn't release them from the head end?

11 A. Yes. You don't release the brakes there.

12 Q. Okay. So how did you know how to react to that?

13 A. Experience and training. It's happened before, you know,
14 occurrence sometimes when you're coming down the hill like that on
15 certain trains.

16 Q. So you were trained how to react to that type of situation
17 with an unintended release?

18 A. Yes. Yes.

19 Q. You feel comfortable in the way that you handled it yesterday
20 morning?

21 A. Yes, I do. Yes, I do. I feel I handled it. Kept it from
22 having to put it in emergency. Yes. Yes, I do.

23 Q. The helper crew you were talking about, that's a pusher type
24 crew?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. That pushes you over --

2 A. Over the grades, yes.

3 Q. Over the grade?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Can you talk a little bit about -- you said that they had
6 already cut away before this happened; is that correct?

7 A. Yes. They were helper link; they had a helper link, so
8 therefore they can cut away on the fly.

9 Q. Have you ever worked with a helper link?

10 A. Yes, I have.

11 Q. Can you describe to the group what that is?

12 A. A helper link, instead of having to cut in conventional --
13 the air lines and everything, the link actually links the engine
14 to the EOT of the train and you actually control the engine
15 through what you do through that helper link. So, if I go in
16 emergency, they go in emergency. I apply the brakes, brakes apply
17 on them, so forth.

18 Q. So is it safe to say, when the crew cut away with the helper
19 link, that the integrity of the train line was not affected?

20 A. Yes, yes. Absolutely not. They cut away, there was no
21 problems at that point with the train line.

22 Q. Are you familiar with the term EDBA?

23 A. EDBA?

24 Q. Or effective dynamic brake axles.

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. How many locomotives did you have on the head end of
2 the train?

3 A. I had five locomotives.

4 Q. How many were online running?

5 A. Three of them.

6 Q. Three. Thank you for confirming that. We had some questions
7 about that.

8 So, with those three locomotives, do you recall what three
9 locomotives -- not by number, but by series, what you had or how
10 many dynamic brake axles would you have had?

11 A. I would've had 21 dynamic brake axles. I had an AH on the
12 head end and -- that was a big one. It's worth 9. And I had I
13 believe a refurbished SD40, which was worth 6. And an SD50 or 40
14 -- I ain't quite sure about those -- them also were 6.

15 Q. Okay. So, with 21 dynamic brake axles going down the grade
16 there into Hyndman, into Cumberland, what would be your speed
17 limit?

18 A. I had 30 at the top of the hill and 25 at the bottom of the
19 hill.

20 Q. Okay. So you -- in fact, you had enough dynamic brake axles
21 to run the speed limit for that territory?

22 A. Yes. Yes.

23 Q. The rule that you were talking about earlier with the block
24 of empties, are you familiar with our rule also, that there's
25 another requirement about trailing tonnage before that rule kicks

1 in? So if you've got more than 30 empties, it also limits -- that
2 that rule is based on trailing tonnage behind those empties as
3 well, as far as 6 loads, there's a 6,000 ton --

4 A. Ton limit there.

5 Q. Are you familiar with that?

6 A. Yes. Yes, I am.

7 Q. Okay. All right. Just wanted to make sure we cleared that
8 up.

9 A. Yes.

10 MR. AMMONS: Okay. Well, that's all I've got right now.

11 BY MR. CASSITY:

12 Q. How big that train -- how big did you say the train was? I'm
13 sorry. This is Jared Cassity with SMART. How big did you say the
14 train was?

15 A. The train was 179 cars. I believe it was 8,700 feet with
16 locomotives and everything, and the tonnage was 10,000- -- I
17 believe -- -2, something like that, if I can remember. I don't
18 have the paperwork anymore. But, yeah, it was over 10,000 tons
19 and I know it was 8700 feet long.

20 Q. Okay. In layman's terms, would you consider that a big
21 train?

22 A. Yes. Yes, that was a very big train. 178 cars, that's a big
23 train.

24 Q. You were talking about the air line coming up slow. Is there
25 a reason you think that the air might have been slow in building?

1 A. At that time -- well, a train that size, I mean, you don't
2 know when you first get on, but it could have multiple leaks in
3 air hoses. And, you know, when a train gets close 2 miles long,
4 that can cause it coming up slow. Weather conditions can cause it
5 to come up slow, or a train line leak can cause it to come up
6 slow.

7 Q. So basically, the size of it can actually have an impact on
8 how quick the air acts as far as building or --

9 A. Oh, absolutely. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. With CSX rules --

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can we re-clarify the weight and the
12 tonnage please.

13 MR. CASSITY: The weight? Okay. Yeah.

14 MR. SAGER: Okay. The length was 10,612 and the tons were
15 18,252.

16 BY MR. CASSITY:

17 Q. Okay. So 18,000?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. So when we are talking about the air pressure on the
20 train, is there a certain pound that you have to reach or is there
21 a window that the air can -- is there a minimum amount that the
22 air can reach before the train is good to go?

23 A. Per my rules, to be operational, my flow has to be below 60
24 CFM and my rear end has to have at least 75 pounds on the rear.

25 Q. In a perfect, absolute perfect world, what does that scenario

1 look like? Ninety pounds and zero flow?

2 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah. If you go on a straight -- we run 90
3 pounds, so yeah. It would be 90 pounds, no flow.

