



SURVIVAL FACTORS ATTACHMENT

First Responder Interview Transcripts

Louisville, NY

HWY23FH005

(74 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL CRASH OF A FREIGHTLINER BOX
TRUCK & BUS IN LOUISVILLE,
NEW YORK ON JANUARY 28, 2023

Accident No.: HWY23FH005

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Interview of: MATTHEW DENNER, Emergency Manager
St. Lawrence County, New York

Thursday,
February 2, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RONALD KAMINSKI, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

JOHN HUMM, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

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2 MR. KAMINSKI: Today's date is February 2nd, 2023. My name
3 is Ronald Kaminski with the NTSB. I'm here also with investigator
4 John Humm of the NTSB and we're going to be talking to the St.
5 Lawrence County emergency manager, Mr. Matthew Denner, D-e-n-n-e-
6 r. And he's just going to go through from the time they got the
7 call and what they all did to lead up to the MCI.

INTERVIEW OF MATTHEW DENNER

8
9 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

10 A. Okay. So there was -- the first call came in about 6:02 in
11 the morning.

12 Q. From the Apple iPhone detection.

13 A. Yes. I lay -- I was laying in bed. How it works in St.
14 Lawrence County is being the largest county in New York State,
15 we're divided into eight different districts. You could say
16 battalions, districts, it's whatever slang you want to use. I
17 have a district deputy assigned to each of the fire districts.
18 Whenever they get toned out, along with the fire departments,
19 anything, personal injury, MVA, drownings, structure fires, stuff
20 like that, they all get toned out along with the departments to go
21 to.

22 So whenever they get toned out, I get an alert on my phone
23 that they're calling something. I heard the alert go off and it
24 was about two minutes after that, my dispatcher called me, and
25 said boss, he says, I think we have a bad accident. It's a fatal,

1 there's multiple victims, and I got -- and he told me the units
2 that he had dispatched there. I'm like, okay, and I'm like he
3 told me it was up on State Highway 37. I asked where on 37.
4 Morristown and Massena, and he said to Louisville. I'm like, all
5 right, I'm like, I'm going to get dressed, start heading that way.

6 So I left my residence. I live in the Village of Heuvelton
7 and I was on State Highway 812 between the Village of Heuvelton
8 and City of Ogdensburg, and I heard the fire chief arrive on
9 scene. He did an excellent job on the scene size-up, really
10 painted a good picture of what he had.

11 Q. What fire chief was that?

12 A. The Louisville fire chief.

13 Q. Okay. Which is --

14 A. Matt LeFrance (ph.).

15 Q. LeFrance?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Matt Laforce.

18 A. Laforce, excuse me, yes.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Yes, there's no R. So he did a really good scene size-up
21 description. We all knew it was a bus accident and he said there
22 was 15 patients. He did believe this is a -- he did say that
23 there was a fatality. So at that time I got on the radio, called
24 dispatch and said hey, activate our county (indiscernible), which
25 is, you know, getting a bunch of ambulances there and calling

1 hospitals and stuff like that.

2 Shortly after that, he -- my dispatcher said can you landline
3 dispatch? So I called them, and he told me that Hamlin says that
4 they did dispatch. He said what else do you want done; I said
5 call the hospitals. Find out how many critical -- nine critical,
6 walking wounded they can take, and I said text my phone. So he
7 did find that out, but he said it over the air, which I was almost
8 on scene at that point. So I asked him to text it to me, which he
9 did.

10 And when I arrived on scene, I did a 360, view the evidence
11 around the bus and over to the Penske truck. I went over to the
12 fire chief, where he was at where the command post was. And he
13 said look, we need to do a little bit better job on stabilization
14 of the bus and let's -- once we get all the viable people taken
15 care of, let's take a time out, we'll stop, regroup and make sure
16 this is stable so we don't cause any injuries to any of the
17 firemen that, you know, worked on the scene. He agreed.

18 By the time I got there, I believe two patients were gone.
19 They're extricating the third that got transported when I was
20 there. There was six of the walking wounded that were in
21 Waddington's ambulances between both of the rigs. I checked on
22 the girls in both, to make sure they're all right, see anything
23 that they needed. Language barrier was a huge problem. They
24 could not communicate with them. There was the one gentleman that
25 was with the bus that kind of was the translator.

1 Q. Raul?

2 A. Yes, he was very emotional, so he really wasn't much help to
3 us in that aspect. One of the gentlemen did have a phone and he
4 was able to text on the phone and show it to the EMT, and that's
5 how they communicated back and forth a little bit. I'm not sure
6 if it was an app or what he was using.

7 So after that we turned the scene over to the state police.
8 They performed their investigation and then afterwards they told
9 us we can finish the extrication, you know, and start placing all
10 the deceased in the body bags. So we called our public health
11 director because the coroner that showed up only had one bag with
12 him. She had to bring in six more down with her, so that made
13 transport or transfer of the bodies from where their locations
14 were into the body bags and into the back of the funeral home
15 vehicles that they brought.

16 Q. And what -- you mentioned Waddington had the six walking
17 wounded.

18 A. Waddington Rescue.

19 Q. Waddington Rescue, right. And what ambulances -- because I
20 did talk to Mr. Brown (ph.) at Sea Valley?

21 A. Seaway Valley, that -- Phil Brown. He transported, I
22 believe, maybe two of the victims to the hospital.

23 Q. Yes, I think it was two or three. And who else --

24 A. I thought Massena (ph.) -- he may have transported all three,
25 but I'm not sure. I thought Massena maybe have transported one

1 and he transported two. I know he transported at least two.

2 Q. So Massena may have --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Let's see, we had triage set up and once the victim got
6 pulled out, went to triage and then the triage officer assigned,
7 you know, to an ambulance crew.

8 Q. And then the walking wounded, they were in the Waddington
9 and --

10 A. They were out in the cold --

11 (Crosstalk)

12 Q. -- to the hotel?

13 A. They were out in the cold first, so then we corralled them up
14 and put them in the ambulances. They did go through and checked
15 their vitals and everything to make sure they're okay.

16 Q. Right.

17 A. And like I said, the communication was hard. So they wanted
18 to do the blood pressure over the coats, they're telling them no,
19 you have to take it off. So we were able to get a full set of
20 vitals. They felt comfortable, there were sign-offs. And then
21 they called me and said hey, you know, I'm like, they can't sign.
22 You know, how do we go about doing this. I'm like, just state
23 down there that they could not sign and they didn't have names
24 either. So, you know, they took a piece of paper and started
25 pointing, you know, on the bus where they were and wrote their

1 name next to that position. So they got a few names off of that
2 and they were able to fill some of it in, but I just -- fill it in
3 the best you can and whatever you don't get names label as John
4 Doe 1, John Doe 2.

