

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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DERAILMENT OF CSX TRANSPORTATION
TRAIN K42911 WITH SUBSEQUENT
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS RELEASE
IN DRAFFIN, KENTUCKY,
ON FEBRUARY 13, 2020

Accident No.: RRD20FR002

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Interview of: JAMES COLLINS, Trainmaster
CSX Transportation

Hilton Garden Inn
Pikeville, Kentucky

Friday,
February 14, 2020

APPEARANCES:

TOMAS TORRES, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BARRY STAMPER, Operating Practices Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration

DAVID CLARK, Investigator
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen
Safety Task Force

RANDY FANNON, Inspector
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen

JEFF MITCHELL, Investigator
SMART Transportation

STEVEN AMMONS, Director Train Handler Rules & Practices
CSX Transportation

TONY THOMAS, Director Safety & Operating Practices
CSX Transportation

ROD PAYNE, Attorney
Boehl Stopher & Graves, LLP
(On behalf of Mr. Collins)

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:10 a.m.)

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2
3 MR. TORRES: Okay, we'll get started. My name is Tomas
4 Torres, T-o-m-a-s, T-o-r-r-e-s. Today's date is February 14th,
5 2020, and we are at the Hilton Inn at Pikeville, Kentucky, in
6 connection with an accident that occurred at railroad milepost 123

7 --

8 MR. COLLINS: .8.

9 MR. TORRES: -- .8, on February the 13th, 2020. The NTSB
10 accident number is RRD20FR002. The purpose of the investigation
11 is to increase safety, not to assign fault, blame, or liability.

12 NTSB cannot offer any guarantee of confidentiality or
13 immunity from legal certificate action. A transcript or summary
14 of the interview will go into the public docket. The interviewee
15 can have one representative of the interviewee's choice.

16 A representative may not testify for the interviewee.
17 Representative's comments should be limited to legal objections or
18 other stuff -- basically can't answer for you. Okay? If you've
19 got a question, maybe you have a sidebar.

20 But anyway, do you understand this interview is being
21 recorded?

22 MR. COLLINS: Yes.

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

24 MR. COLLINS: James Collins, J-a-m-e-s, C-o-l-l-i-n-s.

25 MR. TORRES: Thank you. And your representative?

1 MR. COLLINS: Mr. Payne.

2 MR. PAYNE: Rod Payne, R-o-d, P-a-y-n-e.

3 MR. STAMPER: What are we doing now?

4 MR. TORRES: Introduce yourself, and what agency?

5 MR. STAMPER: I'm Barry Stamper. I'm an Operating Practices
6 Inspector for the FRA.

7 MR. TORRES: You've got to spell your name.

8 MR. STAMPER: B-a-r-r-y, S-t-a-m-p-e-r.

9 MR. CLARK: Jason Clark, BLET Safety Task Force Investigator.
10 J-a-s-o-n, C-l-a-r-k.

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

13 MR. MITCHELL: Jeff Mitchell, J-e-f-f, M-i-t-c-h-e-l-l, SMART
14 Transportation investigator.

15 MR. AMMONS: Steven Ammons, S-t-e-v-e-n, A-m-m-o-n-s, CSX
16 Transportation, Director of Train Handler Rules and Practices.

17 MR. THOMAS: Tony Thomas, T-o-n-y, T-h-o-m-a-s, Director of
18 Safety and Operating Practices, CSX Midwest Region.

19 MR. TORRES: Okay, thank you.

20 INTERVIEW OF JAMES COLLINS

21 BY MR. TORRES:

22 Q. James, this is Tomas Torres with the NTSB. Can you give us a
23 brief description of your work history here with the CSX?

24 A. Yes. I hired in 2001 as a clerk, moved up to yardmaster in
25 2004, and was promoted to trainmaster last year.

1 Q. Last year?

2 A. I'm sorry, excuse me, year before last.

3 Q. Okay. And your duties as a trainmaster, can you describe
4 them?

5 A. I just make sure we run the operations out of Shelby Yard
6 here, Shelbiana, Kentucky.

7 Q. So it's about pick-ups and set-outs for the trains and stuff?

8 A. Just that, making sure the mines -- the scheduled loadings
9 for the mines are loaded on time, the operational testing of
10 employees, just all operational functions at the yard, this
11 territory.

