

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: ALEXANDER HAAS

Via Teleconference

Monday,  
August 21, 2017

## APPEARANCES:

TOMAS TORRES, Chairman, Operations Group  
National Transportation Safety Board

MICHAEL BULLING, Operating Practices Inspector  
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

LARRY ROSS, Inspector  
Federal Railroad Administration

RICHARD RUPP, Railroad Safety Inspector,  
Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission (PUC)

STEVEN HANNESSON, Manager, Safety and Operating  
Practices, Baltimore Division  
CSX Transportation

JARED CASSITY, Representative  
National Safety Team  
SMART Transportation Division

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

JEFFREY MARSHALL  
American Train Dispatchers Association  
(On behalf of Mr. Haas)

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I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. TORRES: Okay. Good afternoon, everybody. I just want  
3 to remind everybody that this is an interview for the train  
4 dispatcher Alex Haas and only NTSB can record this interview. And  
5 only those that are directly involved in the accident  
6 investigation can participate, okay. Nobody else should be around  
7 you guys.

8 MR. BULL: That's a roger here. Mike Bull FRA and Rich Rupp  
9 with the PUC, who was involved with the accident investigation  
10 from the beginning.

11 MR. TORRES: Okay. Alex?

12 MR. ALEX: Yeah, this is Alex Haas. I do have a union  
13 representative with me.

14 MR. TORRES: No, that's fine. That's allowed. I just -- I'm  
15 going to read a statement and then, once I finish that, we'll  
16 introduce ourselves, we'll spell our name out, and I'll start --  
17 we'll go in order of FRA to introduce themselves, CSXT, BLET and  
18 then SMART, okay?

19 So, Alex, I'm going to read something to you: This is an  
20 NTSB informal interview. My name is Tomas Torres, T-o-m-a-s,  
21 T-o-r-r-e-s. Today's date is August 21st, 2017, and we are at --  
22 this is a teleconference interview. We're at different locations.  
23 I'm in El Paso, Texas, interviewing the train dispatcher in  
24 connection with an accident that occurred in Hyndman on August  
25 2nd, 2017.

1           The purpose of the investigation is to increase safety, not  
2 to assign fault, blame or liability. NTSB cannot offer any  
3 guarantee of confidentiality or immunity from legal or certificate  
4 actions. A transcript or summary of the interview will be go into  
5 the public docket.

6           The interviewee can have one representative of the  
7 interviewee's choice. You have somebody; that's correct?

8           MR. HAAS: That is correct.

9           MR. TORRES: Okay. The representative may not testify for  
10 the interviewee. His comments should be limited, and that's about  
11 it.

12           Do you understand this is being recorded?

13           MR. HAAS: Yes.

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

15           MR. HAAS: All right. You want my full legal name or as you  
16 have it and have stated it?

17           MR. TORRES: Your legal name is fine.

18           MR. HAAS: All right. First name Alexander, A-l-e-x-a-n-d-e-  
19 r; last name is pronounced Haas and is spelled H-a-a-s.

20           MR. TORRES: Okay. Thank you. And your representative?

21           MR. MARSHALL: Representative is Jeffrey Marshall, J-e-f-f-r-  
22 e-y, M-a-r-s-h-a-l-l, with the American Train Dispatchers  
23 Association.

24           MR. TORRES: Okay. Thank you.

25           Larry?

1 MR. ROSS: Okay. Yeah, Larry Ross, L-a-r-r-y, R-o-s-s. I'm  
2 an inspector with the Federal Railroad Administration.

3 MR. TORRES: Okay. Mike?

4 MR. BULL: Mike Bull, M-i-k-e, B-u-l-l, FRA Operating  
5 Practices Inspector.

6 MR. TORRES: Okay. And the person that's with you?

7 MR. RUPP: Richard Rupp, R-i-c-h-a-r-d, R-u-p-p, Railroad  
8 Safety Inspector, Pennsylvania PUC.

9 MR. TORRES: Okay. CSXT?

10 MR. HANNESSON: Steven Hannesson, S-t-e-v-e-n,  
11 H-a-n-n-e-s-s-o-n. I'm manager of Safety and Operating Practices,  
12 the Baltimore Division here at CSX.

