UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *
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CSX TRAIN DERAILMENT IN HYNDMAN, * Accident No.: DCA17FR011
PENNSYLVANIA, AUGUST 2, 2017 *
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Interview of: JOSEPH TAYLOR

NTSB Headquarters
Washington, D.C.

Thursday,
September 7, 2017

APPEARANCES:

PAUL STANCIL, Senior Hazardous Materials
Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

RANDY KELTZ, JR., Manager, Tank Car Safety Program
Federal Railroad Administration

STEVE AMMONS, System Road Foreman
CSX Transportation

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

(10:08 a.m.)

MR. STANCIL: Today is September 7, 2017. It's 10:08 a.m. We're at NTSB Headquarters in the Office of Railroad Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Investigation. My name is Paul Stancil. I'm a senior hazardous materials accident investigator for the NTSB, and we are discussing the investigation of the CSX Transportation train derailment in Hyndman, H-y-n-d-m-a-n, Pennsylvania, that occurred on August 2, 2017. The accident number is DCA17FR011[1].

Present in the room we have Mr. -- well, the interview is of Mr. Joe Taylor, who was the operations section chief for CSX Transportation on the response to this incident.

So we'll go around the room and introduce ourselves.

MR. TAYLOR: Joseph Taylor, manager of hazardous materials for CSX Transportation. I'm based out of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

MR. AMMONS: Steve Ammons, A-m-m-o-n-s, system road foreman of engines, CSX Transportation.

MR. KELTZ: Randy Keltz, Jr., Federal Railroad Administration, Manager of Tank Car Safety Program.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. And as I explained to you, Mr. Taylor, this is a safety investigation that the NTSB is conducting. The purpose of the investigation is to increase safety and not to assign any fault, blame or liability. Our sole mission is to

[1] Corrected Accident Number

improve transportation safety and prevent accidents.

The NTSB cannot guarantee any confidentiality or immunity from any legal or certificate actions by other agencies, whether local, state or federal.

A transcript of the interview will eventually be placed in a public docket for this investigation, which will be available via the NTSB website. Okay?

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

INTERVIEW OF JOSEPH TAYLOR

BY MR. STANCIL:

Q. So to start off with, if you could tell us a little bit about your background, your current position, and your history with CSX.

A. Yes, sir. I am the manager of hazardous materials, based out of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I've been with CSX now since July of 2015, employed in the same position. Prior to that, I was employed as a, initially, a hazardous materials compliance officer, and then when I ended my employment with Norfolk Southern Railroad, as a regional hazardous materials manager in the same position, so --

Prior to that, I spent time in both the fire service, volunteer and career fire service, and I have a military background as well.

Q. Wow. Okay. All right. And so you were the first person on scene from CSX?

A. Outside of the train crew, yes.

Q. Outside of the train crew?
A. I believe so, yes, sir.
Q. Okay. So if you could walk us through the incident, you know, from about the time you were notified until the scene was stabilized. Tell us -- walk through the activities and your observations over those first couple of days.
A. I think probably the most important part to start off with is that I was not in Pittsburgh; I was not at my home. I was in LaVale, Maryland. I had business the next morning in Cumberland, Maryland at our yard, so I was staying at a hotel in LaVale.

And just after 5 a.m., I got a call from the Public Safety Coordination Center. Gentleman by the name of Sean Reed called me and said, as I recall, we have a train -- and he told me the name of the town, and I was still waking up, and I said okay. And he said that I'm getting a report that there was an explosion and that there are multiple fires.

And I kind of did this -- looked over at the clock to see did I sleep in and did I miss a drill sort of thing. But I confirmed with him the train ID. I confirmed with him the town, and I said, do we have any idea what's on fire? Do we have any other information? He said, no, other than the information that he had been -- they were receiving multiple calls into the PSCC. That's the information I got.

So I immediately hung up. Without putting the phone down, I immediately called Mike Austin, my boss, and told him, relayed to

him exactly what I was told, and said, I'm getting report from the PSCC that this train has derailed, that there's been a explosion, multiple fires. I tried to repeat exactly what I heard. And that I was going to be on the way in a few minutes, and I told him -- initially I didn't know what my ETA was going to be because the town that I thought he said -- there's a town in West Virginia that has a similar name, and I thought that's where I'd be going. So I thought, all right, I've got a few hours to kind of get myself together while I'm on the road, start coming up with a game plan.

And then when I got in the truck, I tried to call -- I called the PSCC back, the operator that I spoke with, and I said, do you have a consist? I need a consist. I need a standing order. I need for you to give me anything and everything I can get, and I said, I need you to spell that town for me again. He told me, and he said Hyndman, Pennsylvania. And I put it in the GPS and it said, you know, ETA whatever. I don't remember the actual, but it wasn't very long. And I thought, well, that's not where I thought I was going. I was going -- very close.

So, again, I called Mike Austin to update him. I said, I don't have a standing order or consist, that the operator was going to be getting that for me; I'm going to be calling him. And that I initially feared where I was going I was not going to have cell phone reception. So I immediately called -- at that point, as I got into the truck, I got a hold of one of our primary

response contractors -- Specialized Professional Services, Incorporated, out of Washington, Pennsylvania -- and explained to him that I did not have a lot of information and I wasn't sure how much was accurate and was not, but to go ahead and load and prepare for the worst, and get everybody on the road and moving towards Hyndman, Pennsylvania. And that was the last time I spoke with the contractor because at that point I was on the road.