12 Q. Okay, thank you. What are your work hours? What's your
13 schedule?

14 A. Usually -- on average, mostly during the day, 6:00 to 6:00.
15 But it can be all hours.

16 Q. Do you have any scheduled rest days or --

17 A. Friday and Saturday.

18 Q. Friday and Saturday? And mostly daylight, 6:00 a.m.?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. 12-hour shifts?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. On the day of the accident, what time did you go on duty?

23 A. I was called at about 6:50 that morning for the call. I'd
24 actually had just got home from -- that morning about 3:30 and was
25 called for that at about, like, say 6:50.

1 Q. 6:50? So you were on duty --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- when you got called?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. So at 6:50, who called you?

6 A. Best of my memory, I think it was the chief -- the local
7 chief.

8 Q. Chief train dispatcher or --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. And what did he tell you?

11 A. Just that there had been a train derailment over at milepost
12 123.8.

13 Q. Okay. And how long did it take you to get there -- to
14 respond?

15 A. Probably 30 minutes.

16 Q. 30 minutes?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. So you worked the yard office at the time when you got
19 notified?

20 A. No, I wasn't. I was actually at the house.

21 Q. At the house?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. But you were on duty?

24 A. Well, like I said, I had actually been out that night. So,
25 like I said, I typically come on duty at 6:00, but I hadn't -- I

1 was technically at the house when I got called that morning.

2 Q. Okay. So you were pretty much getting ready to go to work
3 or --

4 A. No, I was asleep at the time I got the call.

5 Q. Okay, I understand. Okay, so when you arrived on scene, can
6 you describe what you saw and what you did?

7 A. When I arrived on scene, seen the engines were derailed, cars
8 were derailed, and everything was on fire.

9 Q. So it was already up in flames when you got there?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Oh. And did you notify anybody else?

12 A. Not once on scene, no. I talked to Mr. Davidson (ph.) in
13 route. But no, once on scene, I didn't -- I was not in contact
14 with anybody else.

15 Q. Who's Mr. Davidson?

16 A. He is a senior trainmaster.

17 Q. Okay. And were you the only one that responded to the scene?

18 A. At the time, yes.

19 Q. Right. Okay. So you arrived, everything's on fire now. So
20 what did you do after that?

21 A. Worked my way down to the riverbank, communicated with the
22 crew on the nose of the engine, and eventually ended up getting in
23 the water to help get them out of the water.

24 Q. So you jumped in the water and swam towards them?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. When you arrived, what did you communicate with them? What
2 was the language? Was it over the radio?

3 A. No. No, I was screaming at them, trying to communicate with
4 them, because they were out on the nose of the engine. I was
5 screaming, so they tried to hear me over all the noise, about
6 needing to get them off the engine.

7 Q. Okay. So what noise? Was it, like, gas?

8 A. It was just a roaring noise.

9 Q. Roaring noise?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. From the flames?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And were they stuck in the cab, or were they --

14 A. They were on the nose of the engine.

15 Q. They were already outside?

16 A. Well, when I first got there, no, they were working their way
17 out on the nose of the engine, and then -- I'm sorry, out of the
18 engine -- and then were on the nose of the engine for several
19 minutes. And I just, like I said, tried to communicate back and
20 forth with them on the nose of the engine.

21 Q. All right. And the reason for you to swim towards them --

22 A. I --

23 Q. -- I mean, you just did it or --

24 A. I did.

25 Q. -- did they ask for help, or --

1 A. No, no. I, I just wanted to help.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. I just had to get them out of that situation.

4 Q. And the fire, was it really close to them?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. I mean, like, was the cab or the engine itself on fire?