4 Q. Okay. But that wasn't the case in this one?

5 A. No. That was not the case.

6 Q. Do you have any thoughts on why the pressure would rise to
7 release those brakes when you're running that train?

8 A. Well, now, I know why. At that time I didn't know why.

9 Q. So you think it was the air hose that was doing that?

10 A. Absolutely. The break in the train line definitely is
11 probably what caused it. I knew -- there's usually a leak
12 somewhere that causes it, because it gives you that pound and a
13 half differential, which can cause a release of your train.

14 Q. Sounds like you handled well.

15 I want to talk about CSX, then, itself. There have been a
16 lot of changes you can see it in the media here recently. Have
17 you seen any changes or anything different in the size of the
18 trains that you've been running in the --

19 A. Oh, absolutely. The trains have gotten a lot bigger from
20 when I first started being an engineer. You know, the -- yes,
21 absolutely.

22 Q. How about the environment? Does it -- has it changed any as
23 far as the expectations on the crews or maybe some of the pressure
24 or you feel like that's remained the same?

25 A. Yeah. I guess, actually, to make things work, we do move a

1 little bit more, which I always was a that type of a go-getter,
2 but it was -- yeah. I'd -- yes.

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

4 MR. ROSS: Hey, Donald, Larry Ross with the FRA.

5 BY MR. ROSS:

6 Q. We probably met before somewhere along the line.

7 A. Yes. I think I talked to you at Connellsville.

8 Q. Yeah. How big of a helper did you have out going through
9 there?

10 A. He had two AC units with a helper link. I'm not sure of his
11 numbers or anything, but I know he had two AC units.

12 Q. Two ACs.

13 A. Yes. And -- because we needed -- actually, he lost an AC
14 unit on the way up. He ran out of fuel on the second unit and we
15 climbed the hill on our knees pretty bad then.

16 Q. Where did he lose his power?

17 A. Right around mile pole 217 is where I was when he said that
18 he ran out of fuel on the second unit and it was no longer
19 running.

20 Q. Did you have -- before you lost the unit, couldn't find it,
21 did you have any trouble on the hills or how did the train handle
22 compared to a comparable train like that? You said it was a
23 little bit sluggish or --

24 A. Yeah. It's slow. Yeah, it --

25 Q. Did you have any trouble with the air creeping on you, like a

1 -- you know, when the node would change in the train when the
2 helper would shove a little hard, back off, I mean did you feel
3 anything different about the train?

4 A. No. Just the only -- like I said, the only thing about the
5 train, when you got that much empties, like if the helper backs
6 off, comes in, you can feel the push on you because of all the
7 loads, you know, behind all them empties.

8 Q. And do you use the air after you did the helper test at
9 Connellsville?

10 A. No, I didn't, sir. Not until I topped over Sand Patch. A
11 train that size is -- unless you're stopping, and I didn't get
12 stopped, you usually don't have to, you know, put the air on too
13 much unless something happens.

14 Q. Okay. And so you didn't notice any of your airflow changing
15 en route?

16 A. No. My air --

17 Q. Hopefully, I know you wanted to see it go up, but did you see
18 it --

19 A. Oh, no. I wanted to see it come down.

20 Q. -- did you see it calling for more air or anything?

21 A. The flow ran anywhere between 40 to 28, and it settled in --
22 when I got to 83, like I told you there at the BFJ2.0, it was at
23 83. And my flow was showing 28 and it never went below 28 from
24 that point on.

25 Q. So it was sort of, just sort of stabilizing?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Didn't change too much?

3 A. It charged right to there and that's the lowest the flow got
4 for me and it's as high as the rear end got.

5 Q. Have you ever had a premature release of the brakes on a
6 train before?

7 A. Yes. Yes. A couple times.

8 Q. Yeah. Similar situation?

9 A. Yeah, a similar situation. You can -- you definitely know
10 when it does it, because it comes in on you and, you know, you got
11 to adjust your air to control it.

12 Q. And the reason I'm asking, I mean, you used to hear of a
13 stretch leak or a bunch leak or anything. I was asking if you had
14 any of those types of leaks on the train?

15 A. Yeah. No, it didn't fluctuate as far as when I would stretch
16 the train out or bunch the train up. That didn't really have an
17 effect on this train.

18 Q. So your big bunch started outside of the tunnel?

19 A. Yes. That's --

20 Q. When did you notice your airflow changing? You say you come
21 out, you were down at Manila, and then where did the helper cut
22 off? Where were you when the helper cut off?

23 A. Okay. I was right around -- I was probably in the middle of
24 the plant at Manila with the length of my train, when the helper
25 notified me that he had cut away safely and the train was all

1 mine.

2 Q. Okay. And how far further east did you go before you started
3 noticing some air issues?

4 A. It wouldn't have been far from there. I was probably about
5 9.2., then it -- like I said, about the 8.5 is where my rear end
6 came up 1 pound, and that is where I took another 2 to 3 pounds of
7 air.