13 MR. TORRES: Okay. BLET?

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

15 MR. TORRES: Okay. And SMART.

16 MR. CASSITY: Jared Cassity, J-a-r-e-d, C-a-s-s-i-t-y, a  
17 representative with our National Safety Team.

18 INTERVIEW OF ALEXANDER HAAS

19 BY MR. TORRES:

20 Q. Okay. Alex, do you mind if we call you by your first name?

21 A. Absolutely, that's fine.

22 Q. Okay. Hey, if you can just give us a brief description of  
23 your work history there with the CSXT?

24 A. I've been with CSXT since October 21st of 2002, and a  
25 qualified trained dispatcher here since July 6th of 2003. And I

1 have been on the Baltimore Division for the majority of that time,  
2 with a brief 7 months on the Jacksonville Division in 2015.

3 Q. Okay. What are your scheduled working hours?

4 A. Currently I'm an extra board dispatcher, so they're various.

5 Q. Okay. So they call you and you fill in positions, different  
6 shifts?

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. Okay. On the night of the incident can you describe, you  
9 know --

10 A. Right.

11 Q. -- what was happening that day, you know, when you went on  
12 duty and stuff like that, what you dispatched?

13 A. I was dispatching the BB desk, Bravo-Bravo, on third shift.  
14 And that was a pretty routine night with the exception of the  
15 events that occurred.

16 Q. Okay. When was the first time you talked to that train that  
17 -- when they started having problems? Can you describe that to  
18 us?

19 A. I had two different incidents involving the train as far as  
20 problems go. There was an incident with an air issue and then, of  
21 course, the derailment issue, that involved two different crews.  
22 The first time that I had an incident was with the original crew  
23 when they had an air issue coming down grade.

24 Q. What did they report to you?

25 A. They had reported that they were losing their air, that they

1 had stopped the train on grade and were securing it to inspect and  
2 see what the air brake problem was.

3 Q. Okay. And did they find any defects?

4 A. They did. They found a cracked train line.

5 Q. And what happened after that? Or, you know, what  
6 conversations took place after that with the crew?

7 A. The crew that was on board, of course, wasn't the crew that  
8 had the derailment. They were short on their hours of service so  
9 I had contacted a relief crew. The chief ordered a taxi for the  
10 relief crew to go up and meet the crew that was on board. We also  
11 had notified our car department to go to the location to check out  
12 the problem with the train.

13 Q. On the first crew, did you -- did they ask for any type of  
14 help or, you know, what was needed?

15 A. Well, when they had discovered that they had the cracked  
16 train line, they had informed us that there was nothing they could  
17 do with that. And at that point in time I had talked to the  
18 chief, who was then having the car department go to location, and  
19 that's the help that they required.

20 Q. Okay. So when did the second crew get on board?

21 A. It was in the vicinity of time that the car department had  
22 arrived and were working on repairing the train line, and I don't  
23 recall the exact time.

24 Q. Okay. Once the repair was made, did that second crew talk to  
25 you?



1 A. Yes, they did.

2 Q. What did they say? What was that conversation?

3 A. To the best of my recollection, once they had fixed the  
4 cracked train line, the crew had recharged the air and then they  
5 had required permission to move the train down grade.

6 Q. And then what happened after that once they departed?

7 A. Well, it was a significant period of time from when they  
8 departed to the point in time when the emergency tower went off  
9 and the crew advised me that they were in emergency. Probably at  
10 least an hour from departing the location of the cracked train  
11 line to when they went into emergency.

12 Q. And what did you do after that?

13 A. When they informed me that they were in emergency I got what  
14 information I could from the train crew and reported that to the  
15 chief dispatcher and our police communications center.

16 Q. So what's the subdivision where this took place?

17 A. The Keystone Subdivision.

18 Q. Okay. And what direction was the train traveling?

19 A. The timetable direction was eastbound.

20 Q. So are you required to be familiar with the territory?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. So can you tell us a little bit about it, about the  
23 territory?

24 A. Well, the operation -- or the subdivision where they were  
25 operating is grade. It is -- in some parts it's heavy grade.

1 Q. And is this -- what kind of -- is it signal territory?

2 A. Yes, it is traffic controlled.

3 Q. So when trains come into your territory, I mean, do you take  
4 a look at them before they enter your territory or how does that  
5 work?

6 A. Yes. They -- when they enter the Keystone Subdivision coming  
7 from that particular direction, they've operated for quite a  
8 distance before they get to grade.

9 Q. So when they come -- when the train arrives to the Keystone  
10 Subdivision, you already know what the train looks like, you've  
11 already seen their profile?