5 Q. Now does somebody have a copy of that?

6 A. I'm not sure where it was, where the copies -- I don't have a
7 copy.

8 Q. Okay. I mean, we're working -- we've talked to the seven
9 survivors that were not in the hospital. So we've gotten them --

10 A. One of them must have gotten released. Oh, you mean, seven,
11 you mean for the Penske truck, too?

12 Q. No, we talked to the driver -- both the driver and the bus
13 driver, but that -- well, the bus driver was one of the seven.

14 MR. HUMM: Maybe the -- we had seven --

15 MR. KAMINSKI: Seven plus the bus driver.

16 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

17 Q. Yes, so yes, there was one with a broken leg that was --

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. -- that we talked to.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. And so the 15 ambulances, they were coming from do you
22 know what agencies?

23 A. Seaway Valley. I thought they may have brought two, off the
24 top of my head. Massena either had two or three; Waddington had
25 two; Norfolk Rescue had one. I think Potsdam Rescue may have had

1 two; Canton had one; Ogdensburg Rescue had one; Madrid Rescue had
2 one.

3 Q. Is that pretty much all of them?

4 A. That I can think of off the top of my head, yes.

5 Q. Massena, Waddington, Norfolk, Potsdam, Canton. Ogdensburg,
6 is that what --

7 A. Ogdensburg.

8 Q. Ogdensburg, yes.

9 A. O-g-d-e-n-s-b-u-r-g.

10 Q. Ogdensburg, okay. And Madrid. And did -- I know you said
11 you had that meeting? Was it --

12 A. Monday night we had an after action critical incident
13 debriefing, stress debriefing.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. I brought some counselors in for all the firemen and the
16 EMTs.

17 Q. How did that go?

18 A. It went very well. We had over 50 --

19 Q. Because I heard it was pretty traumatic at --

20 A. It was very traumatic. You know, it was one of the -- I've
21 been doing this over 30 years. Worst scene that I have ever been
22 on. And part of it was, you know, I'm like, the extrication after
23 when we stopped -- well, do the bus a little bit better. The
24 problem I had was stabilization on the driver's side, because the
25 whole driver's side was gone.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. You know, and there was no place to attach stretch to, and
3 then the couple of places there were, there was bodies underneath.
4 You know, and then you had to dig through the snow to get to solid
5 ground, you know. And so it was -- like I said it was -- it was
6 difficult.

7 Q. Right. And then as far as you recall, was there -- for the
8 ejected, totally ejected, was there three I'm hearing? Does that
9 sound --

10 A. That sounds about right.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. There was one up on the side of the road. There was the head
13 of one victim that was up on the side of the road. I believe the
14 one victim that got decapitated, he was underneath the bus. There
15 was another one in the snow, yes.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And we took three or four -- we had to cut out at three --
18 three or four we had to cut out of the bus at the end. If I
19 remember it's -- I knew we did it one at a time.

20 Q. And then I know you said you just had a tabletop disaster
21 drill. Have you had a tabletop or a drill regarding mass
22 casualties?

23 A. We do them -- it used to be once a year and because of covid,
24 we kind of didn't get anything together for MCIs. And then we
25 just started doing back-up last year. So we do one countywide

1 with -- like I said, there's eight different districts.

2 Q. Um-hum.

3 A. And kind of every year we go to one of the districts and kind
4 of do them once a year, and the district sometimes do their own.
5 We've never done one total countywide with everybody before --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- being, you know, 42 fire departments and 19 EMS agencies.

8 Q. Yes. And then a lot of them are volunteer, so that
9 involves --

10 A. Yes, so a good percentage of them are volunteer. There's
11 only a couple of our -- we have one paid department, fire, and
12 then EMS we have a couple that have paid employees --

13 Q. So the -- but covid you may have skipped a couple of years, I
14 guess --

15 (Crosstalk)

16 Q. So when do you think the last one was?

17 A. We just did one this past summer.

18 Q. Oh, okay.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. I don't think I need a date, but if I do, I'll get back to
21 you on that. And so overall, how do you think it --

22 A. First responder, I think everybody did well, being the way
23 the scene looked. From what everybody had to see and deal with,
24 everybody did well. There was a lot of professionalism.

25 Everybody, you know, you do the drills. Everybody does what

1 they're supposed to on a drill. Whenever you have the real thing,
2 it doesn't always happen that way.

3 Q. Sure.

4 A. But, you know, I mean for -- we've had structure fires that
5 you couldn't get a word in the radio edgewise. You know, in like
6 with this, fire operations went to one of our top comms; EMS went
7 to another. It left our dispatch channel open for communications
8 with myself, the deputy coordinator, the fire chief and our
9 dispatch. So we were able to -- nobody was talking over us or
10 nobody, you know, we could get our transmissions through that we
11 needed to get through. And then, you know, like I said it's
12 surprisingly -- you know, that everything went as well as it did
13 because normally, you know, it doesn't -- usually you have some
14 people that are walking over each other on the radio or something,
15 and we didn't have any of that.

16 And extrication wise, it was very well. You know, I mean, I
17 know Louisville came from their station towards the accident
18 scene, so they came from the Penske truck side. There was a
19 gentleman standing next to the truck and the operator inside they
20 said no, keep going, they need you down at the bus worse than
21 here. So they went and then, you know, I think Massena ended up
22 working on the guy in the Penske truck. And then Waddington came
23 from the other side, the bus side, and then between Louisville and
24 Waddington, they were working on the bus.

25 Q. Yes, we're going to meet with two guys from Louisville. I

1 think it was Fregoe and --

2 A. Andy Fregoe, he's a state trooper but assistant chief.

3 Q. Right. And Jeff Vice.

4 A. They're both assistant chiefs.

5 Q. Right. We're going to meet with them tomorrow regarding the
6 extrication in the bus. And we're going to meet with Chief
7 Laforce as well.

8 A. Yes, he works during the day --

9 Q. Right.

10 A. -- in Drecksville (ph.), (indiscernible) all over.

11 Q. Right, right. So okay, anything else of interest, any -- and
12 you didn't -- so --

13 A. I didn't find the road conditions to be too bad. Like I
14 said, I travel from Heuvelton to Louisville to the accident scene.
15 It was snowing, it was definitely a white -- the visibility was
16 hard because of the snow, but the road conditions weren't bad as
17 patchy. There was patches of black top and then patches of snow.
18 I didn't find it difficult, the road conditions, but visibility
19 yes. Visibility was very hard to see for me.

20 Q. Right.

21 A. And I had emergency lights on my vehicle, you know, but you
22 get some reflection. I didn't even try without them on, but --

23 Q. Okay.

24 MR. KAMINSKI: John, do you have any --

25 MR. HUMM: I have a few -- a couple of questions.

1 BY MR. HUMM:

2 Q. Do you know anything about the extrication of the truck
3 driver?

4 MR. KAMINSKI: The Penske truck.

5 BY MR. HUMM:

6 Q. The Penske truck. Do you know --

7 A. I know he needed to be, and I think Massena was the ones who
8 did that.

9 Q. Okay, all right. I didn't -- because we're just --

10 A. He was alert and talking, because he told Chief Laforce to
11 keep going, they need help down there more. And I know talking
12 with -- we did -- Monday night we had a stress debriefing with a
13 lot of members. Tuesday night I met with just the chiefs of the
14 departments that responded and, you know, did a kind of an after
15 action, you know. And that, I think, that's when it came up that
16 Massena guys ended up doing the extrication of that guy in the
17 Penske truck.