8 Q. Were you down around Guardrail Curve or were you beyond that?

9 A. I was just a little bit beyond Guardrail Curve there, when I
10 added more air to it.

11 Q. Okay. And did it look like it was going to continue and
12 release on you, or --

13 A. No. No, actually then the train tightened up really nice.
14 It handled nice down in through Mance and, like I said, down in
15 through NA. And I kept the speed down on it because I wasn't
16 quite sure, you know, what was going to happen. I think I was
17 running like 15 to 17 mile an hour the whole way down through
18 there. And when I came down in towards NA, like I said, I came
19 out of dynos actually, and started pulling on it because the train
20 was, you know, snugging up pretty good. And when I started to
21 pull on it, everything seemed fine, then, like I said, then all of
22 a sudden the rear end dropped to 75, and then from that point on
23 it just kept raising back up, you know. And I believe the last
24 one I seen was 80 pounds on the rear whenever I came to full
25 service.

1 Q. Did it seem like it was handling good when you were in
2 dynamic coming down off the hill?

3 A. Yes. Yes.

4 Q. And then when you started to stretch her back out and put
5 some power in it, is that when you saw the air starting to go
6 away?

7 A. Yes. Yes. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. Did it start on -- pick up pretty fast on you?

9 A. No, not real fast at that point until -- when I -- when the
10 air went to 80, I started to come out and I went into dynos, and
11 before I even got to put any dynos on, that's when it hit me. But
12 I was already through, you know, how to -- set to go into -- and I
13 put long dynos on and started adding air to full service to stop
14 the train.

15 Q. Did it take -- did it stop fairly quick for you or did you
16 have to fight it a little bit more to get it?

17 A. I kept it in dynos. It took a -- well, a train that size, it
18 takes a while for all that air to get through it and actually get
19 stopped. I ended up, like I said, at the 205.6 is where my head
20 end came.

21 Q. 205.6, that's where your engine stopped there?

22 A. Yes. That's where they came to a stop at, yes.

23 Q. Did you have a rough stop or normal?

24 A. No. No, it was -- actually it was smooth.

25 Q. Considering what you had, would you describe it a normal or

1 average stop, or --

2 A. Right. No, it was actually a smooth stop. Once the air
3 started applying, the train just -- you know, it came down to a
4 nice smooth stop. Yeah.

5 Q. Do you have any idea about what time you stopped up there?

6 A. I'm going to say it was like 11:50, I believe, sir. I mean,
7 I'm just --

8 Q. It doesn't have to be exact. Just a best estimate.

9 A. Yeah. I'm -- that's my estimate that I think it was like
10 11:50, 11:54, something like that.

11 Q. Okay. And your conductor did his magic math?

12 A. Yes. He figured out his 30 percent and got off the train.
13 And like I said, I notified dispatcher we were stopped and gave
14 him my pole and the reason why we were stopped, had an undesired
15 release and stopped the train with full service, not emergency. I
16 told him that too. It wasn't an emergency or anything.

17 Q. And then he started to walk the train. And you said you
18 didn't know how many brakes he --

19 A. No. He was over there -- he skipped a couple cars, which, I
20 mean, you'd have to ask him because he briefed with the other
21 crew, you know. Like, Mr. Bobb, ought to know. He briefed with
22 them like what brakes he skipped because they were clear high
23 ones.

24 Q. High?

25 A. Yeah. Yeah. And I think he put on -- I thought he was going

1 to put them on like 58 or 59 brakes, total. But like I said, I
2 ain't sure what he did because I sat there until we had on his
3 sufficient amount. Then he radioed me and told me he had the
4 brakes all set.

5 Q. You said earlier it was probably, what, 45, 50 minutes for
6 him to --

7 A. Yeah. Yeah.

8 Q. -- put the brakes on?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And you said then he started inspecting and he found a
11 problem at --

12 A. 159 car.

13 Q. -- 159?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. And then he did --

16 A. It was an LW-something car. Yeah. Right there, LW62114.
17 Yeah, if you guys want to know the car number, it was an LW62114,
18 that he gave me on the radio that had a broken train line.

19 Q. Now did your conductor actually repair the --

20 A. No. No, sir. It was a broken train line. A conductor ain't
21 going to repair a --

22 Q. I mean, was it a broken train line or the air hose?

23 A. The train line.

24 Q. Oh, it was a broken train --

25 A. Train line, had a crack in the train line, is what he told

1 me. A crack in the train line.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In the hard pipe?

3 MR. SAGER: Yeah. In the hard pipe in the middle of the car,
4 yes.

5 BY MR. ROSS:

6 Q. Was that like a covered hopper or sliding center
7 (indiscernible)?

8 A. I believe it was an empty flat car. Yeah, it was an empty
9 flat.

10 Q. Empty flat. Who fixed that? Were you there when it was
11 fixed?

12 A. No. No, I wasn't, sir. Like I said, he -- after he found
13 that, the helper crew come down and we was running out of time to
14 work. He got a ride --

15 Q. So it wasn't an air hose; it was -- there was a crack and
16 trouble with the train?

17 A. Crack. Yes, yes. Train line crack.

18 Q. And it was on that piece?

19 A. About the middle of the car, is what he told me on the radio.
20 I wasn't there. I didn't get to see it.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. He told me about mid car, he heard --

23 Q. Not my job, huh?

24 A. Yeah. He heard air blowing about mid car.

25 Q. Yeah. Okay. And did he walk back to the head end?

1 A. He got a ride with, I think, the B247, the helper at that
2 time. I ain't sure what, quite what the number was, but they gave
3 him a ride to the head end then.