12 A. Correct. Correct.

13 Q. And how do you dispatch trains with that information?

14 A. Well, as far as operating goes, there are times when you  
15 might have something of that particular size, you might have  
16 something with a higher priority that you need to get around that  
17 particular train. Sometimes that comes into play.

18 Q. So when you looked at that train before it entered or while  
19 it was in your territory, what -- was there anything that struck  
20 you or thought that it was unusual?

21 A. No. We'll have to back up and look at the time frame there  
22 because that train was in the -- I would say it was probably  
23 within 10 miles of starting to descend the grade when shift  
24 turnover transpired. So I had not dealt -- you know, I had not  
25 been dealing with that train but for a short period of time when

1 the first air brake incident occurred.

2 Q. Okay. So the train was already on your territory when you  
3 went on duty; it was already running?

4 A. Correct. correct. My only thing that I noticed was that the  
5 hours of service on the crew that was on board was a little short.

6 Q. Okay. During the conversation with the first crew -- I heard  
7 the voice tapes -- you mentioned about helpers. You asked them if  
8 they needed helpers. What was that referring to?

9 A. I was curious. They had a helper that assisted them up the  
10 grade. I wanted to determine whether the helper that had cut off  
11 at the top could be any assistance to them with their air brake  
12 problem.

13 Q. Okay. So it was not for -- to help, to assist the train go  
14 down the grade?

15 A. That's correct.

16 Q. And where is the crest; where is the top of the hill?

17 A. The top of the hill would be at Sand Patch.

18 Q. As far as this train is concerned, is this train profile  
19 typical? I mean, is this a typical train?

20 A. For what we've been running in that particular terrain, yes,  
21 that was fairly typical for that, yes.

22 Q. So you run -- you guys operate trains like that almost on a  
23 daily basis; is that correct?

24 A. Correct.

25 Q. When you're dispatching that territory, how often do you have

1 problems there or train crews report problems to you?

2 A. I wouldn't say it's frequently. It does occur. But I  
3 wouldn't -- it's not something if I were dispatching that desk on  
4 a daily basis that would occur daily, certainly.

5 Q. Yeah. Would you give us an example what they report, type of  
6 problems?

7 A. It is kind of various. It can be anything from having an  
8 air-type issue to tower issues, maybe fuel. There's a lot of  
9 different situations that could occur.

10 MR. TORRES: Okay. Thank you. I'll pass it on to the FRA.

11 BY MR. ROSS:

12 Q. Yeah, Alex, this is Larry Ross. The train when you first  
13 talked to it, do you have -- and I know you probably don't have  
14 the train sheet in front of you, but do you recall about what time  
15 you first heard from the crew on the radio, the first crew there,  
16 just east of Sand Patch?

17 A. It would had to have been sometime after 2300 or in that  
18 vicinity, because shift turnover, as I -- if I'm trying to recall,  
19 probably occurred about, oh, 10:40, 10:45, and probably took about  
20 10 minutes. Then, at that point in time, the train was still  
21 moving east up towards Sand Patch. So probably sometime after  
22 2300.

23 Q. Okay. Had the crew reported any -- when you were in the  
24 process of your turnover, had they reported any problems with the  
25 train en route out of Connellsville such as tonnage, issues with

1 the train power or anything like that, that was handed off to you  
2 with your turnover?

3 A. No, not at all. Only issue was short on hours of service.

4 Q. Now, do you know -- were you there when the helper cut off  
5 the train, or --

6 A. I would have been there. I don't know -- I don't recall  
7 whether it occurred during the turnover or it was shortly  
8 thereafter. But I would have -- yes, I almost certainly was there  
9 when it happened.

10 Q. Okay. Where do the helpers usually cut off these eastbound  
11 trains?

12 A. They cut off at Sand Patch if they are using a helper link.

13 Q. At Sand Patch is it the west portal or the east portal over  
14 toward Manila or --

15 A. Usually they cut off west of the tunnel.

16 Q. Okay. Do you have any other traffic in the area, whether  
17 eastbound or westbound trains, that you were handling at the time  
18 with the first crew?

19 A. There were at least two eastbounds coming behind that  
20 particular train. Westbound traffic, I believe I didn't have  
21 anything coming when they were having issues on the grade. I  
22 don't recall at the time there something coming westbound, but I  
23 did have eastbound traffic, yes.

24 Q. Okay, behind it. Now you said you had talked to the first  
25 crew when they had the air problem and talked with the chief, and

1 then between the chief they were calling a relief crew and getting  
2 the car department out there. Did the relief crew talk with you  
3 when they arrived up at -- towards east of Sand Patch?