7 A. Yes, that engine was on fire.

8 Q. So they jumped in the water with you or --

9 A. Eventually, yes, they ended up getting into the water working
10 their way towards me, and I helped -- once they got to me, because
11 I was obstructed by a tree growing out of the bank, I helped get
12 them over that tree and get them onto the bank.

13 Q. And how about the other emergency personnel? When did they
14 arrive?

15 A. They were actually on site when I got there. But they could
16 not get the boat in the water. They could not find any access
17 point. So they left and traveled down the road looking for a
18 place, and then traveled back up the road looking for a place.
19 They finally arrived after we had got out of the water and was
20 sitting on the bank.

21 Q. And that's the fire department or --

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. So they were looking for a place to stage the boat and get it
24 on the water?

25 A. Yes, they were trying to find an access point to get it in

1 the water.

2 Q. Do you know how long that took them to accomplish that?

3 A. Probably about 30 minutes, I'm assuming.

4 Q. Oh, really? So they were going back and forth looking for a
5 spot?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. And where did they finally put the boat on the water?

8 A. Excuse me?

9 Q. Where did they finally end up getting the --

10 A. From what I heard, it was probably 2 miles up the road at
11 Ferrell's Creek.

12 Q. So then they --

13 A. Yeah, then they come back down the river on the boat.

14 Q. Yeah, because there's a lot of brush right there, right? I
15 mean, along the banks it seems like.

16 A. Yeah, yeah. Right where we were at, they were -- I guess
17 whoever owned the property, it was -- they had been -- I guess
18 done some dozer work, so they were -- it was just a drop off
19 straight down to the water, so it was really -- there was no way
20 to get the boat down right there.

21 Q. So the fire department, EMS, EMTs were already there?

22 A. The local fire department, the -- I think they're called the
23 Swift Water Rescue Part at the fire department, was there.

24 Q. So they were already there when you arrived?

25 A. Yes, they had got there about -- I guess right there before I

1 got there.

2 Q. Do you know who notified them?

3 A. No, I do not.

4 Q. No, you don't?

5 A. No.

6 MR. TORRES: Okay. At this time, I'll pass it on to the FRA.

7 MR. STAMPER: That crew was on duty --

8 MR. TORRES: You have to identify yourself when you speak.

9 MR. STAMPER: Oh, I'm sorry. Barry Stamper, FRA.

10 BY MR. STAMPER:

11 Q. James, that crew was on duty -- were they on duty -- did you
12 see them before you went off duty? I think they were there at
13 Shelby around the time that you were probably still out working.

14 A. No.

15 Q. Did you see them prior to them getting on the train?

16 A. No, sir, I did not.

17 MR. STAMPER: Okay.

18 MR. CLARK: Jason Clark, BLET. From all the rain that we've
19 had recently, one of the people at the organization, he mentioned
20 earlier that approximately 3 miles up the rail there was, like, a
21 known issue where there's potential for landslide -- or a problem
22 area I believe he described it. Did you guys have any inclination
23 that there might have been anything going on, like, toward that
24 area -- heading toward it at all, or no?

25 MR. COLLINS: No, sir. Not right where this happened, no.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

2 MR. MITCHELL: The only question I -- Jeff Mitchell, SMART
3 Transportation.

4 BY MR. MITCHELL:

5 Q. The train, I believe, was delayed. The crew was on duty at
6 0050 or 0055?

7 A. 12:50, sir -- 0050.

8 Q. And then they got on the train at -- do you know what time?

9 A. No. I don't know exactly what time they got on the train. I
10 know they departed the yard at, I think, 6:16.

11 Q. 6:16?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Do you know why the train was delayed?

14 A. The train was stuck behind another crew that was on duty that
15 had hit a tree. So that delayed that train getting there.

16 Q. (Indiscernible) also rain get in their way or --

17 A. No. We had a severe rainstorm and severe winds that night
18 before, and it had blowed the tree off the mountain at CMG 76.8.
19 And that crew hit that tree, and the tree was up under the engine.
20 So we had to get all that cleaned up. And that train was stuck
21 behind that crew.