18 Q. Okay. Yes, because we're just trying to figure out -- I know
19 he had a broken hip, possibly leg, and I just wondered if they
20 took him out through the passenger side or did they pull him out
21 through the driver's side?

22 (Crosstalk)

23 A. Yes, I don't know.

24 Q. We'll talk to them.

25 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

1 Q. Well, I think I got a late text or email from Mr. Brown.

2 A. Phil?

3 Q. Phil Brown.

4 A. He's from Seaway Valley.

5 Q. Right. And he did -- they did some transport. Yes, he told
6 me they transported the --

7 A. Maybe the department did transport him.

8 Q. And -- yes, I don't know what else -- yes.

9 A. That's that age, you know, where you forget what you're
10 doing.

11 Q. Yes.

12 A. It happens to me all the time. I go in the kitchen, what did
13 I come in here for?

14 BY MR. HUMM:

15 Q. So the --

16 MR. KAMINSKI: It gets worse as you get older.

17 BY MR HUMM:

18 Q. The call came in and then how does that get -- like in this
19 area -- I'm just trying to understand this area -- so how does it
20 get disbursed throughout all these multiple agencies?

21 A. So that night we had three people working. My supervisor, we
22 had -- and I'm not sure --

23 (Crosstalk)

24 A. That was -- we had three on staff that night.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Usually, normally, we try to have four, but we had three.
2 One call taker, one dispatcher and one law enforcement dispatcher.
3 And the supervisor that was working, he took the first call. And,
4 you know, how it works is he takes the call, he puts the notes up
5 on the CAD and the dispatcher sees the notes, you know. They're
6 all in the same room together. So he can say hey, you know, they
7 can see the notes, they can hear his conversation, so they're
8 dispatching the units at the same time.

9 How it's set up is geographic. So the supervisor told me,
10 you know, they gave the coordinates, he wrote them down, he
11 repeated them again. While he was on the phone, he popped them in
12 onto the CAD and the map popped up, it showed the exact location.
13 And he's, like, we got the exact location, it's -- you know,
14 location's perfect. So when you get the location, you validate it
15 and then it tells you what departments to dispatch. So that was
16 Louisville Fire, Massena Rescue and Car 12. That was my deputy
17 coordinator for things. So it tells them which one -- so those
18 were the ones they dispatched there first.

19 So once they started getting more reports in, he made the
20 decision to get Massena and Waddington Fire and Rescue going as
21 well. So -- normally, the chief will ask for mutual aid. In this
22 instance, he took it upon himself to get more, which --

23 Q. Your supervisor did?

24 A. My supervisor did and that's kind of what we want them to do,
25 is think out of the box. My theory is to send them. If we don't

1 need them, we can always turn them around.

2 Q. Exactly.

3 A. The fire chiefs don't need them, he can turn around, but he
4 (indiscernible). And they were -- everybody was on scene fairly
5 quick. And like I said, the manpower we had was amazing, the
6 staffed ambulances. And we're not -- we're like every other
7 county. We have a problem with staff and ambulances, you know.
8 This morning -- that morning we did not, you know. I mean, there
9 were all full crews, every single department that was paged out
10 and -- which was hard to believe that was what --

11 Q. Yes, I know. Because you had, like, 15 ambulances. Like
12 when I read that, I was like wow, you guys had -- that's a pretty
13 significant response.

14 A. And --

15 Q. I mean, I guess it turned out, unfortunately, that --

16 A. And we even notified the hospitals and --

17 Q. Yes.

18 A. -- you know, and, like, Claxton and Potsdam were able to take
19 four critical and four non-critical, and I forget the numbers of
20 walking wounded. And Massena, I think, was two critical and four
21 non. Ogdensburg and Claxton Upper didn't get any. The hospitals
22 did full staff it. They kept their midnight staff over and they
23 did pull more staff in. And then afterwards, they're like --
24 Claxton called me and said hey, you know, we didn't get any, you
25 know. So I kind of explained to them that we ended up having six

1 fatality on scene. I said the next ambulance was headed your way.

2 But unfortunately, you know --

3 Q. Right.

4 A. -- they didn't have to need it.

5 Q. Yes, because -- like I said that's interesting is like how
6 quickly did you realize the number of occupants again? Like --

7 A. The fire chief on scene.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. His report -- he said --

10 Q. Yes.

11 A. -- 15. He said at least 15 on the bus --

12 Q. Got you, okay.

13 A. -- is what he said in his report.

14 Q. And so your communication system, how do you guys -- like
15 between all these different groups, do you --

16 A. Everybody carries pagers.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And we also have apps on our phone. So when we dispatch the
19 department, like, say bring call up, information goes in, you add
20 the units. And like if you look up top where it says 48
21 (indiscernible), that's a call that's come in that's pending. It
22 hasn't been dispatched yet. So all the ones on the bottom, those
23 are the ones that have been dispatched and it tells you the times,
24 it tells you the status. Like you see the ones at the hospital
25 and then you get a few of that unconscious on scene. And then

1 over to the far right, it tells you the units that are there. So
2 up top it doesn't have that. There's no units, it's just, you
3 know, zones and stuff like that in the City of Ken (ph.). So
4 that's -- it's a transport to one of the local (indiscernible) is
5 what that is.

6 So once you get dispatch, it goes out, and the units get
7 assigned to it. Once it goes from the top down to the bottom,
8 like this sick person just came in, once it comes down to the
9 bottom, everybody's phone goes off that's assigned to that call.
10 Their phones will alert them and some information will come up on
11 their phones. Also they have an audible pager that the dispatcher
12 tones and that trips -- opens up the contact on their pager and
13 then they hear the verbal announcement go over and alert.

14 A lot of them -- some of them have different alerts, but an
15 alert will go off first, then hear the audible tone. They can't
16 talk back on the pager, but they hear it, then they respond to
17 their station. Usually the chief -- all the chiefs have radios
18 either in their vehicles or portables. They'll call them, tell us
19 they're en route, either the station or the scene, and you know,
20 so we know someone's calling them. We just kind of update the
21 CADs and the notes.

22 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

23 Q. Is that a fairly new system for you or you've had that for a
24 while?

25 A. We've had this for a while. Just a couple of years ago, we

1 actually brought all the law enforcement agencies in the county
2 and before we used this for the sheriff's office, and all fire and
3 EMS. And like I said about two years ago, we brought in every
4 police department in the county in except for one. One didn't
5 want to join us. But so now we have, like, you can search names
6 and anything else.