I was maybe a mile away from the hotel and I got back on the phone with -- I don't remember if he called me or if I was able to call the PSCC, but I asked the operator, I said, do you have a standing order or anything else yet? And he said, I got a standing order. I said, fine; start reading me the standing order. Because at that point I was driving, I wasn't going to stop over and read a consist or a standing order.

So I had him begin to read to me the hazardous materials that were in that train. I immediately asked were there any TIH/PIH, and he said there did not appear to be. He said a lot of flammable gas, a lot of flammable liquid, lot of molten sulfur. The flammable liquids were alcohols, NOS, ethanols, those types of materials. And he said, you do have one car of sodium chlorate in the train. I said, okay. About that time my reception started to really get bad so I think actually we may have been disconnected in the middle of that conversation.

Kept coming down the road, and I'm looking for the glow. I'm looking for anything precursor to tell me what it is I'm walking

into here or driving into. I found a decent spot for reception on the hill, and I slowed down to a crawl so I could make one last phone call to Mike. I said, Mike, I'm going down into this. I don't think I'm going to have any good reception, and as soon as I can, I will call you and let you know what we have. And that was when Mike told me what he thought his ETA was, and I proceeded down the hill.

When I came down the hill, I could look over, I saw there was an orange glow. I could see some smoke. It was a fairly clear night. But I didn't see any active flame, I could just see the glow. I turned down -- you have to forgive me -- the main road there that runs through town. Drove down to the end of town. Obviously, saw the activity. And pulled off on a side street. Got out. Looked around to see if I could see was there anybody establishing a command post, was there anything that I could -- you know, someone that I could point to maybe that was in charge that I could start walking towards. And there wasn't really anything evident, mostly because they were still -- the local fire department was still putting hose on the ground. They were establishing water supply. They were -- I mean, vehicles were still arriving. So it was still pretty chaotic when I got there.

Actual time for this -- I know that we sat down and we put some times of this. That document is on a hard drive that I'll make available to you, sir. I -- my apologizes. Personal note, I'm coming off of a death in the family last night. So that's why

I didn't get a chance to download that and provide it to you today. So my apologies. But I'll make sure that you have that.

So got to the end of the road. Immediately opened my truck. Donned all of my personal protective equipment, which was structural firefighting gear, SCBA, and started a walk towards the bridge. At that point, it was very chaotic. There were a lot of people running back and forth. It didn't appear to be -- there was obviously some order because there was a lot of folks talking on the radio. And I was asking several people, can you tell me where the incident command post is? Can you tell me who the incident commander is? I kept asking everybody that I came into contact with that. And I got a lot of the "Down there," "This way," "Over here." I got different names.

When I got to the bridge -- well, first of all, you could hear the car. You could hear what was going on when I parked. But when I got to the bridge, the sound that I heard -- does anybody have any fire service background? Okay. So a large diameter hose line, when water is hitting the side of a building that noise is what I thought I heard. And I thought, well, based on the amount of hose that they've got on the ground, my goodness, they must be putting water on something. That's what I thought, with the noise that I heard coming from the derailment site. I could at that point see a flame above the houses, but I did not know -- I theorized that maybe the water was hitting maybe a tank car, maybe the side of a building that they were trying to protect

from catching on fire. I didn't know that.

So I walked over to the other end of the bridge, and then I recognized that the local fire department was in full-scale mode of trying to get everybody out of that block. They were going from house-to-house trying to get people out of homes. And, I mean, we've got folks in their nightclothes and their slippers that are standing out in the middle of the street. Some trying to get out of the way; some trying to get a better position for pictures. So what I did was kept asking for the incident commander. At the same time helping people, you need to go this way, just trying to help with the evacuation effort.

I did that kind of a one round for that, and I never really got a good look at where the noise was coming from. All I saw was that there was a large volume of fire. But when I did get on the other side of the bridge, I recognized that there was no water being put on the fire. So at that point I knew, well, that noise is obviously coming solely from a tank car, not -- or from something else down in the derailment site, you know, underground utility or something.

So I backed out to the bridge, and I finally found a deputy chief, who he asked me specifically, he said, what's inside this train? And I gave him the information that I had verbally. I said that I've been told that there is all those products I previously listed. I immediately asked, have we verified the safety of the crew? Do we know is the crew safe? Have we

accounted for them? And if we have accountability for them, they will have that paperwork, and we need to get that.

And he made a call on the radio, and then he said the crew is okay, and the chief on the other side of the tracks has the paperwork. I said, okay, the crew will go through that with him and tell him exactly, you know, what's in the train, but I can't tell you what's causing your problem until I go down there and look. So at the first opportunity, I need to go and see exactly what's potentially derailed, what's impacted, what's on fire, what's not on fire, and then I can give you a really good idea of perhaps what we're dealing with.

He said, no problem. I also gave him the number to the PSCC. I said, if you call your dispatch center and have them call the PSCC, and give them a fax number, give them an e-mail address, give them anything that you can, they'll get you the -- another copy of the paperwork.

So that went on, and I requested the assistance for two personnel to kind of back me up, to walk with me back down towards the derailment site and stay at a safe distance, so that I could just get an idea of what we had.