4 Q. Was that the helper that had initially helped you up the
5 hill --

6 A. No. No, sir. That was a Cumberland helper coming back down
7 from shoving the train.

8 Q. So did you folks have to wait long for a ride?

9 A. No. Actually, till the conductor got up there, the relief
10 crew was already showed up in the van.

11 Q. So the relief crew came and you guys -- do you have any idea
12 about what time that was?

13 A. When the crew showed up, it was probably about 1:30 in the
14 morning, I'm guessing. We was probably within 15 minutes of going
15 long. That's an educated guess, of course. I didn't --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Yeah, I didn't get all the times and all that.

18 MR. ROSS: Okay. I think that's it for me. I might have
19 some questions later on like for a fatigue analysis study or
20 something like that, I would like to talk to you at some point in
21 time and answer -- well, we're going to get your hours of service
22 record. Usually we check it for the week. But that's normal with
23 an investigation. So -- and that would be end, you know, if you
24 don't mind talking to me about that. And basically, there's a
25 couple questions, were you well rested and stuff about how did you

1 sleep, you know, what's your sleep cycles and stuff like that.

2 MR. SAGER: Okay.

3 MR. ROSS: But, no, I appreciate it. That's all I've got.

4 MR. FANNON: Randy Fannon, BLET.

5 BY MR. FANNON:

6 Q. Donald, you talked about the air releasing and you had your
7 hands full after you had the pusher, got your pusher cut off.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Is that normal? I mean, do you consider what happened
10 yesterday morning normal?

11 A. No. No, sir. No.

12 Q. Okay. I think a previous question asked that you -- have you
13 experienced a release before?

14 A. Yes. Yes, I have.

15 Q. Do you know what caused that release?

16 A. No, not all the time. I mean, you just know that it's
17 usually either most of the time a leak in your train line
18 somewhere, you know, like either a bunch leak, stretch leak,
19 something, you know, where you lose air or gain air.

20 Q. All right. Fluctuation that caused the brakes to release?

21 A. Right.

22 Q. In the past, in your 5 years as a -- running the engine in
23 this territory, were the trains more average, smaller trains when
24 they had a leak?

25 A. Yes. Yes. All the other trains I had leaks on -- I had it

1 on two other trains, and -- well, no; I can't say -- the last one
2 that I had a release on was an autorack train and it was big. It
3 was over 10,000 feet. It had 115 racks or something like that.

4 Q. 10,000-foot long, but 115 auto racks?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Is a little different than 178 manifest freight train?

7 A. Not as heavy. Yes, not a heavy; lot different kind of train.
8 Yes.

9 Q. Right. When you were -- you sound like you were fighting
10 this a little bit. You bunch up the slack, you have to pull them
11 in places --

12 A. Right.

13 Q. -- you had to fight it down, then you add in the leak and the
14 release. That caused you a lot of work to come off the mountain,
15 right?

16 A. Yes. Yes.

17 Q. But you're saying this is really not normal, you have had --
18 it has happened to you on occasion, but is it normal to have that
19 type of experience on a mountain, I mean, to come off?

20 A. No. No, it isn't. Most of the time -- you know, like I
21 said, it happened to me in 5 years three times. You know, I mean,
22 so it's not a normal occasion.

23 Q. Give us a scenario of a normal -- topping the hill normal,
24 you put first service on, dynamic holds the train back --

25 A. Yeah. Usually first service and dynamics usually -- it

1 depends on your engines. That all varies, you know. The power
2 they give you, you don't have. Like if a perfect world, two ACs
3 and minimum, usually you can bring almost anything down that hill,
4 my experience. But the train makeups are getting to be a lot
5 bigger. Like I had an AC and two SD40s, which is a lot different
6 than having two AC units on a train like that. Is that what
7 you're asking? I'm ain't quite sure if I --

8 Q. Yeah. Yeah, you answered it. Thanks.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Have you seen a train that was made up kind of like the one
11 you had the other night? I mean, have you handled one that
12 resembled that?

13 A. Yes. Yes, I have.

14 Q. Is that a normal to have that type of manifest train coming
15 through now with the blogs the way they are?

16 A. Anymore, yes, that's usually the -- big and heavy and ugly,
17 yeah.

18 Q. The change of running longer trains, has it changed the
19 methods of the way you're operating, how you do things?

20 A. Yeah. I mean, when they are longer like that, the places you
21 do things better, yep, you know, I mean, where you have to do
22 because of the train that big is -- you know, usually on a regular
23 train, I usually have the air on like before the tunnel. You
24 know, it used to be you always put it on before the tunnel on a
25 train with a lot of loads in it like that and drug it through.

1 But because of the size of that train, you know, you can't do that
2 because the train will hang up on you before you get it enough
3 over grade 2.

4 Q. When you're talking about hang up, because you have more
5 still on the other side of it coming up?

6 A. Yeah. More still coming up the hill than you got over the
7 hill, and they set down --

8 Q. Right.

9 A. -- on you and you cannot actually stretch the train through
10 anymore. You know, you got to change up for the size of the train
11 you have.