7 So if we have an individual that gives law enforcement a hard
8 time, we can flag it. So if he gets assigned to anything, the
9 flag goes up and alerts the officer hey. You know, we do our all
10 point bulletins out through this system, and it goes to all the
11 cars, it goes to -- certain people have apps on their phones they
12 can access this.

13 Q. Very good, yes.

14 BY MR. HUMM:

15 Q. And so what about the radios? Like do you have shared --
16 does everybody have a shared channel or, you know --

17 A. Right now we're an analog conventional system. So we have
18 one frequency --

19 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

20 Q. Are you guys updating that?

21 A. Yes, we actually just signed a contract in December with
22 Motorola for a P25 trunking phase 2 system. So --

23 Q. Yes, I heard there's a lot of them switching from analog.

24 A. Yes, ours -- well, I think we're only the -- there's only
25 three of us left in the county and we're one of them. But

1 basically we just signed a contract in December with Motorola, so
2 we're in the process. In a couple of years, we should be online
3 with the new system.

4 BY MR. HUMM:

5 Q. I see. So everybody uses a common channel then when you --

6 A. Yes, dispatch is -- we have 13 repeaters around the county.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. So depending -- and that's what these flags all are. So
9 depending where you are, you turn to that repeater on your radio.

10 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

11 Q. So there's no dead zones, you don't have to worry about --

12 A. Oh, we have dead zones, oh yes. There's still dead zones.

13 Q. Okay. Yes, because -- well, going out to Raybrook (ph.)
14 where the vehicles where we -- you know, there's some spots out
15 there we had no --

16 A. We have spots here, there's no cell service. Yes, so we have
17 dead zones.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. With the new system, it takes a lot of them away and we're
20 adding a few more towers. Work in progress. Yes, so everybody's
21 usually -- it goes to the dispatch channel. So it's the same
22 frequency, but each repeater has a different PL tone. So
23 depending on which PL tone you are, like, I could be here in
24 Canton and I could turn it and I could transmit to Hammond, per
25 se, you know, if I turn to that same frequency but it's just got a

1 different PL tone to that repeater. So you want to know and
2 everybody knows where they are.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. You know, so up in that area, they're either in the
5 Waddington repeater or the Massena repeater, either or. And then
6 their transmission would be go to the repeater, then the repeater
7 sends it to Canton to where we are here.

8 Q. So you said something interesting before. So you're the
9 largest county in the State of New York?

10 A. Correct. We're bigger than the State of Rhode Island, our
11 county is.

12 Q. How many square miles is that?

13 A. Oh, you had to ask. I couldn't tell you.

14 Q. I can probably Google it.

15 A. Yes, we are the largest in the county -- the largest in the
16 state. They said -- I know we're bigger than the State of Rhode
17 Island.

18 Q. And how many can you -- departments do you have?

19 A. 42 fire and 19 EMS.

20 Q. Wow. Okay. Well, you've given us some great information and
21 I appreciate it. Yes, I don't have any other questions for you.

22 A. Like if there's some other information you need, all you have
23 to do is send me an email and I'll forward it to the county
24 attorney.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And then they'll let us send everything to them and then
2 they'll send it to you guys directly.

3 Q. Okay. And you're probably doing the same thing, collecting
4 the same information for state police, I believe.

5 A. We're in the process -- I'm not sure if they've sent it. We
6 knew there was going to be FOIA request, a discovery request on
7 it, so I'm not sure if we actually, physically got the discovery
8 yet. I have to look through. We -- they do -- we may have a form
9 that the officer fills out, it's about to check boxes and
10 information. They got exactly what they want, because like I
11 said, we're an analog system.

12 So any of the recordings, one of my supervisors has to sit
13 there and listen to every single one, and then determines if it
14 goes with that call or not. The new system that just went online
15 last night about midnight has events. So when we open a call,
16 everybody attached to that event, those radio transmissions go in.
17 And the 9-1-1 calls we attach that. It will all be in the events
18 so it's easier for discovery. But we went online at midnight last
19 night.

20 Q. Right.

21 A. So now we're discovering we have to print downstairs, because
22 our IT wouldn't leave the old recorders on the network. So now
23 they have to go downstairs for the next -- because we'll still be
24 using that -- getting data off of that thing, it's five, six
25 months.

1 Q. Right.

2 BY MR. HUMM:

3 Q. I have one more question, sorry. So --

4 A. No, don't be sorry.

5 Q. What did -- what was the coordination between your state
6 police -- like, so what did they do for you guys?

7 A. Well, obviously, when the scene's -- like right off the bat,
8 it belongs to the fire chief. He's the incident commander. So as
9 long as there's life safety involved and public safety, it belongs
10 to the fire chief. And as soon as we determine that -- well,
11 except when I told them after we get the viable people done, we
12 need to stop and regroup. Then at that point we did, and we
13 turned the scene over to the state police, to the investigators
14 there.

15 We work well with all law enforcement agencies here, you
16 know. It's the largest county, but we -- everybody knows
17 everybody, you know. So we assist them, whatever they need. Even
18 on the other end, they assist us on whatever we need. You know,
19 so I mean, it is a good working relationship with all law
20 enforcement, fire and EMS here for us and the county anyways.

21 And then after they were all done, investigator came to us.
22 He says all right, guys, he says, we got whatever we need; you
23 guys can finish up. So that's when we started placing the ones we
24 could in body bags and then finished the extrication on the bus to
25 get them out. Policed the area on the bus and in the ground for

1 any kind of personal belongings, cell phones, wallets, backpacks,
2 anything that had any names on it. Placed all of them in a body
3 bag to help them -- to help identify everybody and what belongs to
4 everybody.

5 And then after that we, you know, got the records and then
6 started pulling everything up and cleaning debris up off the road.
7 We opened the road about, I think, about 5 o'clock is when we
8 opened up the highway.

9 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

10 Q. 5 in the afternoon?

11 A. 5 in the afternoon.

12 BY MR. HUMM:

13 Q. It looks like there was a significant amount of work?

14 A. (Indiscernible).

15 Q. Yes, from like the police, I mean, I know they droned the
16 whole area.

17 A. They did, they did fly drones across the whole thing.

18 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

19 Q. And was it still snowing all day long or --

20 A. No, it just snowed in the morning. I know after when we
21 stopped to regroup, you know, that we -- hey, you know, our job's
22 kind of done right now, you know. We'll wait until after the
23 state police are done. It wasn't snowing at that point. So I
24 suggested to the fire chief let's clean -- start getting rid of
25 the fire ambulances and the fire departments we don't need, have

1 them go to their stations, stand by. We cleared everybody off the
2 debris field from the other side of the Penske truck to way on the
3 other side of the bus. Wherever you see, you know, so nobody was
4 on there when the road opened up. It was completely -- you could
5 see the blacktop on the whole road. There was no snow on the
6 blacktop at that time. I couldn't tell you when the snow stopped.
7 It stopped at some point, you know. I know when we first got
8 there, it was snowing pretty good and on my whole way there it was
9 snowing pretty good.