4 A. The relief crew was a standard helper crew that gets called  
5 daily. So I had talked to them initially to tell them where they  
6 were going, and then they did contact me when they arrived at the  
7 train.

8 Q. Do you have any idea about what time -- and this is shooting  
9 from the hip; I realize it's been 3 weeks ago -- about what time  
10 they first contacted you?

11 A. Which -- the helper crew?

12 Q. Yeah, the helper, the relief crew or the helper crew out of  
13 Cumberland.

14 A. The only thing that sticks in my mind as far as that goes is  
15 that they did arrive in the vicinity the same time that the car  
16 department did, and I, to the best of my knowledge, don't. It  
17 tends to stick in my mind that it was getting pretty close to that  
18 other crew expiring on the hours of service. I don't recall what  
19 their time was.

20 Q. Okay. How long, can you remember, it was from the time that  
21 the relief crew got there, the helper crew, and the carmen  
22 finished -- or how long was it before this second crew on the  
23 train was ready to depart?

24 A. It was probably -- to my thinking, it was at least an hour.

25 Q. Probably an hour or so. And I think you said before that you

1 had talked with the crew and they were getting ready to go for  
2 permission. Did they say any -- excuse me -- did the relief crew  
3 say anything to you about the handbrakes on the car, whether they  
4 were going to leave handbrakes on the train or take them off the  
5 cars before they left or were there any delays like that?

6 A. Yeah. They were going to leave handbrakes applied and bring  
7 it down the grade, which they did.

8 Q. Did they ever give you a number of the handbrakes?

9 A. No. They had to knock sufficient brakes off to move the  
10 train, but to my recollection they didn't tell me the number that  
11 they left on the train.

12 Q. Now you were talking about some of the issues that you  
13 encounter. Does this happen very often up there where the crews  
14 have to stop and apply handbrakes and, in particular, leave them  
15 on when they leave the top of the mountain?

16 A. Not frequently, no. It has happened, but not frequently.

17 Q. You said before you weren't -- it probably took an hour from  
18 the time they left up there. Do you have a -- kind of a shoot  
19 from the hip when they left there down the mountain, finally  
20 started moving?

21 A. I would say sometime probably in the 0330 -- sometime between  
22 3:30 and 0400.

23 Q. How long does it normally take a train -- I realize the train  
24 was actually beyond the normal, but what's the actual running time  
25 down the mountain from, say, that location down to Hyndman?

1 A. About 45 minutes.

2 Q. Do you hear anything more from the Q388 crew after they left  
3 the top of the hill?

4 A. No. Once they got the train moving, I don't recall that -- I  
5 don't believe that they said anything until they got down to  
6 Hyndman.

7 Q. Okay. Now you said you had some eastbound trains following  
8 it. Were they close or were they back a ways yet?

9 A. They were all stopped when the incident occurred and they  
10 didn't get moving again until the train left, once it got enough  
11 brakes knocked off of it after the train line was repaired, the  
12 two eastbounds started moving again.

13 Q. Okay. How about the westbound? You said there was one in  
14 the picture someplace. Was he stopped or did he get held up  
15 coming up the mountain?

16 A. No. There wasn't anything on the westbound number 1 track  
17 that was moving or was out there.

18 Q. Okay. Where would that crew pick up their -- I should say  
19 their first controlled signal or any eastbound signals that you  
20 would control there?

21 A. No, they'd have to have gone all the way down to Hyndman.

22 Q. Once, say, you got -- where's your control signal at the top  
23 of the hill?

24 A. Manila.

25 Q. Oh. So your last eastbound control signal is Manila; then



1 the next control point is down in Hyndman, then?

2 A. Correct. Correct. Yeah, you're talking 209 mile pole down  
3 to about the 193.

4 Q. Okay. Now, can you tell with your indication on your  
5 schematic or on your board there what kind of signals that they  
6 had when they left there?

7 A. No.

8 Q. I mean, does -- what do you just show track occupancy? It  
9 doesn't give you any indication of your intermediate signals?

10 A. That's correct, yeah. On the display there's three segments  
11 that show on the display, but there's far more than three  
12 intermediate signals out there and I don't have any way from that  
13 display to determine anything with an intermediate signal.