So I went back down in. I had two firefighters with me. I had them stay back at a safe distance so if something were to happen, they could get their hands on me and come in pull me out.

And I walked down -- you have to forgive me. I just don't know the road names. But when I came down -- may I stand up

and --

Q. Yeah, sure.

A. The road that's -- this would be the main road here, looks like here. That's -- yeah, that's Red's house here. So this is the main road. I went down this road here, and that's when I recognized that we had two freight cars into houses. I immediately stopped and asked had we accounted for everybody inside those houses. They were unaware. So I went up to both of those houses to see if there was anybody. I called out to anybody to see if anybody was there. I got no response.

And then when I got between the two houses that were hit, I was able to see this car here, CBTX71553, and I could tell that there was a large volume of fire, flame and pressure coming out from that car. But because of the large volume of fire, I couldn't tell was it a protective housing, coming out of maybe the pressure release, but I couldn't tell that. All I knew is that's where it was coming from.

So I went back out, told the incident commander. I said, I strongly recommend that we get everybody as far back as possible from this site. And they were in the process of continuing to do that. And I specifically asked them the question, can you verify if the people in those houses are accounted for? At that time I was told, yes, everybody is accounted for.

The base of the bridge -- so the east side of the bridge, there was a home. This nice lady, elderly lady, who was sitting

on her front porch, and I politely asked her if she had a landline phone, and she did. She gave me a cordless hand line phone or landline phone, and I called Mike Austin. And I said, Mike, we have a -- I know we have a pressure car that's -- I don't know if it's the PRD, but we have a pressure car that is venting and it is on fire, and we have a large volume of fire on the ground and I don't know what that is. And I gave him that update. I told him that I would call him back as soon as possible with additional information. I think it was two or three houses back from the bridge was the lady that I used that phone.

So I went back down for another entry. At this time I came down this road to try and get to this vantage point here. And when I got to the corner right before the hill starts to go up to the crossing, I was able to look down this way here, and this is where I saw the protective housing for that car. I could also verify there were still numbers on the end of the car that I could still see, and I verified that it was 71553. So I knew that that was the car.

But what alarmed me was that I saw the protective housing here in a 90-degree position and the pressurized flame was coming from here. So that immediately set off the warnings to me. In addition to that, all of this -- this is a little bit -- so all of this in here was on fire. This was all -- and it had that, that real pretty blue flame.

Q. So you're pointing to the area surrounding CBTX781553. The

dark soil in the vicinity around that car was all on fire?
A. All of this was. And it was not an aggressive flame. It was a flame -- it was a ground cover fire, and I could tell at the base of the fire was a very blue-colored flame, and I knew immediately; I said that's got to be molten sulfur the way it's burning like that.

So I figured we at least had a molten sulfur car ruptured, and it spilled on the ground and was on fire. And that was also aiding into -- this, at this point, I'm thinking the absolute worse scenario: Do I have a ground cover fire that's adding to the heat and increasing pressure on this pressure car? I didn't know what kind of damage that we had here because the jacket was still intact at that point. So I didn't know if I had a puncture, a crack, a run-away crack. I didn't know what we had.

But we had the noise coming from that car was changing in volume and intensity, and then it would go down a little bit, and it would come back up, and the height of the flames. And then all of that accompanied with that I saw on the ground was when I went back to the incident commander and I recommended that, based on those observations, that we evacuate at a minimum to, you know, half a mile. And I said, what would be a half a mile from here? What would be like a good bench point, benchmark? And he said, well, we can go back to the firehouse. And I said, well, the firehouse it is. This is your town. I said, I can't make this call, but I strongly recommend it. This is a pressure car. We

can't really tell what's going on with the car until this thing needs to calm down and do what it's doing. And that's when the incident commander said, fine, we're all going back to the firehouse, everybody pull out; 30-second statement, everybody's going to pull out and go back to the firehouse. Of course, that takes a while to get everybody actually together, get on their fire trucks, start evacuating more people in the town and getting everybody pushed back.

I made another phone call to Mike Austin, and I told him that I didn't have very good news; that the car that was venting that -- that the pressure car was venting was not coming from a PRD; that the side wall had been impacted either by a puncture or a crack or something, but that's where the fire was coming from.

And at that point I immediately turned my efforts to assisting the locals with the evacuation of more citizens in the town, getting them back to the firehouse. I believe the incident commander made the decision to move evacuees to a charter school initially. That was -- that's where he felt, you know, would be a good rally point for them. And I went to the firehouse.

When I got to the firehouse, I asked to use the landline. They said they didn't have a long distance plan. I asked if anybody in town had a long distance plan. They said that the EMS station did. So they -- a block away. I went over to the EMS station, made another phone call to Mike to update him that we have backed out even further because of what we're seeing, and

that I was going to continue to help with the evacuation.

By that time, there was local sheriffs, local police. There were Pennsylvania State Police. There were multiple fire departments. There was a very organized collective effort to get everybody evacuated from down there, and they were working through that. I had an opportunity to kind of catch my breath at the EMS station. I don't think it was for very long.

A Maryland State Trooper helicopter had showed up on-site, had already been up once with a CXS special agent to provide an overview. And then at that time, I went up to see if I could get a better view of what else was potentially involved, and I did that over-flight, took some basic notes.