10 Q. Okay.

11 MR. KAMINSKI: Okay, I really don't have any more --

12 MR. HUMM: Yes, I'm good.

13 MR. KAMINSKI: I don't have any --

14 MR. HUMM: Yes.

15 MR. KAMINSKI: -- more either. So that concludes our
16 interview here of Mr. Denner. And it's approximately 9:40 a.m.

17 (Whereupon, at 9:40 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: FATAL CRASH OF A FREIGHTLINER BOX
TRUCK & BUS IN LOUISVILLE, NEW YORK
ON JANUARY 28, 2023
Interview of Matthew Denner

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY23FH005

DATE: February 2, 2023

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.



Maria Socorro R. Abellar
Transcriber

LUNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL CRASH OF A FREIGHTLINER BOX
TRUCK & BUS IN LOUISVILLE,
NEW YORK ON JANUARY 28, 2023

Accident No.: HWY23FH005

* * * * *

Interview of: Matthew Laforce, Chief
Louisville Fire Department

Friday,
February 3, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RONALD KAMINSKI, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

JOHN HUMM, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. KAMINSKI: Today's date is February the 3rd, 2023. My
3 name is Ronald Kaminski with the NTSB. I'm here with John Humm of
4 the NTSB and we're going to be talking to the chief of the
5 Louisville Fire Department, Mr. Matthew Laforce, L-a-f-o-r-c-e.
6 Chief Laforce is going to give us a description of what all he saw
7 and what he did once he got the call on February 28 -- or excuse
8 me -- January 28th.

INTERVIEW OF MATTHEW LAFORCE

9
10 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

11 Q. Go ahead, Chief.

12 A. So the call initially went out -- first there was a set of
13 tones drop, but then they re-toned us because they got more
14 information. It came in as a bus accident, possibly fatal. Then
15 they updated it to a box truck versus bus. I was the first
16 emergency person there. Whenever I got there, I pulled up on
17 scene. There was a box truck on my left-hand side, the driver was
18 still in it, he was talking. There was another guy standing
19 outside the truck. They both told me that I needed to go to the
20 bus first, that there were more serious injuries at the bus.

21 So I pulled up to the bus, which was on the right-hand side
22 of the road, and there was one gentleman behind the bus, with one
23 guy on the ground that was ejected. And he said this is our most
24 serious patient that's still breathing. I went back to my truck;
25 I got on the radio and let them know we had more than one

1 fatality, and that we needed to see the availability of a chopper.
2 Then I went back to help that guy and by then my assistant chief
3 pulled up, and we both went down because the guy had stopped
4 breathing. We tried dragging him to the road so that they could
5 get somewhere where they could do CPR. That's when they
6 determined that it was too long, they couldn't do CPR, there were
7 more patients that needed attention right away.

8 So by then, our first engine pulled up with the jaws and I
9 told them to come up to the bus. They went around the other side
10 to start extrication on the bus. At that time, Massena Fire was
11 also showing up, their chiefs came up to me, asked me what they
12 wanted. I told the Massena guys to cut the guy out of the truck
13 first and then come up to see me and they could help out with the
14 bus.

15 I also got on the radio and asked for any department that had
16 airbags to support the other side of the bus because it was going
17 downhill. Norfolk Fire came because they had airbags. At that
18 time we had another guy show up from Waddington Fire that had a
19 tow truck, so we used that to kind of help support it, put it
20 through the one side of the bus on the uphill side to help support
21 it.

22 Q. And that was from Waddington?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. We tried getting rescue jacks on the downhill side, but there

1 just -- there was nothing left of the bus to attach it to. And
2 you start to, and it would fall out, so our best bet at that point
3 was the uphill side. They got the other guy extricated out of the
4 bus and that was the only other one in the bus that was breathing
5 and able to be cut out. And then they started putting the people
6 -- there were six guys standing up on the hill, walking wounded.
7 That's what we call them.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. They put them in the ambulance so they could start checking
10 them over. And one of them I know went to the hospital because
11 the side of his head was messed up from leaning against the side
12 of the bus. At that point, we ended up -- everyone on the
13 downhill side of the bus, they were trying to dig underneath to
14 make sure there was no one else. We accounted for everybody; we
15 counted everybody we knew where they were. So I told them to get
16 away from the downhill side of the bus, so it didn't roll over or
17 something on them. There was no reason to be down there at that
18 point.

19 So we all regrouped and decided what we were going to do. By
20 then the state police investigator showed up and we started asking
21 them, and they wanted everything left alone until they were done
22 with their investigation. We couldn't remove any more bodies. At
23 that point Waddington Rescue had the six guys in there and we
24 asked if they could go somewhere so that it was warm, and they
25 said yes. So they brought them back to the motel, to the Econo

1 Lodge, and dropped them off.

2 Q. And what ambulance -- was it an ambulance or --

3 A. Yes, Waddington Rescue.

4 Q. They took six of them back?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. The Econo Lodge.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And then at that point, we pretty much waited for the state
10 police to finish their investigation, and then once they did, we
11 got a heavy tow truck in there to lift the front end so we could
12 remove the two bodies that were underneath the front driver's side
13 of the bus. And the coroner started taking -- took those bodies.
14 We winched the bus up onto the road where it was flat ground
15 before we extricated the rest of them out of the bus, that way no
16 one got hurt. Then we removed the last three bodies, cut them out
17 of the bus.

18 Q. So you waited -- after they were done, you got the heavy
19 truck, moved the bus and then you removed the two under the bus,
20 and then you -- once that was out, then you removed the last three
21 deceased that were in the bus?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay. And the -- did the -- so there really wasn't anybody
24 that was -- I mean, other than the one person that we talked about
25 earlier that's still in the hospital with the head injury -- there

1 wasn't really any other really serious injuries. Correct?

2 A. Well, yes, the truck driver --

3 Q. Oh, yes.

4 A. -- that was pinned in there with his legs.

5 Q. Right. He got a fractured hip, I guess.

6 A. Yes, I don't know what's wrong with him. But then they had
7 the one in the bus that cut out that they said his arm was almost
8 severed, I guess. He's the one right now that they have in a
9 self-induced coma, I believe.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And then there was another one with a head injury on the side
12 of his head.

13 Q. Is that the laceration?

14 A. I don't know. To me, it also looked like his ear was gone
15 that day, but it was hard to tell. There was so much blood.

16 Q. Sure.

17 A. But he was in the group of guys. He didn't -- wasn't even
18 looking for an ambulance.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And then someone noticed and said you need medical attention.

21 Q. Yes, we talked to him. There was a guy, he had --

22 MR. HUMM: His cheek was, at the time, was -- it's gone
23 considerably down -- but it was -- they said that at the time, it
24 was very small.