12 Q. So you've had to adjust the way you run your trains
13 obviously?

14 A. Yes. Yes.

15 Q. And that comes with your experience?

16 A. Right.

17 Q. You stated you pulled them once; is that right, you had to
18 pull on them once?

19 A. Yeah. Which is -- sometimes because of the curvature of the
20 track, after you get it past Mance to 208, it's a little bit of a
21 flat area there and a lot of times you do have to start pulling
22 your train, you know, just to keep the speed --

23 Q. Momentum.

24 A. -- yes, the speed up on it.

25 MR. FANNON: Everybody else has already beat me to the

1 questions that I was going to ask, so thank you.

2 MR. SAGER: You're welcome.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I've got one more. What time did you
4 go on duty for the --

5 MR. TORRES: Yeah, we'll go around again.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, okay.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm good.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't see him back
9 there.

10 MR. TORRES: Okay. Tomas Torres with the NTSB. I've got a
11 couple questions.

12 MR. SAGER: Yes, sir.

13 BY MR. TORRES:

14 Q. You said the maximum air pressure on the rear was 83 when it
15 was fully charged?

16 A. Yes. Yes, that's as high as it got for me, yes.

17 Q. And the head end's speed bell is set up for --

18 A. Ninety.

19 Q. Ninety. Okay. And when you made a minimum brake
20 application, what would it show on the rear?

21 A. It was showing 79.

22 Q. Seventy-nine?

23 A. Yeah. And it's usually a 6 to 8-pound reduction, but that
24 only gave me a 4 pound on that.

25 Q. Okay. Can you describe on a typical day how would you come

1 down the grade; you know, what kind of grade is it?

2 A. I believe a 1.68 is the steepest part of it. It is -- it's a
3 pretty good grade with a flat in the middle of it. It flattens
4 out in the middle, then you start down on a steeper part of it.

5 Q. Would you describe a typical --

6 A. A normal train, usually I top over Sand Patch. I mean, like
7 I said, where you put your air on depends on a lot, you know --
8 like do you want a certain size train that you do it to? You
9 know, because it varies on my train lengths when I'd apply the
10 air. My speed, all that has an effect when I put the air on my
11 train.

12 But I usually top over Sand Patch. Usually a minimum
13 reduction on most trains is all you need to navigate them down
14 over the hill. And every once in a while, you'll get one that the
15 brakes just don't -- you know, ain't as tight as some and you'll
16 have to -- and I usually take like 1-pound increments as I need it
17 to hold the train.

18 Q. And that's with balancing the grade with dynamic brakes --

19 A. Right.

20 Q. -- and a brake set --

21 A. Between dynamic brakes and power sometimes, too. There's
22 places where -- like I said, our hill comes down, then it's got a
23 sag in it and it flattens out for a couple miles, then you start
24 down again. So what you try to do is you try to get enough air on
25 to hold your train back with dynamics that you can still pull it

1 through the flat and then go back to dynamics and hold it at the
2 bottom until you finish descending the grade.

3 Q. Okay. Where the derailment occurred, can you describe that
4 area?

5 A. Yeah. That is definitely grade where the derailment
6 occurred. You're still not off of grade yet. It's -- actually, I
7 believe, the steepest part is right above that. Yeah, you're
8 coming off the steepest part of the grade right there, so you're
9 still at grade coming downhill.

10 Q. Is the track tangent?

11 A. Yeah. It's curved. It's a curvature around there. There's
12 a Hogback Road crossing, then it makes a right-hand curve. I
13 believe that's where -- I didn't see the derailment. I wasn't on
14 it at that time.

15 MR. SAGER: Is it right at Hogback's where it did it?

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right -- yeah, right at Hogbacks.

17 MR. SAGER: Yeah, the track comes into a curve.

18 BY MR. TORRES:

19 Q. It's a long curve, or?

20 A. Yeah. Yeah, it's pretty, pretty -- it curves the whole way
21 around Hyndman there, yes. So it straightens out again near -- at
22 the road crossings there in Hyndman, Market Street and Center
23 Street, whatever the names of them are.

24 Q. Okay. So let's go back to his question now. When did you go
25 on duty?

1 A. At 1345 on the Q21701.

2 Q. 1345?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And was this like the second train you handled?

5 A. The Q38831 was the second train I handled that day, yes.

6 Q. So you say that just recently you started getting trains like
7 that, this big?

8 A. As often as we do, yes. Yes. They used to be every once in
9 a while, you'd get a big one. But these 18- and 19,000 ones,
10 yeah, these have mostly just been within the last 6, 7 months that
11 they've really been coming bigger.

12 Q. Do you know the reason for it?

13 A. Oh, no, that's not my --

14 Q. No, no, I'm just trying to find out --

15 A. I guess they want to run bigger trains and have less crews.
16 I don't know why they want to do it.

17 Q. Okay. Can you describe for us the last 72 hours, you know,
18 like when you went to work, when -- you know, your rest cycle?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. The previous 3 days, you know, prior to the event.

21 A. Yeah. Like I was --

22 Q. I mean, as best as you can. I mean, it doesn't have to be
23 accurate.

24 A. Yeah, I'd like to have a copy of my history because --

25 Q. No, we'll get it, you know, but I just -- you know, were you

1 working --

2 A. Yeah. I can't even remember the trains, sir, that I brought
3 down here. It was -- I was -- I had my starts, so -- I was off
4 Sunday and Monday. I brought -- I can't remember what I brought
5 down. Went to the hotel, and -- well, I don't go to the hotel. I
6 go home. Actually, I drive home. And got called back out for the
7 Q217 at 1345. But, like I said, without my -- I can't give you
8 train numbers or what.