It was during that over-flight that I was able to determine it was in fact molten sulfur that was on the ground, but I also had a volume of what appeared to be asphalt. And I knew that that made more sense in the consist where we thought what was derailed between what car and what car, that made more sense to see molten sulfur on the ground and what appeared to be asphalt and some of the soy meal. What I was trying to rule out was did we have ethanol involved; did we have, you know, some form of other high vapor pressure alcohol that I was going to have to deal with. But it did not appear to that, and that's what that over-flight for me confirmed, was that it really did say this is the derailment between this car and this car, at least roughly between this car and this car.

And then came down off of that. Calls from Jacksonville started to come in, but those were not for me. They were for like our transportation, like our trainmaster and those other folks were being summoned up to the charter school because they were able to establish a landline. We have our -- our claims department was on-site helping getting all that established, and the beginnings of an outreach center and those types of things.

And then I drove up to the school at the time that I thought Mike said he was going to -- his ETA to the school. So I drove up there. About the same time Mike Austin pulled into the charter school. I briefed the Pennsylvania State Police commander that was there. I believe he's the barracks commander. I spoke with him. He wanted to know things like, what's this product? What can you tell me about this product? What's this car? How, you know, how strong the car is. I gave him very generic basic information knowing my observations.

And he started asking me like worst-case scenario, you know, what happens if this car comes apart sort of thing. And wanted to know about what would the material do and those types of things. What could we expect? So I briefly went over, you know, it's a flammable gas. It's got an expansion ratio. It will expand based on that expansion ratio, and everything that it comes in contact will most likely be on fire. That there's a possibility of the car, if it does come apart, can come apart in two ways: either a split tear or it can, you know, break apart. But I don't have any

of that fact-based information. I really tried to stick with what I knew.

And by that time Austin was there and he started briefing what the expectation was between at that point until like maybe 18-, 1900 when we knew we had so many more resources coming in. But we started to get a plan together so that Mike Austin -- by that time Joe Cocamo (ph.) had arrived on-site, another hazmat manager, and myself and one of our contractors could go down to the site and get as close as we thought we could safely get to get better eyes on this thing. See maybe -- tell the type of damage, specifically what other cars might be involved, those types of things. We were so consumed with evacuation, the preliminary information that I got, I just tried to keep it simple: It's a pressure car. It's venting. I don't know what the damage is. Here are the basic safety, you know, rules in approaching that.

So we got together with -- let's see, there was four. So there was Mike Austin, myself, Joe Cocamo, and one of our contractors. And then the fire department provided was like eight guys in two fire trucks. And our plan was to go down, we're going to stop at the bridge, and then we were going to walk over across the bridge. The fire department is going to hang back, more of a backup team for us, and we were going to go in, we're going to look: what do we have; you know, what's changed; specific cars, and those types of things.

Well, when we did that, we got to the bridge, and we stepped

out of the fire truck and started to walk to the height of the bridge, there was a significant change in volume, the type of sound and intensity of that flame. So you could see the tip of the flame when you first got off -- when you first got out of the fire truck. But when we got to the height of the bridge, something changed, and it was louder and the flame was clearly above all the houses now, and that signified to us that something was imminent, something was -- there was a potential for something imminent happening. Was this car getting ready to come apart? We didn't know.

So at that point, based on --

Q. How far into incident was this? What time of the day?

A. I'd have to check the timeline, sir, but I believe it was by noon or 1 o'clock.

Q. Okay. I'm sorry. Continue.

A. No. I have to check my timeline.

Q. Trying to get a feel for --

A. But by noon or 1 o'clock this is -- we heard a significant change, and that was when Mike was in control of the entry. So it was at that point we said, we can't stay here. If this car is going to do whatever it's going to do, we've got to back up and get at a safer distance. So we backed up. We went down a couple side streets thinking maybe we could get a view that we hadn't seen yet with binoculars, and we just -- we couldn't get a view of it. And the entire time that we were in that entry, that sound

got louder. The flame got higher or taller across the houses, and that was when we regrouped, went back to the school, the initial school, the charter school that we were staged at.

And we had a brief conversation about what ifs; what do you think? And I've not been standing 100 feet from a propane car when it came apart. I've never -- I've not seen that before. But I have been around propane cars when they're venting. And they're venting, they're doing exactly what they need to do, but that's out of the pressure release device. This was a whole 'nother game. I have not seen one where a car had been punctured in the side and was venting like this. And I said, well, everything that the rules -- I say rules -- everything that practice tells you, that when you hear a change in intensity, you see an intensity in the flame, you know that something is changing inside the car and I'm not going to be the guy to guess, you know, oh, it's okay, it'll be just fine. I wasn't going to do that.

So that's when -- my recommendation was, I said I think we need to firm up our evacuation area. This is what I recommended to Mike. And really I think we need to let this car do what it's going to do. And it's not worth one of us trying to get up there to get a pressure on the car or even try and tear the jacket at that point. There was just -- we knew by nature of the car it was a loaded car of propane. So we knew, you know, the range of pressures that the -- that that product operates at without being damaged and without being, you know, being exposed to a three-

dimensional fire or anything like that.

So Mike went into the charter school. I was not a part of that conversation. That was at the unified command at that point, so state police and local fire, and it was everybody inside there. And when Mike came out, that was when the decision was made that we were going to evacuate to 1 mile, which meant we were going to evacuate the charter school included, and that we were relocating the incident command post to the Ministry Center, which was several miles out of town.