25 MR. KAMINSKI: Two really long --

1 MR. HUMM: Yes.

2 MR. KAMINSKI: -- lacerations to his right cheek, I think it
3 was.

4 MR. HUMM: Yes.

5 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

6 Q. Okay. So that -- you mentioned about the helicopter and
7 that --

8 A. They couldn't fly because of the snow.

9 Q. Right.

10 A. I guess they took the one guy fixed wing after, but yes, it's
11 getting harder and harder. If there's a snowflake in the air,
12 they will not fly the chopper here anymore.

13 Q. Back in the day they did and nowadays --

14 A. And we've got Fort Drum --

15 Q. Um-hum.

16 A. -- that's starting to fly again. They used to do it and
17 they're starting to do it again. But the problem is you call
18 there, they have to get approval, then have to find their guys,
19 then they have to get them there. They're not on standby like the
20 regular Life Net (ph.).

21 Q. Right. And what's the name of the helo group here? Life
22 Med?

23 A. Life Net.

24 Q. Life Net.

25 A. Yes, Life Net.

1 Q. Okay. And is there anyone else that you feel -- we're going
2 to talk to -- we talked to the one Assistant Chief Fregoe this
3 morning. We're going to talk to Vice here at 4:00 o'clock, I
4 mean, at -- back at the --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. -- station. Anybody else from Waddington or any other
7 departments do you think?

8 A. I mean Waddington's chief and their guys helped do the
9 extrication out of the bus.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. The initial extrication of the one guy. Our guys and their
12 guys did it, so you might want to talk to them.

13 Q. Well you know what, I've got phone numbers but --

14 A. Kevin Sharlow (ph.), who's the chief.

15 Q. I'm not getting -- I think Waddington goes right to -- it
16 rings. I've got a 4441 number.

17 A. I have his cell phone.

18 Q. Okay. Yes, that would help because --

19 (Crosstalk)

20 Q. -- you know.

21 A. Pat O'Brien from Massena, did you talk to him?

22 Q. Yes.

23 A. Because I told him you would be calling.

24 Q. Yes, I talked to him. In fact, he was one of the first guys
25 I talked to, I think, on Monday.

1 A. The only other guy that he was there when we got there --
2 he's not in the fire department or rescue squad -- is Jeff ice
3 knows him. He works with him, he's a sergeant at one of the
4 jails. He was the one that was there with that guy, he was
5 following --

6 Q. The bus driver?

7 A. -- the bus.

8 Q. Or with the truck driver?

9 A. No, with the guy that flew out of the bus. I don't know who
10 the other guy that was walking around in a bright green jacket
11 that was up with the truck driver. Once it was done, I didn't see
12 him anymore.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. So it was like -- where he went or if someone got his name,
15 but --

16 Q. So the Waddington chief? It's --

17 A. Kevin Sharlow.

18 Q. C-a-s --

19 A. S-h-a-r-l-o-w.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And it's [REDACTED].

22 Q. Okay. And we're still trying to -- I know there was 15
23 ambulances that went out.

24 A. The only ones that did transports, though, were Massena and
25 Seaway Valley, is what I was told. Those are the only two that

1 did transports. Seaway Valley's a paid ambulance. I don't
2 know --

3 Q. Yes. I think that's where I called and talked to --

4 A. Phil?

5 Q. Phil Brown, yes. Because I think there was -- how many were
6 transported? That was --

7 A. Three, I think. There was a guy in the truck, the guy in the
8 LE cutout, then the other guy.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So there was three.

11 Q. That's right. The rest were deceased. Okay. And overall,
12 how did you think that the -- it all went? I mean --

13 A. I thought it went excellent for this -- especially where we
14 were in the middle of nowhere.

15 Q. Yes.

16 A. And it's not like we're in the middle of the city and people
17 I've spoken to there in the city said we wouldn't have had the
18 turnout you guys had, that we actually did better, they think,
19 than they would have did in a city. It helped with the dispatch,
20 because the dispatch, as soon as I got there, all the way down
21 this road -- because if you continue down this road, that's where
22 it happened, right there on the left.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. You turn left and it's the first house.

25 Q. That's how you were there, the first one -- yes.

1 A. And I couldn't talk on the radio all the way there because
2 they were toning people out, which was excellent, because whenever
3 I got there and I needed to get on the radio, everyone was already
4 on their way. I mean, Massena and Waddington Fire were already
5 coming, we had ambulances coming, and then once I told them the
6 number, then we got more ambulances coming. So it was quick.

7 Q. Yes. And when we talked to Mr. Denner, yes, he said that it
8 was --

9 A. And in a matter of minutes, it seemed like they had the
10 people cut out. I mean, I turned around to our guys to get them
11 going. Massena had started on the truck; they came up to me and
12 said we're done on the truck. And by the time they were done on
13 the truck, they had the guy coming out of the bus, too. It was
14 pretty quick.

15 Q. Yes, and it sounds like -- he says that, you know, they just
16 had a disaster drill, they practiced the other day, tabletop, but
17 yes, it sounds like -- well, for the biggest county, I guess, you
18 know, you got to be prepared. You'll never know. And you're
19 right here on the border?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. So that's -- I've got --

22 MR. KAMINSKI: Do you have any questions, John?

23 MR. HUMM: I just have one right now.

24 BY MR. HUMM:

25 Q. The question is about the one that was outside or the victim

1 or the decedent that was outside the vehicle that was ejected, you
2 came upon -- or you said --

3 A. He was breathing.

4 Q. Yes. Do you know about how far you pulled him? Because I'm
5 just trying to figure out where maybe he was --

6 A. The bus was sitting down in an angle in the snowbank.
7 Whenever I got there, he was laying on the ground behind it, but I
8 don't know if that's where he landed or if that CO moved him at
9 all.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Because he was there before me. Whenever I got there, he was
12 laying right directly behind the back door.

13 Q. Oh.

14 MR. KAMINSKI: Oh, okay.

15 BY MR. HUMM:

16 A. And then from there, we dragged him up -- straight up the
17 hill on the road --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- so that if we had to do CPR, we could do it.

20 Q. No, that's actually really good information because this is
21 first that we've heard that he was moved from his original --

22 A. And the other two guys, one was underneath the wheel --

23 Q. Yes --

24 A. -- and one was --

25 Q. Yes --

1 A. -- just behind him.

2 Q. Yes, and then there was one guy that was in here, kind of
3 trapped in here like this --

4 A. That guy --

5 Q. -- here and then here.

6 A. Yes, and this guy here, it looked just like a movie. He was
7 folded right in half --

8 Q. Yes.

9 A. -- and tucked right in the seat on the far side.

10 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

11 Q. And was he initially -- was he the one that was initially
12 breathing and --

13 A. I don't know because I didn't get inside.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Car 36 is the one that was inside. He's the one that told us
16 yes, no, who to treat, who to cut out.