14 Q. Okay. Now where are your display points, out of curiosity?  
15 Or does it just show the train in red as occupancy --

16 A. Right. Correct.

17 Q. Just shows occupancy. Is there a give location where those  
18 circuits are or no?

19 A. Possibly. I don't know what they are.

20 Q. Okay, so there's no other control points. Do you have any  
21 other power switches in between Manila and Hyndman?

22 A. No. No. There's no power switches between those two control  
23 points at all.

24 Q. Okay. When did you first talk with the crew after the  
25 derailment? You said your crew contacted you.

1 A. Correct. Yeah, they called me and informed me that they were  
2 in emergency, and I got as much information as I could so that I  
3 could pass it on to the chief and the police and our PSCC.

4 Q. Did they know that they were in derailment initially or did  
5 you find that out afterward, in the second communication with  
6 them?

7 A. Well, the conductor -- the engineer told me that it had  
8 kicked hard. There was a track occupancy on the adjacent number 1  
9 track, which I told them. Of course, they didn't know they were  
10 in emergency, but it was certainly an indication there.

11 Q. So you had track occupancy light on number 1 track?

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. Okay. How much longer -- what time do you think that was,  
14 best recollection?

15 A. What time the, what time --

16 Q. Yeah. When the crew first called you to tell you that they  
17 were in emergency and then when you finally realized -- you know,  
18 how long was the span in there by the time you really knew they  
19 had cars on the ground?

20 A. Well, they -- sometime around the vicinity of 0500, that was  
21 when it occurred. And I don't remember when it was exactly, the  
22 first time they called in emergency or the next time that I spoke  
23 to them there in very short order, but somebody had pulled up  
24 beside the train and informed the engineer that they had a car  
25 that had exploded, I think is how he stated it.

1 Q. Okay. Did the engineer say where his head end stopped?

2 A. Yeah. He gave me mileposts on the head end and, of course,  
3 he gave me an approximate rear end mile pole.

4 MR. ROSS: That's all. I have a couple other things I'll  
5 ask. I want to think about it and catch up with my hieroglyphics  
6 and writing down here. That's all for now. I would like to ask  
7 just a couple questions before we finish up.

8 MR. HAAS: Okay.

9 MR. ROSS: Thank you, sir.

10 MR. TORRES: Okay. Mike?

11 MR. BULL: Yeah, Mike Bull, FRA. I think Mr. Ross asked the  
12 questions that I was planning on asking you that had to do with  
13 when the relief crew got up there and, Alex, I think you answered  
14 that pretty well. So I don't really have anything at this point.  
15 Thank you.

16 MR. HAAS: Okay.

17 MR. BULL: Okay. I'm done.

18 MR. TORRES: All right. CSXT?

19 MR. HANNESSON: I have no further questions for Mr. Haas.

20 MR. TORRES: BLET?

21 MR. FANNON: Alex, Randy Fannon.

22 BY MR. FANNON:

23 Q. Basically just a general question, I think I heard Mr. Torres  
24 ask you earlier, but -- do you get to see the train makeup  
25 anywhere on your computer system, what the train looks like prior

1 to getting to your territory?

2 A. Not to -- not on the dispatcher system, no. You would --  
3 you'd have to go into the mainframe and look at it from there.

4 Q. Do you recall if you did that or have you done that in the  
5 past?

6 A. Generally, no. I usually look at what's on the train sheet  
7 so that I can judge the performance of the train.

8 MR. FANNON: All right. Thank you, no further questions.

9 MR. TORRES: Okay. SMART?

10 MR. CASSITY: Thank you, Tomas. Jared Cassity here with  
11 SMART.

12 BY MR. CASSITY:

13 Q. Alex, if you said this in the beginning I apologize. Were  
14 you ever a conductor or an engineer when you hired on with the  
15 railroad?

16 A. No. I hired on the railroad as a train dispatcher.

17 Q. Okay. I see you answered that one. Talking about the train  
18 makeup and issues that happen on a system, is there anything in  
19 the dispatching system that would flag an improper train, maybe  
20 perhaps one that's built wrong or has a bad order of cars? Is  
21 there anything in the dispatcher system that would alert you to a  
22 potential problem with a train on a territory?

23 A. If it were related to a consist discrepancy, which would go  
24 out as an alert, or a defect detector, which is programmed into  
25 the system. There isn't any connectivity there otherwise.

1 Q. Okay. Was there any exception or anything that you recall  
2 with this train in particular on that night that was flagged or  
3 shown in your system as inappropriate?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Okay. As far as defect detectors, and forgive me here, I  
6 know there's even remote detectors now on CSX that seem to  
7 indicate a hot bearing or a hot journal, if you will, and I know  
8 of dispatchers notifying crews. Was any of that prior to the  
9 derailment on the territory?