And at that point, myself, the other hazmat manager, Joe Cocamo, we focused on assisting local police, state police. At this point there were two agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Pittsburgh Office, that were on-site. They were helping us with evacuations going door-to-door and just getting everybody out as much as we can. Provided rides when needed. Encouraging them to get in their car and go to the Outreach Center. And that was more of the chaos for the first probably 8 to 10 hours for me. It felt like it took forever.

Once the decision was made to get everybody back to the Ministry Center, it -- I won't say it took forever to get everybody out there, just some people didn't want to leave, so you had to do your best to encourage them. Some people wanted to stay and, you know, we respected that. But we were doing our best to inform them, trying to keep a list of who was staying, and then identifying any other needs in trying to get people out. That was

really the focus. All the while at that point, you know, we would hear the sound that pressure sound coming from the car. We would hear it change in intensity. Some of that was based on where we were standing. Some views you had houses in front of you so that would change the noise. But it would -- the flame stayed relatively about the same height, and the sound stayed about the same height. So -- and I would say it stayed like that till -- I mean, the entire time that we were doing evacuations it stayed with that kind of intensity. So --

Q. All right. So that carries you through that first day pretty much?

A. Certainly through the first operational period. At that point there was a lot of, you can imagine, there was a lot of set-up at the --

Q. Right.

A. -- the unified command. At that point I was trying to get control over exactly how many -- what kind of resources we had coming in with contractors, and staying in communication with the fire chief to ensure that he knew exactly what we were doing and what we needed.

Q. Okay.

A. And that involved I can't tell you how many trips down into the city and then back, either going to the fire station or coming out or going down to do another sweep. Because I'm told -- I think at one point we were told, man, there's a teenager out here

raking leaves in her front yard, you know, that -- and the evacuation had already been there for several hours and that family didn't know. So it was let's go back down there, do another sweep. So we just did everything we could to try and keep people as far back as possible. So --

Q. Good. All right. So as time went on, you were able to further size up the scene and maybe take a look at the condition of this propane car. What did you later find out about the car as you went back and --

A. Well, I mean, hindsight is always 20/20. I mean, I later found out, you know, we -- this was days later once the pressure in the car went down, several more entries later with all of us on the hazmat team, went in. We were able to get a pressure on the car several days later. I think 2 days into the incident, I think we had a pressure of the car was around 28 pounds, 26, 28 pounds. So we knew the pressure was coming down in the car.

We didn't see a frost line because the jacket was still intact. So we knew one of the things we wanted to do was try and get the jacket peeled back as best we could. We were able to get the jacket peeled back, and we were able to determine that there was a puncture in the side wall of the car. It was pretty evident. I couldn't see the actual size of the puncture. When I got pretty close to the car I could tell it was -- you know, it's about that big. Most important to me is that it was a puncture, that it wasn't a crack, that it wasn't a twist, you know, a

torsion or something like that on the metal.

One of those entries when I went up to inspect to see if I could see as close as I could on that, I noticed that there was a sizeable what appeared to be a bubble in the metal adjacent to the puncture. I have no idea when that started. But I know the first time I noticed it was when we had the jacket all finally peeled back, and I was able to get up -- the car was still on fire. I was able to get up and take a look at the size of that hole.

Q. That's the first time you noticed the bulge in the tank shell?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Did any -- was there any discussion about that as to what hazard that might have played into the incident?

A. By the time we noticed it, I mean, there was almost no pressure or product in the car.

Q. Okay.

A. We were in the process of gas-freeing the car. At that point we felt confident we had control of the car and control of the product. So, sure, there's a lot of -- you know, you hear of sudden heat-induced tears and, you know, and --

Q. Right.

A. -- general service tank cars, thinning of metal, you know, based on its compromise and the damage that it received. And, sure, you do a lot of the, wow, I wonder how thin it got sort of thing. You could see the bubble, but how thin did it really get?

So I know we later found that out. You published that in your preliminary findings. So, sure, there was discussion about that. But you don't really "what if" -- for me, I don't really "what if" it until it's done and over and I'm driving home. But we -- when we noticed it, we were, wow, that was something that it was very difficult to see it with the jacket still on.

Q. Right.

A. And once we got the jacket off and we could walk up to it, by that time we had control of the car. We wouldn't have done that unless we had control of the car anyway. That was when we recognized it. So --

Q. So toward the end, I see there was a flare stack put up. Could you kind of describe what that process is all about? What prompted that action?

A. So when we pulled the jacket, we pulled the jacket on the end that was damaged because we wanted to clearly identify the amount of damage, and we also -- the car was not level. The car was on a slope. And so we pulled the jacket back from the downward end. We wanted to see the frost line. We wanted to see how much potential liquid was inside the car. That was going to determine did we need to come in and flare the car? Did we need to come in -- is this thing going to kind of burn itself out? What kind of timing?

At that point, pressures were down to like 8 pounds, 8, 10 pounds. And we saw a frost line on the bottom of the car that

indicated that there were still some -- quite a bit of liquid inside the car. So at that point, what we decided to do was roll the car. And by rolling the car, it would put all the liquid theoretically and, you know, the induction line, the liquid induction line down into the liquid space to allow us better management of the liquid. It would ensure that the vapor line was clearly in the vapor space, and again we can manage the vapor.