17 Q. Okay. And were they from Car 36?

18 A. He is from -- geez, where is he from? He was working in
19 Alcoa (ph.). We're lucky he just got done work that day because
20 he heard it, and he called the other county car, Dave Weitz (ph.),
21 Car 12, and said hey, do you want my help and he said yes. Where
22 the heck is he from? I can't remember if he's from Ogdensburg or
23 Parishville. One or the other; he's quite a ways away. But he
24 was the one that was in there, pretty much telling which guy to
25 treat, which guy to walk away from, because they're already

1 deceased.

2 Q. But he'll probably -- would his car number be on the dispatch
3 logs?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Yes.

7 MR. HUMM: Yes, we want to talk to him, definitely.

8 MR. KAMINSKI: Yes, right.

9 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

10 Q. You're right. It was Ogdensburg or Saraville (sic) you think
11 he's at?

12 A. Him?

13 Q. Yes.

14 A. He's either Parishville --

15 Q. Oh, Parishville.

16 A. -- or Ogdensburg.

17 Q. Oh, Ogdensburg, yes.

18 A. I think he's -- I wasn't to say he's from Parishville,
19 because I'm -- yes, I'm pretty sure he is because he would have
20 turned and went home, and instead he came straight and helped us.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. So he's a paramedic also, so he --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- he knew what he was doing.

25 BY MR. HUMM:

1 Q. So is he on a rescue trip or was he --

2 A. No, first --

3 (Crosstalk)

4 Q. Okay.

5 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

6 Q. Yes, you said he called and see that they needed his help.

7 A. And he said I'm leaving work. I'm going through Massena. Do
8 you guys need help, and I said yes, get here.

9 MR. HUMM: Okay.

10 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

11 A. More help the better.

12 Q. They said they -- with the -- the whole picture. So I don't
13 have any other questions.

14 MR. KAMINSKI: Do you?

15 MR. HUMM: (No audible response).

16 MR. KAMINSKI: That concludes our interview here with Chief
17 Laforce. It is approximately 3:15.

18 (Whereupon, at 3:15 p.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: FATAL CRASH OF A FREIGHTLINER BOX
TRUCK & BUS IN LOUISVILLE, NEW YORK
ON JANUARY 28, 2023
Interview of Matthew Laforce

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY23FH005

DATE: February 3, 2023

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complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Maria Socorro R. Abellar
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL CRASH OF A FREIGHTLINER BOX
TRUCK & BUS IN LOUISVILLE,
NEW YORK ON JANUARY 28, 2023

Accident No.: HWY23FH005

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Interview of: ANDREW FREGOE, Assistant Chief

Friday,
February 3, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RONALD KAMINSKI, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

JOHN HUMM, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. KAMINSKI: Today's date is February 3rd. My name is
3 Ronald Kaminski with the NTSB. I'm here with John Humm of the --
4 also with the NTSB, and we're going to be talking with Assistant
5 Chief Andrew Fregoe, F-r-e-g-o-e, and he's going to give us a
6 description of the event -- the mass casualty incident from last
7 Saturday, January 28th.

INTERVIEW OF ANDREW FREGOE

8
9 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

10 Q. And why don't you start from the time you got the call?

11 A. Okay. So I'm home, in bed and the pager goes off. I started
12 heading out. Usually I'm pretty key when there's lots of extra
13 pages that it's something serious, and that's county registers did
14 a great job on that. So I kind of picked her up a little bit. By
15 then Matt Laforce had been on scene, so he's giving a scene
16 description, and obviously extrication was a major factor.

17 So coming down by the station at 6:00 in the morning, so it's
18 always -- the guys are a little slower getting going. So I see
19 the truck was still here, so I pulled in to get the truck, then
20 actually John Sheets (ph.) rolled in and he grabbed it. I
21 actually ended up driving; I rode with him. I heard some more
22 scene description on the way.

23 Q. And the truck you picked up, was that a rescue truck?

24 A. Well, East 71, it's a mini-pumper/rescue truck, I guess. We
25 have all our car accident extrication equipment, things --

1 Q. Okay.

2 (Crosstalk)

3 A. So we knew that's what definitely what we needed. We pulled
4 up -- I think we pulled up next to the box truck. And Matt
5 Laforce, who's the chief, he says, you know, the man was talking
6 so he said he was going to have someone else deal with that. So
7 he sent us up to the bus and we were focused on the bus. Not even
8 knowing what was going on, I jumped right off and grabbed the
9 spreader and cutter, jaws of life. And went down around the
10 corner and kind of saw what was going on. Obviously the whole
11 side's wide open. So there is an EMT -- I can't think of his name
12 for the life of me right now -- but there was an EMT in there.

13 Q. Already in the bus?

14 A. Already in the bus. The second one was crawling in the back,
15 I think wanting to open up the back door. And I just said, you
16 know, started pointing and who do we need to deal with, and he was
17 obviously checking who's clearly deceased and who needs saving.
18 And ultimately we only had one. Made a little plan to get him out
19 of there. So somebody went and got the rescue guys down there,
20 and we cut some -- a seat out, which was the most obvious way to
21 get him out. And basically cut the back board up there and slid
22 him down like a slide and right onto the -- because obviously the
23 bus is on an angle.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. Right onto the back board, and I think we got him up to the

1 truck -- or carried him up to the gurney and obviously EMS takes
2 over at that point. And we went back down. You know, we went
3 through and we checked everyone again just to make sure. I mean,
4 as we say in the state police, the obviously dead --

5 Q. Right.

6 A. -- you don't need to check that. And then we -- I think we
7 spent a period of time confirming that no one was under the bus.
8 So we talked about having lift bags coming. I think Norfolk Fire
9 was bringing their lift bags. We do not have any.

10 Q. Yes, I talked to Michelle (ph.), I think her name is,
11 yesterday.

12 A. Michelle?

13 Q. From Norfolk.

14 A. Maybe Norfolk Rescue?

15 Q. Yes.

16 A. So we had Norfolk Fire coming. They --

17 Q. Oh, that's different.

18 A. Yes, so as opposed to a lot of counties, a lot of the rescue
19 squads and fire departments are separated. So they're two
20 separate entities.

21 Q. That's good to know.

22 A. Two separate -- so Massena Rescue and Massena Fire. We're
23 actually contracted with Massena. Massena Rescue also covers
24 Louisville. Waddington Fire, Waddington Rescue. The
25 (indiscernible) lower part of the county, they're still together,

1 but I don't know. That separation was long before my time. So,
2 let's see --

3 Q. So how many seats did you cut out?

4 A. Just one.

5 Q. And was it the seat bag, the seat cushion or both?

6 A. The entire seat. There was, you know, a hollow plate there,
7 that --

8 Q. Um-hum.

9 A. -- on the base and I just snipped those and it come right out
10 easy.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. So it was the most clearly, the most easiest way to get them
13 out.

14 Q. So you cut the one cushion -- you cut the whole seat, the
15 cushion and the seat bag?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Yes.