10 A. Not while I was there and nothing that was passed on to me in  
11 the turnover.

12 Q. Okay. And I was listening to some of the tapes and I noticed  
13 -- and I'm assuming here that you were speaking of the roadmaster,  
14 but for all honesty and clarity I don't know in particular who you  
15 were talking to. But there was a reference made to the track  
16 light coming on after the derailment was reported, and then you  
17 made comment towards the Foley crossover, something about it being  
18 6 miles back and possibly a coincidence. Do you recall that  
19 conversation and, if so, what you were referring to?

20 A. The only thing I can recall with that, I was just trying to  
21 make sure they were beyond that hand crossover. Just making sure  
22 that -- pretty much where they were at and that nothing had  
23 damaged -- caused that crossover any kind of damage.

24 Q. Okay. So there wasn't anything showing as something the  
25 train could have possibly done in that area to the track?

1 A. No. That's a hand-throw crossover. So, no, there's nothing  
2 indicated whatsoever, unless it left a track light.

3 Q. Okay. Okay. And then it was asked a little bit ago about  
4 placing the handbrakes on the train, and you had said it's fairly  
5 common when a train stops. And you may have answered this; again,  
6 I apologize. Is it possible for a train to leave the grade, a  
7 descending grade without handbrakes? And I know the train sizes  
8 is going to be an issue, but I mean is it something they have to  
9 do every time or is it really just kind of an engineer's  
10 preference?

11 A. That would be -- would certainly be the train crew's  
12 preference and responsibility.

13 Q. Okay. Then how about train brakes or handbrakes -- excuse me  
14 -- on empty cars, are you aware of any issue with that on the  
15 subdivision?

16 A. No.

17 Q. This crew -- and granted, you weren't privy to it, but they  
18 -- you testified earlier that they released the handbrakes from  
19 the head end -- I mean, excuse me, from the -- there we go -- from  
20 the head end rather than the rear end. So in other words, when  
21 they released the brakes they started knocking them off from the  
22 locomotive working backwards, which left a series of brakes out  
23 beyond that. As far as you're concerned as a dispatcher, is there  
24 any issue or any concern there for train operations?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Okay. There's been a lot of changes on CSX recently, has  
2 there been any significant changes to the dispatcher role or the  
3 way you guys operate?

4 A. Certainly there have been a number of rules changes that we  
5 get, which is common -- pretty much common practice in those  
6 professions. I wouldn't say that it's done anything to  
7 significantly change how we operate.

8 Q. Okay. And do you recall if there were any issues with the  
9 track? Was there any slow orders or anything reported that was an  
10 exception with the track that night?

11 A. No. No, I don't recall there being any issues.

12 MR. CASSITY: Okay. I don't have anything else, Tomas.

13 Alex, thank you.

14 MR. TORRES: Okay. Tomas with NTSB.

15 BY MR. TORRES:

16 Q. Alex, are you familiar with a timetable?

17 A. I am.

18 Q. Are you required to be familiar with it?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. On page 72, it makes a reference to placing the empty  
21 cars in trains. Are you familiar with that page?

22 A. I would have to look at that to see.

23 Q. Well, it reads: "Empty cars 80 feet and longer must be  
24 placed in the train in such a location that the trailing tonnage  
25 behind these empty cars does not exceed the amount listed below."

1           It's got a table there. It's got Hyndman and Sand Patch  
2 westward; Connellsville and Sand Patch eastward 5100 tons; and  
3 Connellsville and New Castle eastward and westward 13,000 tons.  
4 Are you familiar with that?

5 A. I'm looking now. I have seen that, yes.

6 Q. All right. I'm trying to understand how it applies.

7 A. That would apply toward the train makeup, obviously. On the  
8 dispatcher's side, there is no indicator on the dispatcher system  
9 how the train is made up. I can look at general information like  
10 loads, empties, tons, length, locomotive numbers, but there's  
11 nothing on my system that indicates how the train is built.

12 Q. Okay. In between that table Connellsville and New Castle,  
13 what are those points, from where to where?

14 A. From Connellsville to New Castle would be on the Pittsburgh  
15 Subdivision.

16 Q. Okay. And Connellsville and Sand Patch?

17 A. That would be on the Keystone.

18 Q. Would that cover Hyndman or where the accident happened, the  
19 derailment?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. It would?