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. I wasn't even sure my --

11 Q. Do you recall what times you went on duty, what times you
12 went off duty?

13 A. Yeah. That day, I went on duty at 1345 and I believe we got
14 off at like 5:30 in the morning.

15 Q. Yeah. And prior to that how much rest did you have?

16 A. The whole time I was off, I believe 16 hours --

17 Q. Sixteen hours.

18 A. -- and 48 minutes, I'm pretty sure. I think I had an hour
19 and 48 minutes of terminal time. So, yeah, I mean, right, 16
20 hours and 48 minutes.

21 Q. Okay. Do you take any prescription or nonprescription drugs?

22 A. No, sir.

23 Q. And your hire date, when did you actually hire?

24 A. April 11th, 2004.

25 Q. And your engineer's date?

1 A. I believe it was 2011. I'd have to -- I can't -- I ain't
2 sure. Hold on a second. I don't -- I ain't even sure.

3 Q. No, that's okay.

4 A. Yeah. You know, I'm not sure of my engineer's hire date.

5 Q. We'll get it.

6 A. I mean --

7 Q. And you're also a certified conductor?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. When is the last time a supervisor rode with you or
10 tested you?

11 A. This year. It was the -- it was 1/17/17, Mr. Matthews.

12 Q. And what's his title?

13 A. He was a road foreman at the time, road foreman of engines.

14 Q. Is he a road foreman now?

15 A. No. A trainmaster, whatever they call them now.

16 Q. Oh, okay.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Transportation officer.

18 MR. SAGER: Transportation officer, whatever. And it was on
19 a simulator.

20 BY MR. TORRES:

21 Q. On a simulator?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Not on the territory?

24 A. Not on the territory. It was on a simulator on the
25 territory, but -- I guess they had our Keystone Sub, is what I ran

1 on the simulator.

2 Q. So I understand there's no more road foremen. How does that
3 affect your performance or how things happen out on the road?

4 A. I don't know. Yeah, the road foremen were all promoted to a
5 transportation performance officer, I guess, which some of them
6 are going through training or whatever.

7 Q. But they are still around with a different title?

8 A. Yes. Yes.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Yes. Like if I have any questions, Mr. Matthews usually --
11 you know, he's there to answer them.

12 Q. All righty. Do you ever get downloaded, you know, like event
13 recorder? I mean, do they ever tell you you got downloaded and
14 had an evaluation?

15 A. No. No. I was never told of it. They might have. I was
16 never told that I was downloaded and had an evaluation. I'm sure
17 on this, I did.

18 Q. Yeah. And when is the last time you had an efficiency test?

19 A. You know what, I haven't checked on my thing to see when I
20 was officially tested last.

21 MR. TORRES: Okay.

22 MR. AMMONS: Yeah, I've got several follow-up questions here,
23 Donald.

24 BY MR. AMMONS:

25 Q. First of all, just want to go back again and log the way you

1 handled this situation. Looks like you did a fabulous job
2 stopping the train under adverse situation, so thank you for that.

3 From what you were told by your conductor and what you have
4 heard since then, did the air leak occur, in your opinion or from
5 what you were told, due to a long train or was it due to a
6 defective equipment?

7 A. No. It was defective equipment.

8 Q. Okay. These pushers or helpers, as -- I think you refer to
9 them as helpers -- on the Keystone Sub, you said that one,
10 actually a different one actually brought the conductor back to
11 the head. How long have these pushers and helpers been around on
12 the Keystone Sub?

13 A. As long as I've worked there, sir.

14 Q. Thirteen years then, at least?

15 A. Yeah. I mean, I can't -- well, I wasn't here back in the
16 '50s. I'm just saying they have been here as long as I've been
17 here.

18 Q. Okay. So at least 13 years?

19 A. Thirteen years, right. Yeah.

20 Q. Okay. What's your -- have you ever worked one?

21 A. Yes. Yes, sir.

22 Q. What's the purpose of the helper/pusher?

23 A. Is to help over-tonnage trains get up the grade.

24 Q. So for 13 years we've been running heavy trains over here?

25 A. Oh, yeah. Yeah, I mean, coal trains and stuff are heavy,

1 yes.

2 Q. Okay. All right. And you said you were conductor qualified?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. All right. What about your conductor that you were working
5 with that night? What was his name?

6 A. Jimmy Beitzel.

7 Q. Good conductor?

8 A. Yeah. Yeah, he does his job. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. You trust what he found in his inspection?

10 A. Yes. Yes, I do.

11 Q. Okay. You mentioned when you finally brought your train to a
12 stop when you realized you had an issue, you described it as a
13 nice smooth stop.

14 A. Yeah. I mean, to me, what I felt, yeah, it wasn't abrupt or
15 you know what I mean -- once I got the slack in and took full
16 service, the train came to a, you know --

17 Q. Even though it was described as a very big train with a bunch
18 of empties in it, it was a nice smooth stop?

19 A. It was -- yeah. After it hit me, yeah.

20 Q. Okay. But you described the hit because of air release?

21 A. Air release, right. Because, like I said, I was pulling on
22 the train which had stretched out --

23 Q. Right.

24 A. -- then when it released, it did come against me.

25 Q. Okay. You qualified to run these very big trains?

1 A. Well, I hope so. I do it every day.

2 Q. It seems like the way you handled this one, you are.

3 A. Yes. Yes, I am.

4 Q. Speaking about qualifications and running big trains, do you
5 remember your simulator ride you spoke about, do you remember what
6 size train that was on?