So what we did was dig a pit. We took an excavator, and we dug a pit right in here. I'm pointing to CBTX71553, just adjacent to that. And that pit, I don't know the size of it, but I could probably stand up in it. Right here in this. So as we rolled the car, if liquid were to want to come out of that puncture, it would immediately come out into the pit while it was on fire as opposed to running -- not that it was going to run across the ground and chase us away, but we wanted to be able to control that.

Q. Okay.

A. So we rolled the car up. We observed no liquid coming out of the puncture, so we knew that the liquid inside the car was below that. And then from there, we ran a pipe from the protective housing on the liquid line off the car, and then we bury a pipe that goes into that same pit, and then we, in a controlled sense, liquid flare the car. So we very easily open the valve, make sure that we won't have a problem with an excess flow check valve, you know, actuating, and then we liquid flared the car.

Once we liquid flared the car, we were able to start vapor

flaring. That's where you saw the vapor stack where we've -- gas-free the car. We had a nitrogen -- truck of nitrogen brought in. We were able to flood that car with nitrogen, and continue to gas-free it, and we did that for -- I'd have to go back and look at my timeline. We did it for a pretty long time to gas free the car. And then once the car was gas-free, we pulled the protective housing and the pressure plate. Pulled that out of the car to ensure that there weren't going to be any problems with flare-ups, that we had 100 percent, you know, zero -- gas-free zero pressure car.

And then from there, the car was actually moved over to our staging area where your team was able to access it, and we were able to get you the coupons that you guys needed. So --

Q. Did the pressure relief device ever actuate on the propane car?

A. I never observed it.

Q. No. Okay.

A. If it did, I didn't observe it.

Q. Okay. And you mentioned that at some point you decided you had control over the car. What were those circumstances that made the scene under control?

A. We knew we had originally a loaded car product, down to less than 25 percent of that lading remaining.

Q. Okay.

A. So substantially less product and substantially less pressure

on the car. Those two factors alone were -- you know, made it to the point where we could manage that risk to handle that car. I mean, these cars are built extremely well. And between substantially less lading, substantially less pressure, and we could positively identify the type of damage on the car. Those three things I would say is what allowed us to be comfortable with uprighting the car.

Q. So you were comfortable at that point that there was no longer any danger that the tank was going to fail or --

A. I did not have any reason to believe that, no.

Q. Even with that bulge in the shell?

A. At that point, with 8 pounds of pressure, the amount of -- you know, based on, well, a lot of stuff that I've read coming out of this office --

Q. Right.

A. -- it takes a lot more pressure to cause metal to fail at a catastrophic rate. So I was very comfortable with the pressures that we were managing.

Q. Okay. So this action that was taken to flare-off the remaining product, was there any problem with the timing of this? Was it -- you know, was there anything driving those decisions in terms of outside pressure from the other agencies that were there on scene or getting the service restored? Was any of that factored into --

A. No, sir. I never once heard a conversation about, you know,

we have to get this cleared because of service restoration. I never felt there was any pressure from the agencies. I think the pressures that were there were self-induced because we knew we had a town evacuated and we wanted to get these people back in their homes.

Q. Right.

A. As many as possible. Only because in my experience as a first responder, I know the longer you keep people out of their homes the more problems can become compounded for that community. So getting them back, that was a pressure I would say that that was self-induced by us. And once we had that car under control, the other problems that we were dealing with was sulfur dioxide from the molten sulfur car that was burning. So but we knew we couldn't -- we knew we couldn't begin to work on that fire and deal with that problem until we dealt with that propane car.

Q. How was the sulfur, molten sulfur fire extinguished finally?

A. We made an approach to the car. We were able to identify that there appeared to be a large hole in the side of the car that we knew we were able to get close to using thermal imaging, thermometer guns and those types of things. We were able to confirm that the actual tank jacket itself was as hot as the fire that was on the ground. So we knew there was still an active fire, it wasn't just smoldering.

And what we wanted to do was cool the steel of the car at first. So initially we tore away all of the jacket we could tear

away from the sulfur car that was ruptured, and we flooded the outside of that car with water, and were able to get a very dramatic cooling effect on the tank shell. But when we realized that wasn't going to extinguish the fire, we immediately put in a water stream inside the hole, very brief -- it was less than a minute -- to allow kind of a crusting effect over the molten sulfur. That was what we were trying to do. And then that knocked down enough of the SO2 that we were able to safely get two folks in PPE and SCBA up there with nitrogen sponges, and then get them down into the car, and then we flooded that car with nitrogen. And within minutes the fire was out.

Q. Okay. As far as working with the local emergency responders on scene, what -- how would you describe their state of preparedness for this incident?

A. I would describe their state of preparedness as on par with most localities that have a volunteer fire service as their primary service. That -- and by on par, it's the highest compliment, meaning, you know, that they weren't prepared for a train derailment that morning, but they were prepared for the hazards. And they were very basic in their approach and you could tell that they -- their strengths were the basics: You know, let's get folks back; let's get hose lines, you know, in a defensive posture to make sure that the incident doesn't get bigger; you know, incident stabilization, those types of things.