22 MR. MITCHELL: Thank you.

23 MR. AMMONS: Steve Ammons, CSX.

24 BY MR. AMMONS:

25 Q. James, earlier, you mentioned that the crew was on the nose

1 of the locomotive.

2 A. Um-hmm.

3 Q. Could you describe exactly where on the nose? Were they up
4 on top of the nose, like where they would have had to climb up to
5 get away from the water, or were they actually out on the running
6 board in front of the door? Do you recall?

7 A. They were on the running board of the nose of the engine and
8 the top stack (ph.).

9 Q. Okay. Once you got the crew to safety, once you got them up
10 on the bank, you describe how you helped get them off and get them
11 over to the bank and up on the bank; is that correct?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Once you got them up on the bank and they were in a somewhat
14 safer -- much safer location, were you able to get any kind of
15 verbal or written statements from either one of them?

16 A. Just verbal.

17 Q. Could you talk about what they told you about the accident --

18 A. The --

19 Q. -- or what you asked them and what their answers were?

20 A. The only comment that was made about the accident was from
21 Mr. Hendrix. And he said he did -- they did not see it until they
22 were already on it due to the fog.

23 Q. Okay. And Mr. Hendrix is the engineer or the conductor?

24 A. He is the engineer.

25 Q. Engineer, okay. So you stated that they had left Shelby

1 somewhere around 6:15, I think, 6:16?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And this happened at approximately 6:50-ish?

4 A. I think the actual time was 6:46.

5 Q. Okay. So 30 minutes, they had traveled about 10 miles or so;
6 is that pretty close?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. And the engineer stated that they didn't see anything
9 until they were right on top of it, and there was heavy fog or --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. -- it was due to the fog?

12 A. Um-hmm.

13 Q. Okay. Did they say anything else?

14 A. No, nothing else was said.

15 Q. Did you ask them any other questions that maybe they couldn't
16 answer or didn't know or --

17 A. No, I didn't ask them anything else.

18 Q. Did the engineer, did he happen to state maybe anything that
19 you didn't ask? Such as, did he place the train in emergency or
20 did the train go in emergency on its own or -- do you know?

21 A. No, he didn't state anything like that to me.

22 Q. Okay. Do you know if the engineer -- do you remember if he
23 stated, or when you were out there, do you remember -- you talked
24 about the noises. I would be curious to know -- we've been
25 speculating whether or not the engineer may have used the MU

1 shutdown button to shut the entire consist down? Do you know if
2 he did that or could you tell if any of the locomotives were still
3 running or --

4 A. He didn't state that he had done that. And no, I couldn't
5 tell if anything was still running due to all the noise and the
6 smoke.

7 Q. And when you arrived on scene, what was the weather like
8 then?

9 A. Just cloudy.

10 Q. Was it raining at the time?

11 A. Not that I can remember.

12 Q. But it had been raining throughout the night?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. And you were able to talk to both crew members once
15 you got them to a safe location and --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- get them -- so what happened then? Once you got them to
18 the bank and you got yourself pulled back out of the river, what
19 happened at that point? Did you take them to EMS or did --

20 A. At the time I got Chris, the conductor, up to the ledge, I
21 went back down and assisted Mr. Hendrix up to the ledge. And by
22 the time I got him up there, that's when the rescue boat showed
23 up. And we assisted him down to the boat.

24 Q. Okay, so you -- and you walked back, and they rode the boat
25 back. Is that --

1 A. Yes. They rode the boat back, and I walked back.

2 Q. Okay. And when you got back to where -- did you go back to
3 the same location where they rode the boat back to?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Did you see them anymore after that?

6 A. I seen him -- I seen Mr. Hendrix on the back of the
7 ambulance.

8 Q. Okay. All right. Was there any other managers at that point
9 there?

10 A. No.

11 MR. AMMONS: No. Okay. Okay, I think that's all I got.

12 MR. TORRES: Tomas with the NTSB.

13 BY MR. TORRES:

14 Q. So that night, you say it was foggy. When you arrived was it
15 foggy, or -- was it foggy throughout the night?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Were you a conductor?