22 A. Yes. Well, Connellsville -- yeah, Connellsville to Sand  
23 Patch, Connellsville to Cumberland would be on the Keystone Sub  
24 where it happened.

25 Q. Do you know if there's any revisions to it, like a general



1 order or anything like that?

2 A. On?

3 Q. For this section of the timetable, page 72?

4 A. Not on that, no. There's been some train handling rules that  
5 have been revised, but not the timetable.

6 MR. TORRES: Okay. I'll pass it on to the FRA. Thank you.

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

8 BY MR. ROSS:

9 Q. Mr. Cassity was asking you about detectors. Do you have any  
10 type of detectors from Sand Patch, between Sand Patch and Hyndman?

11 A. Sand Patch to Hyndman, no.

12 Q. No detectors on the --

13 A. I take that back. That's incorrect. There is a detector  
14 between Sand Patch and Manila. It's at Glencoe.

15 Q. You say Glencoe?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Now does this send an indication to just the crew or does the  
18 dispatcher have a light or some type of indication that it had  
19 tripped the detector at Glencoe?

20 A. No. That would -- a trip in the field, and the crew would  
21 have to report that.

22 Q. And do you know what kind of detector it is, whether it's a  
23 hot box or drag or --

24 A. I would have to look at that. It's at least a hot box.

25 Q. Okay. Something else I wanted to ask you, though -- I just

1 thought of that there. I'm looking at a -- I got a -- I guess  
2 it's called a train sheet, but it's kind of a data. Was this --  
3 until the train had trouble when you first come on duty, had he  
4 had -- how late was he running? This doesn't actually show the  
5 time. It shows when the problems are reported on it. But was he  
6 running close to on schedule or behind schedule? I got what --  
7 the schedule times on the train, but the sheet that I have,  
8 anyway, doesn't have all the OS times on it. That's why I was --

9 A. I understand. Yeah, I don't know.

10 Q. Okay. And that's all. I got a couple of other questions.  
11 You said you -- you've worked the Baltimore Division mostly. Did  
12 you work at a BB desk most of your time as a dispatcher or are you  
13 spread out on different divisions?

14 A. No, when we came up here in 2002, I owed the second shift on  
15 that desk until '15, when I made a seniority move to Jacksonville.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Sorry. That was 2008, not 2002. So 2008 to 2015.

18 Q. So you took the second trick BB when they moved the  
19 dispatching back to Halethorpe?

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. Okay. And you live in -- these are just some standard  
22 questions, and I'm not sure what I'm going to do with them,  
23 usually for the train crews and the people who are out in the  
24 field. But these are like fatigue questions for people and I'm  
25 just going to do a couple of those. You said you're on an extra

1 board. Were you on a hold-down or anything on this job or did you  
2 catch it extra on the night of the accident? Or morning, I should  
3 say?

4 A. I don't recall that. I've been on so many hold-downs on that  
5 particular shift that I don't recall on that day.

6 Q. Do you live in and around the Halethorpe or Baltimore area  
7 or?

8 A. In the vicinity.

9 Q. How long does it take you to get to work, your commute time?

10 A. Depending on traffic, about 15 to 20 minutes.

11 Q. Fifteen to 20. Oh, you're pretty close then. And, of  
12 course, what, an hour and a half in traffic?

13 A. Yeah. Yeah. On a bad day, correct.

14 Q. Yeah. Do you have any type of a sleep disorder?

15 A. Not that's affecting me, no.

16 Q. What kind of call did they give you to report? Do you get a  
17 call from a chief or somebody to report for the job, or how long  
18 in advance?

19 A. They're generally -- when it's off the board, they're usually  
20 doing it the day before.

21 Q. Okay. So you generally know a day before?

22 A. Right. Right. I'm recollecting back to that. I'm fairly  
23 certain I was on a -- that I was on a hold-down on that.

24 Q. So you knew about it a day ahead of time then?

25 A. At least.

1 Q. Okay. So you had -- okay. And were you rested for this job  
2 or did you go to sleep before you went to work?

3 A. That -- I don't recall if I took a nap, but I would have been  
4 rested prior to coming to work, yes.

5 Q. Okay. How often -- what kind of -- do you have any set time  
6 for going to bed or does it vary?

7 A. Well, depending on the shift, obviously it varies greatly,  
8 but I try to get at least 6 hours' sleep.

9 Q. That's your normal? Do you have any problem sleeping?

10 A. That -- and again it depends on whether I'm working a regular  
11 schedule or not. Sometimes it takes a day or two to get into the  
12 swing of things when I go off of one shift and on to another.