7 A. It was a big train.

8 Q. On the simulator ride?

9 A. Yes. Yes, it was.

10 Q. So you were evaluated running a big train over this same
11 subdivision?

12 A. Yes. It was as -- well, it wasn't a real heavy -- heaviest
13 train, but it was a long train.

14 Q. Long train.

15 A. I think it was like 12,000-some feet long, if I can remember.
16 Intermodal. Yes, it was an intermodal, long one.

17 Q. Long train?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Over the same territory?

20 A. Over the same territory, yes.

21 Q. Mr. Torres was asking you about being -- or someone was
22 asking; I think it was Mr. Torres -- about being downloaded
23 before. Have you ever heard of ERAD?

24 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Can you describe what that is?

1 A. I guess it downloads you automatically at certain points and
2 whatever, as far as I know, from -- I don't know a lot about it.
3 I just, you know -- yes.

4 Q. Okay. So do you think you've ever been downloaded by ERAD?

5 A. Oh, I'm sure I have. I just -- nobody's ever come to me,
6 like he asked, and said you've been downloaded.

7 Q. It's probably because you do a good job running trains.

8 A. Probably. I didn't get hollered at, so --

9 Q. Just one more question. What do you consider a normal size
10 train?

11 A. Like we used to run normal manifest trains anywhere from -- I
12 don't know, about 8,000, you know, 6- to 8,000 feet long, roughly
13 around 8-, 9-, 10,000 tons.

14 Q. What would you consider a short train?

15 A. A short train? Oh, 30, 40 cars, back in -- you know, I've
16 had them as low as 30, 40 cars, a couple hundred ton, you know, a
17 couple --

18 Q. Which one would you prefer to run?

19 A. Oh, a short train, by all means.

20 Q. You'd prefer to run a short train?

21 A. Yes, I do.

22 Q. The 30 or 40 car train?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Really?

25 A. Yes, I do. I like -- I prefer those trains better.

1 Q. That's interesting.

2 A. That's just me. I like those trains.

3 MR. AMMONS: That's all I've got.

4 MR. CASSITY: Jared Cassity with SMART.

5 BY MR. CASSITY:

6 Q. I want to go back to the air for just a second. Did you ever
7 see anything, any kind of anomaly or any issues with the
8 equalizing reservoir verses the brake pipe pressure?

9 A. Nothing out of hand. Most of the time maybe a pound, you
10 know what I mean. I've run like 90 on the equalizing reservoir
11 and my brake pipe will run like 89.

12 Q. Okay. And then for the general man that might end up reading
13 this transcript one day, could you describe slack action and what
14 it is in your terms?

15 A. The slack action?

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. It is the force that a train has whenever it comes into you
18 or runs away from you.

19 Q. Okay. So when you put the train in power or give it a
20 throttle, you actually feel each car stretch out --

21 A. Stretch out. Yes. Yes, you do.

22 Q. -- and then when you do the opposite, you feel each car run
23 in on you?

24 A. Coming in on you, yes.

25 Q. So when you're referring to the air brakes release and you

1 feel that bump, that, in essence, is the slack action coming in?

2 A. Coming in at you, yes.

3 Q. So when you had stated that you feel like there was a lot
4 more weight on the rear end of that train, do you think that
5 increases the amount of slack action when it runs in towards you
6 when the weight is on the rear end if you put the brakes on?

7 A. Oh, yeah, absolutely.

8 Q. Do you recall how the slack action was on that day? Was it
9 pretty rough on --

10 A. It was hard when the brakes released when I first -- like I
11 said, when I got to dynamics quick because I knew that that was
12 going to happen because, like I said, I was pulling on it
13 previous. And when the brakes did release when I went to
14 dynamics, it was a pretty good bump, yeah.

15 Q. Okay. And in general, physics will tell you, I guess, in my
16 opinion, that the longer the train, the more slack action you're
17 going to have, the more space you're going to have for those cars
18 to come in, so ultimately the more force. Would you agree with
19 that?

20 A. Yes. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. And then the deficiency test was brought up and you
22 had said that you weren't aware if -- if you're efficiency tested
23 and you pass, does the railroad typically let you know that you
24 passed or is it really just up to you to look it up on the --

25 A. Yeah, most of the time. I've never had them come up and --

1 you know, very few times, every once in a while, a trainmaster
2 will come over and say, I've watched you do this and, you know,
3 you did a good job or -- most of the time I just get on the
4 Gateway and check my efficiency.

5 Q. Okay. So typically speaking, they don't let you know when
6 pass?

7 A. Yeah. Most of the time no.

8 Q. All right. Do you feel like it is being used as a training
9 tool when you do pass or, being that you just have to look up on
10 the end, it's just kind of a way of how they do things?

11 A. I guess, just -- I always thought it was just the way how
12 they did it.

13 MR. CASSITY: Okay. I don't think I have anything else.
14 Thank you.

15 MR. ROSS: Larry Ross, FRA.

16 BY MR. ROSS:

17 Q. Donald, when you were talking about the air and the train and
18 everything, I wanted to ask you, did you have PTC on this train?