18 A. No, sir.

19 Q. No? The reason I asked, I was trying to see if you were
20 familiar with the territory so you can give us a description, you
21 know, the layout of the track, the terrain.

22 A. Not on that. That's -- I'm -- my territory runs the other
23 direction, so I'm not all that familiar with that territory on
24 that side.

25 Q. Okay. Typically, how many trains do you run per day in that

1 area?

2 A. It varies. A minimum of two every day. Sometimes, it can be
3 up to eight or nine.

4 Q. So between two and eight or nine?

5 A. Yeah.

6 MR. TORRES: That's all I have.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have anything right now.

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

9 BY MR. FANNON:

10 Q. After you ran down from where you parked your vehicle, ran
11 down there right away, got to the location as quick as you could.

12 A. Um-hmm.

13 Q. They were in the front of the locomotive -- or on the front
14 of the locomotive. Did you have to coax them to jump -- come into
15 the water, or did they do that on their own?

16 A. Kind of both. I had been screaming at them to get off the
17 engine, to get in the water, to come towards me. They were
18 hesitant due to the river being up and the swiftness of the water.

19 Q. And it's unknown how deep it was, correct?

20 A. Yes, yeah, there. I don't know how deep it was.

21 Q. So when they came off the locomotive, did they come down the
22 stack? Did they jump in?

23 A. Yeah, they come down the stack and then just kind of --

24 Q. Did they go to the ground or the bottom, do you think, or did
25 they have to swim it?

1 A. No, they went to the bottom.

2 Q. Okay. So they were able to walk from that point --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. -- to the tree that was in the way?

5 A. Yes, they -- from the locomotive to the tree where I was at,
6 they were able to walk.

7 Q. Okay. And approximately how deep on the person themselves?
8 Waist-deep?

9 A. Chest-high.

10 Q. Chest-high. And last question, were they -- did they carry
11 their grips with them or did they leave them?

12 A. Mr. Hendrix had his on his back. To be honest with you, I
13 can't remember if Chris had anything in his hands or not.

14 MR. FANNON: Thanks. Good work.

15 MR. COLLINS: Thank you.

16 MR. AMMONS: Steve Ammons, CSX. Just one or two follow-up
17 questions.

18 BY MR. AMMONS:

19 Q. You talked earlier about your responsibilities as a
20 trainmaster. Is part of those responsibilities to monthly -- to
21 make monthly rides on trains?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Have you been doing that?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. And have you ridden this route before?

1 A. No, sir.

2 Q. You've never ridden this route. What is your area of
3 responsibility? Where do you ride trains at?

4 A. From Shelby to Russell.

5 Q. So which direction is that from where this train happened?

6 A. Going west.

7 Q. Okay. Is this your area of responsibility, this territory?

8 A. No, it's Kingsport trainmasters.

9 Q. Okay. And so why were you called? Do you know or --

10 A. I guess -- well, I was the closest.

11 Q. Okay. Who was the Kingsport trainmaster?

12 A. On duty -- or covering, I think it was Tony Holly.

13 MR. AMMONS: Okay. That's all I got.

14 MR. TORRES: Okay, thank you. I don't have any questions.

15 Anybody else have anything else?

16 (No audible response.)

17 MR. TORRES: Okay. There's no further questions, James, so
18 this will conclude the interview. Thank you very much.

19 MR. COLLINS: All right. Thank you.

20 (Whereupon, at 11:25 a.m., 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: DERAILMENT OF CSX TRANSPORTATION
 TRAIN K42911 WITH SUBSEQUENT
 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS RELEASE
 IN DRAFFIN, KENTUCKY,
 ON FEBRUARY 13, 2020
 Interview of James Collins

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD20FR002

PLACE: Pikeville, Kentucky

DATE: February 14, 2020

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.



Jeffrey Johnson
Transcriber



Autumn Weslow
Corrections made 4/2/2020