So could I go to any firefighter in that company and say,

what kind of tank car are you dealing with today or what's the fuel capacity on a locomotive? Probably not. But they obviously had a large volume of fire problem. We had a three-dimensional fire. They knew they had hazardous materials involved. So their priority was life safety and evacuation and instant stabilization by putting cotton on the ground. And so, you know, I mean, unfortunately these things just don't happen with the experts right around the corner. And I thought that all of their response actions were appropriate and on point.

Q. Good, good. Were there any -- have you all had a hot wash or lessons learned meeting or anything at this point?

A. We have not had a formal hot wash. Two weeks into the incident -- might have been a week. Week or two into the incident -- the local fire department meets every Tuesday night. Sometimes it's a formal business meeting or trainings a lot of times. But every Tuesday night it's just a -- it's a way for them to get together, and they -- and the first opportunity that Tuesday, I know that all the hazmat staff that was on scene, we went out there. It must have been the first -- after the first week.

So we went out there that Tuesday night, and had a very informal us thanking them very much for, you know, coming to our assistance and all of their actions. And allowed an opportunity for some questions, although there weren't very many. We have not had a formal -- we haven't had a formal sit-down, hey, guys, let's go through the timeline and, you know, the discussions moving

forward. We are certainly going to do that. It's yet to be scheduled, but -- and we're still in their town right now cutting up cars and things like that. We're trying to get that done. And then lining up some additional training for them as well.

Q. Good. Good. Well, was there -- at this point I know it's probably a little early for this, but are there any lessons learned that you think would be helpful to share with the hazmat response community? Anything major that seems to be recognized from this incident?

A. I'm going to reserve my answer to be I think there's going to be a lot, but I'm still going through a lot of that in my head.

I think the one thing that is evident right now is if there is ever any doubt about how strong these tank cars are and the amount of damage that they can sustain when they're built properly and they're maintained properly, transported safely, those types of things, that in the rare event that there is an accident that these cars are extremely strong. How do you quantify or put that into a measurable dynamic so that you can account for that in risk assessment? It's hard to do. But I think that the more first responders, the more potential incident commanders see that, and they see the information that comes out publicly about how well these cars are built and those things and how tough they are, that allows you to make a more educated decision, an educated risk assessment. Because the flip side of this is that everyone in there could have been screaming and running around crazy and not

doing anything, not getting anything accomplished, and that's not what happened. But I think this is clear evidence that that car obviously took a pretty good punch to make that kind of damage, and it didn't break apart. It didn't. It didn't do a lot of things that we were prepared for. Not that we shouldn't always be prepared for. I would say that's first and foremost.

I think there's going to be some other things that come out, on the nerd side of hazmat, I think that's going to help out some things later on. But I'm still kind of collecting my thoughts with those types of things. But I'm sure we'll be discussing that at a later date, another venue.

But, you know, I -- the only other thing I can come up with is that the approach to hazardous materials, emergency response to hazardous materials should never be -- you should never confine yourself with pre-selected tactical doctrine. And I say that -- fire departments across the country use a tactical doctrine: I'm going to fight a house fire like this based on this number of people and this number of trucks or this number. And while we've always said hazmat can't be done that way, I think we really need to firm up that the tactical doctrine for emergency response to hazardous materials is, you know, safety first, but you have to make educated decisions on your risk assessment. And you have to make -- you have to reach out to industry and find out, okay, what is the best way to handle this particular problem with this particular container or this particular material. And I think

those are probably two of the best takeaways so far.
Q. On this incident, did you need to reach back to the shipper for any assistance?
A. I did not need to. The biggest thing that I needed kind of confirmation on was, for the sulfur cars, when were they loaded? Obviously, we still had quite a bit of molten sulfur that ran out. So that was -- when was that loaded? When was the asphalt or the elevated temperature loaded? But I needed to know was this propane, butane, isobutene? What kind of LPG was this? Because I knew that that material was going to react very differently in terms of burn rates and those types of things.

So I did not personally reach out. That was done outside of -- again, I had no cell phone or -- service or anything like that. But that SDS was handed to me by Mike and said this is -- we've confirmed this is what it is. And with the amount of LPG that's on the -- that's in, you know, transportation today, there's a few products out there that we're expected to know our stuff with, and that's one of them. So I feel very comfortable with that product, knowing -- once I had the SDS in hand.
Q. Right. So LPG is one of those larger volume hazmats that are transported by rail. One of the top three to four, I think. Is there -- I guess CSX has training scenarios for these sorts of things.
A. Yes, sir. Proudly, CSX has a very dynamic training program. Everything from firehouse-delivered emergency response to railroad

incidents basic level training, where the hazmat manager will go into a firehouse of 12 people or a high school auditorium of 100 people. We work with communities, perform something called Crisis Management Exercises, where we have a contractor who will come in and perform what most would think would be a tabletop exercises, but this is pretty extreme. There's lights and there's phones going off, and there's, you know, lots of pictures and things constantly changing. But that's more of the emergency management incident commander level. And then, of course, we have the REDI Center. So we have a very nice facility that we've used down there for training everybody from contractors to first responders. So --

Q. I know this is fairly -- a fairly rare event. Uncontrolled propane or LPG release doesn't happen nearly as often as other types of releases. How many of these have you handled like this before?

A. This is the first one from a derailment that I have seen like this where it sustained this kind of damage. I have seen this in industry. I've seen this in rail yards where, you know, during switching operations and cars would come together or humping operations or those types of things, I've seen those types of releases, but not when you had -- not when you combine, you know, a ground cover fire underneath it and other types of influences on the car. Usually it was very specific, and you had two cars come together in a sideswipe event or you had a bypass coupler event or

you had something like along those lines or, you know, in industry they've had valve failure or something like that. I've seen those, but nothing like this, sir.