19 A. No. Actually, PT has been out since the 31st, I believe, to
20 the 5th. So PTC wasn't activated on this train.

21 Q. It wasn't activated on it?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Have you been running the PTC trains otherwise?

24 A. Yes. I have been.

25 Q. I knew there were some over here, but --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Now did you have Trip Optimizer?

3 A. Yes. I had Trip --

4 Q. Was Trip Optimizer working?

5 A. Yes, I did. But Trip Op does not work until I get down the
6 other side of the hill. So --

7 Q. The screen goes blank?

8 A. But I had it on and activated.

9 Q. Yeah. But you had a train with operable --

10 A. Oh, yes, yes, yes.

11 Q. And was your end of train device working properly? Were you
12 able to monitor your end of train --

13 A. Yeah. Absolutely. For as long as the train, I was really
14 impressed with that EOT because it stayed in the whole time and I
15 was impressed.

16 Q. Didn't lose coms anywhere?

17 A. Yeah. Even coming through the tunnel and everything, I did
18 not lose my EOT. I was impressed with it.

19 Q. I think -- there was something else you said. My mind is
20 starting to slip me now.

21 Where is your home terminal?

22 A. Connellsville.

23 Q. Okay. You're Connellsville.

24 A. Yeah, Connellsville.

25 Q. So you were called for the westbound train the day before and

1 you were going home, and then they put you on an eastbound train
2 back to Cumberland?

3 A. Yes. I was called for the westbound Q21701.

4 Q. So your home terminal is Connellsville?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. So when you had your rest, though, you had your rest at your
7 away-from-home terminal?

8 A. Yes. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. Now where did you tie up yesterday? Did you tie up
10 here or did they send you back to Connellsville?

11 A. They sent me back. They taxied us home.

12 Q. You went back home?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And just as a follow-up to the couple of sleep questions.
15 How do you normally sleep? Like a rock, good, bad, poor?

16 A. I usually sleep fairly good. I go home. So I'm not at a
17 hotel and I usually do sleep very well.

18 Q. Yeah. Okay. What's a good rest period or a poor rest when
19 you sleep; 6, 8, 10, 5 hours?

20 A. Oh, I like to have a good 8.

21 Q. You like a good 8?

22 A. Yeah, I like a good 8.

23 Q. Do you get a good 8?

24 A. Yes. I got a good 8, yeah.

25 Q. And do you do any napping?

1 A. What's that?

2 Q. Do you do any napping? Do you nap during your day before you
3 go to work?

4 A. Oh, yes. Yes, I try. Yes.

5 Q. Regular basis?

6 A. Yeah, when I can. Yes.

7 Q. How long? Short, long?

8 A. Short. Usually my naps are anywhere from 30 to 40 minutes.

9 MR. ROSS: Okay. That's all I got. Thank you, Donald.

10 MR. FANNON: I just have two questions. Randy Fannon.

11 BY MR. FANNON:

12 Q. Did you have to use the air any prior to topping the grade?

13 A. No, sir. Only time prior to topping the grade I put the air
14 on was to do my helper brake test.

15 Q. Okay. So you wouldn't have noticed any fluctuation?

16 A. Right. Yes. I didn't have to use it, so I would not have
17 been aware of anything.

18 Q. And then the last one. This pusher link, I'm not familiar
19 with it, but does it -- you're constantly getting fed a reading
20 from your EOT --

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. -- and your pusher is separate, correct?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. He's coupled up, but it's separate from your airflow?

25 A. Absolutely, yes.

1 Q. Do they use a device to cut themselves off?

2 A. Yes. They have a pin puller.

3 Q. Depress the independent brake, pulls the pin?

4 A. Yes. Yeah, as well as a power reduction.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Power reduction does it. Power reduction.

7 MR. FANNON: No further questions.

8 MR. TORRES: Tomas Torres with the NTSB.

9 BY MR. TORRES:

10 Q. Trip Optimizer was mentioned. Was this train equipped or was
11 it engaged or --

12 A. Yeah. Yeah, I had the Trip Op on but it does not work until
13 we get to the other end of the territory this direction, over the
14 mountain and stuff.

15 Q. Because of the grade?

16 A. Because of the grade, I guess, yes.

17 Q. So, you manually you --

18 A. Yeah, I was manually running the train but I had it.

19 Q. But if you had come down the hill, would you have engaged
20 Trip Optimizer?

21 A. Yes. When I could have -- below Hyndman there, yes, I would
22 have put Trip Optimizer on.

23 MR. TORRES: Okay. Thank you. That's all I have.

24 MR. AMMONS: That's it.

25 MR. CASSITY: I'm good.

1 MR. TORRES: Okay. That'll conclude the --

2 MR. BULL: I'm Mike Bull with the FRA. Sorry to barge in.
3 Just running late. I'm with these guys.

4 MR. TORRES: Can you spell out your name?

5 MR. BULL: Bull, B-u-l-l, Mike, for the record.

6 MR. TORRES: Okay. Thank you. Okay. This will complete the
7 interview. I just got something for you to fill out.

8 MR. SAGER: Okay.

9 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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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 Donald Sager

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA17FR011

PLACE: Cumberland, Maryland

DATE: August 3, 2017

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Transcriber