13 Q. No, I can understand that. The day of the accident when you  
14 were called to work, how would you describe your sleep? Poor,  
15 fair, good or excellent?

16 A. Good.

17 Q. Good? Okay. Do you do any napping?

18 A. Sometimes.

19 Q. Sometimes. Any regular schedule or no or just --

20 A. No. No, I usually try to get rested in my initial sleep and  
21 not have the nap.

22 Q. Okay. So you didn't have any this day then?

23 A. No. No. I don't believe that I napped prior to coming to  
24 work.

25 Q. Okay. At the time of the accident, and this would be -- you

1 said it probably happened around 5 a.m. And these are actually  
2 for train crew, but we usually like the mechanical people and  
3 dispatchers, too. How would you describe your alertness level,  
4 with 1 very sleepy, 3 is kind of average, and 5 is very alert?

5 A. I'd say probably -- probably 4.

6 Q. Okay. That's it.

7 Now you normally work like a day for day on the extra board  
8 or 5 days or 6 days a week? Is there -- do you have any regular  
9 assigned days?

10 A. Not regular assigned to work, no. Rest days, yes, but not  
11 assigned workdays.

12 Q. What's your regular off days?

13 A. They are progressive. So the one progressive day would --  
14 say, for example, it would be Monday. Then the following week  
15 would be Tuesday, Wednesday and so on. The second rest day is not  
16 guaranteed but they're generally together.

17 Q. Okay. Sounds good. Have you guys been extra busy there  
18 lately or do you have enough manpower to handle the dispatching  
19 desk?

20 A. Yes.

21 MR. ROSS: Okay. I think that's all I have. I appreciate  
22 you taking the time, Alex.

23 MR. HAAS: Okay.

24 MR. BULL: Mike Bull, FRA. Again, Mr. Ross asked the  
25 questions I was interested in. So I thank you, Mr. Alex, and I'll

1 pass it on.

2 MR. HAAS: Yes, sir.

3 MR. TORRES: Okay. CSXT?

4 MR. HANNESSON: No follow-up questions.

5 MR. TORRES: Okay. BLET?

6 MR. FANNON: No questions.

7 MR. TORRES: SMART?

8 MR. CASSITY: SMART, Jared Cassity.

9 BY MR. CASSITY:

10 Q. Alex, real quick. When the helper service -- who determines  
11 when the helpers are going to help a train?

12 A. In what context? As far as somebody needing a push or  
13 somebody in like re-crew service?

14 Q. Oh, I'm sorry. No, as far as actually shoving a train or  
15 helping them ascend a grade.

16 A. As in respect to the eastbound train?

17 Q. Yeah, I mean, this eastbound train wasn't able to go up the  
18 hill there prior to Sand Patch. Who would have made that call?  
19 Is that the dispatcher or the chief or is that someone else?

20 A. Generally, when they're coming east, that's going to be made  
21 prior to coming on to the Keystone. That crew comes on duty at  
22 Connellsville and has either been requested by the crew or I would  
23 assume the yardmaster has made the determination.

24 Q. Okay. So if the train is heavy enough -- if I recall  
25 correctly -- I don't have the timetable in front of me, but if I

1 recall correctly, it's 7,000 tons going east up the hill, the  
2 train needs a shove. So it can either be the crew or the  
3 yardmaster that would make that determination?

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. Okay. So, then, if it's the yardmaster, obviously they would  
6 have knowledge of the train profile and the makeup and how it's  
7 necessarily built prior to entering the subdivision?

8 A. Correct.

9 MR. CASSITY: Okay. I have nothing else. Thank you, Alex.

10 MR. HAAS: Okay.

11 MR. TORRES: Okay. It's Tomas with the NTSB. I have no  
12 further questions. Does anybody else?

13 MR. FANNON: No, sir. I'm good.

14 MR. ROSS: Ross is good.

15 MR. HANNESSON: Steve Hannesson's good.

16 MR. TORRES: Okay. If there's no further questions, then  
17 this will conclude the interview.

18 Alex, thank you. Appreciate it.

19 MR. HAAS: Yes, sir.

20 MR. TORRES: And thank you Steve Ammons, thank you for  
21 helping us in setting up this interview. Thank you.

22 End of interview.

23 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

24

25

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 Alex Haas

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA17FR011

PLACE: Via Teleconference

DATE: August 21, 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.

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