MR. STANCIL: Okay.

Randy, do you have any --

BY MR. KELTZ:

Q. I just wanted to circle back on -- you made a comment about the -- to the local fire folks, you instructed them to go contact the train crew to get a hold of the documentation for the train that spelled out what was in the train. Did they know to do that on their own or did you have to kind of coax them that way to --

A. Actually, and I -- forgive me because I was describing my actions at the time. What I later found out was that the fire chief himself lives a block south of that. So he was on the southside of the derailment, and he later told us that within 5 minutes after arrival, his chief on the other side had that paperwork.

Q. Okay. So they knew to get a hold of the crew?

A. They knew to get a hold of it.

Q. Okay.

A. They knew to seek it out, and they had access to it under 10 minutes. I didn't know that until afterwards. That was why my instructions were to them, call this number.

Q. Go get it.

A. Go get it.

Q. All right.
A. And this will -- and, of course, by that time other departments of CSX started to show up. Our Mechanical Department showed up. He had like five different copies of the consist. I mean, he -- and we were able to hand those out. And I think one of their local hazmat trucks had a fax machine on it or something like that, and they were getting, constantly getting, you know, more and more pages of it. So at that point, when I had asked for them to do that, they had actually already had it on the other side.
Q. All right.
A. I don't know to what extent, you know -- I don't know what happened. Did the conductor sit down, say let me show you what's going on here? I don't know any of that, but I know -- I found out after the fact they had access to it immediately, and they knew to ask for it.
Q. Okay.
A. So --
MR. KELTZ: That's good.
MR. STANCIL: Steve, do you have anything?
MR. AMMONS: No.
BY MR. STANCIL:
Q. Well, Joe, is there anything that we haven't asked you about that you think would be important to add, or --
A. Gosh. Not that I can think of right off the top of -- I

mean, I -- we didn't have to worry about underground utilities. I mean, there were utilities there, but they weren't -- you know, it wasn't natural gas lines and things like that. We didn't have a lot of those outside factors.

I don't know how that fire stopped burning where it did behind the house. I mean, there was some heat damage obviously to the back of that house. I don't -- I can't think of anything right off the top.

It was pretty, pretty chaotic at first. You train to always be the first guy arriving on-site, you know, in a few minutes, and -- but in the end, your priorities are those folks. So much of my time was trying to get them out and to get as much information that I could see in between the houses looking at the car at the same time, trying to multitask. So it was -- I think it's pretty straightforward.

Q. So I know at least until the time we were there, there had not been any injuries reported. Was that -- is that still the case? Any work-related on-scene mishaps or anything?

A. I'm not aware of any injuries; not that I can recall.

Q. Okay.

A. Certainly not involved with -- take that back. During the re-railing operation, I believe one of the treads came -- broke away from one of the cranes. And I don't think there was -- I think it was a near miss. I don't think it was an injury. But PPE was on and -- but no, I've not -- I'm not aware of any other.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. Anything else?

We'll go ahead and terminate the interview and bring Mr. Austin in.

Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

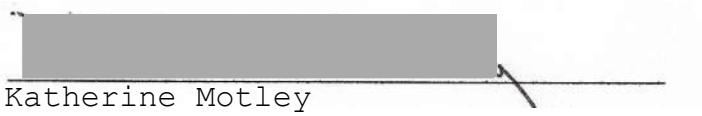
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	CSX TRAIN DERAILMENT IN HYNDMAN, PENNSYLVANIA, AUGUST 2, 2017 Interview of Joseph Taylor
ACCIDENT NO.:	DCA17FR011
PLACE:	Washington, D.C.
DATE:	September 7, 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.



Katherine Motley
Transcriber

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

NOTICE AND ASSURANCES TO INTERVIEWEE
REQUESTED TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS

You are being asked to provide information as part of an investigation being conducted by the NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD (NTSB) regarding the derailment of CSX Transportation Train Q38831 in Hyndman, Pennsylvania on August 2, 2017.

This interview is voluntary. Accordingly, you do not have to answer questions.

The purpose of NTSB investigations is to increase safety, not to assign fault, blame or liability. Our sole mission is to improve transportation safety and prevent accidents.

The NTSB cannot, however, offer any guarantee of confidentiality or immunity from any legal or certificate actions by other agencies, whether local, state, or federal.

A transcript of this interview will eventually be placed in the public docket for this investigation, which will be available via the NTSB website.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I understand this notice and am willing to make a statement and answer questions. No threats or promises have been made to me and no pressure or coercion of any kind has been used against me.

SEPTEMBER 7, 2017
(Date/Time)

NTSB HEADQUARTERS
(Location)

JOSEPH L. TAYLOR
(Printed Name)

[redacted]
(Signature)

STEVEN M AMMONS
(Attorney or Representative Printed Name)

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(Attorney or Representative Signature)

PAUL L. STANCIL
(NTSB Interviewer's Printed Name)

[redacted]
(NTSB Interviewer's Signature)

RANDY M VEETZ JR (FRA HM)
(Interviewer's Printed Name)

[redacted]
(Interviewer's Signature)