19 MR. KAMINSKI: Oh, we did see the one that was --

20 MR. HUMM: Yes.

21 MR. KAMINSKI: -- whole.

22 BY MR. HUMM:

23 Q. Do you recall -- if you can remember -- do you know which, if
24 you could -- because there were five seats essentially -- so if
25 you go one, on the left-hand side, one, two, three, four, five --

1 one's the front --

2 A. I would say it's the second one back on the --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- or on the --

5 MR. KAMINSKI: Driver's side.

6 BY MR. HUMM:

7 A. Driver's side.

8 Q. Yes.

9 A. Driver's side because we're -- buses turn the opposite
10 direction in my mind. Okay. On the other side. Well, like I
11 said, we each spent a little bit of time confirming that someone
12 was under there, but I think by the time they got there, we got
13 shovels and dug out under there, and took some pipe poles and
14 pushed through just to make sure we didn't hit anything. And I
15 think by the time they got there, we had a little bit of a
16 discussion. Is everyone confident no one's under there. I think
17 by then it was stand back and let state police investigators do
18 their thing, so.

19 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

20 Q. So how long did you -- were you on scene approximately?

21 A. To about 12:30. I had a family emergency so I left about
22 that time.

23 Q. As -- now we're going to also talk to the other assistant
24 chief.

25 A. Jeff.

1 Q. Jeff Vice.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And anyone else you think, other departments that you think
4 would be beneficial or would have a lot of good information
5 regarding any extrication or anything else, transport or --

6 A. I mean, shortly after we extricated him, a lot of people
7 showed up. I mean, Massena Fire, Waddington Fire. Waddington
8 Fire was there very early on, but they have some guys that I don't
9 know their names, to be honest.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. I couldn't tell you who exactly.

12 Q. The chief might be able to tell.

13 A. The chief, yes, and the chief was there. You know, the
14 Waddington chief might be a good resource, and I can't remember
15 his name right now either.

16 Q. I think that according to Matt Denner he was saying that
17 there was three chiefs that were on scene, that --

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. -- talked -- did kind of a debrief, I guess, on Tuesday or
20 something.

21 A. Yes, I was here for that, yes.

22 Q. How did that go?

23 A. Pretty good.

24 Q. Yes?

25 A. Yes. Matt does a very good job with that kind of stuff --

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. -- and organizing stuff we had here on Monday and Tuesday.

3 So, I mean, the second thing was very nice, because we try to do
4 that after major incidents, like major fires and things like that.

5 You just get together and say what you did good, what you did
6 bad --

7 Q. Um-hum.

8 A. -- and how you can learn from it. So, but this was a little
9 bit more organized than we would normally do on our own. So it
10 was -- he did a good job on that, so.

11 Q. And so I'm glad you told me. So a lot of these departments,
12 Norfolk, they have fire and rescue. Same with --

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. -- Waddington?

15 A. Yes, Waddington, Norfolk and Massena would certainly fall
16 under that. I'm trying to think. Any of the rescue -- I mean, I
17 know rescue squads -- one squad came from Potsdam, which is
18 separated, but one came from Canton, which is not separated, so --

19 Q. That's a long drive.

20 A. Yes, but the squads are getting harder and harder to get, and
21 they -- I mean, originally they said 15 and at that point, you
22 have no idea who's in and who's not. So they send it right off
23 and you can always turn them around, so.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. I know when I got off the bus, all those -- all the other

1 individuals were still standing there. So --

2 Q. The survivors from the bus?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. I just got to ignore them, because clearly they're standing
6 up, they're okay. So -- and then rescue kind of checked them all
7 out, but I wasn't a witness to any of that, so.

8 Q. Yes, it seemed that the hotel is right down the street here.

9 A. Yes. It's kind of odd that's where they were staying if they
10 were going --

11 Q. Deocano (ph.).

12 A. Deocano. Were they going to Madrid or they were going to
13 Ogdensburg?

14 Q. I just know they were heading west.

15 A. Okay. Because I've heard both. They were working on a
16 project in Waddington, they were working on a project down in
17 Kenyard in Ogdensburg, which it seems like they were driving by a
18 lot of hotels to get there, whatever.

19 Q. Right, right.

20 A. Probably got a deal with Econo Lodge or something.

21 MR. KAMINSKI: Do you have anything else?

22 BY MR. HUMM:

23 Q. So the -- I guess, what I'm curious about is like you heard
24 -- you got the call that there were 15 people?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. That's it? Okay. Because I was just trying to work out in
2 my head like how do you know -- like, because it was a confusing
3 situation and, like, not a lot of English, right? A lot of people
4 didn't speak English?

5 A. Yes, I know -- I mean, I don't know. I know the county said
6 they had six calls on it. This is 6:00 in the morning on a
7 Saturday. I know one was -- somebody who lived right there. They
8 -- I'm losing my train of thought -- but so I don't know what the
9 county -- whether they got that information from a caller or from
10 Matt Laforce, who's the chief and he just lives up the road there
11 from it. And he was very quickly there within two minutes, and he
12 gave a very good description of the scene. So that's where a lot
13 of the mutual aid was quickly garnered to, so.

14 MR. KAMINSKI: Um-hum. Yes, we'll be talking to him this
15 afternoon at his house. Yes, we're going to meet him.

16 BY MR. HUMM:

17 Q. Yes, so I'm curious, like, because you were worried about
18 people being underneath. So is that why you -- you said okay, we
19 got 15 and we kind of know --

20 A. You know, and we talked about that a little bit, too. Like,
21 the foreman was there, who spoke English --

22 Q. Right.

23 A. -- and he said there's 15 of them were on the bus. And we
24 accounted for 15, but --

25 Q. Yes.

1 A. -- I'd still rather look --

2 Q. Sure.

3 A. -- you know. Somebody could have wandered in the back and
4 were sleeping before they even got on the bus, who knows. I mean,
5 people were -- one individual was thrown, so it's perfectly
6 reasonable to think someone could have been thrown and then the
7 bus went over top of them, so.

8 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

9 Q. Sure, yes. I didn't think about that, that's why I asked
10 that.

11 A. You know, like I say, been with the state police for 20
12 years, too, and one thing I've learned is, you know, you have a
13 fatal accident, you do a vehicle walkaround, because you never
14 know there's -- never happened around here, but I've heard stories
15 about, you know, somebody goes to a fatal accident, clean up the
16 body or move the car. And then two hours later somebody's hey,
17 where's so and so, and they're 50 feet in the woods, you know. I
18 never want that to happen to me.

19 Q. Yes.

20 MR. KAMINSKI: So, okay, that concludes our interview here
21 with Assistant Chief Andrew Fregoe.

22 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE


This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL CRASH OF A FREIGHTLINER BOX
TRUCK & BUS IN LOUISVILLE, NEW YORK
ON JANUARY 28, 2023
Interview of Andrew Fregoe

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY23FH005

DATE: February 3, 2023

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.



Maria Socorro R. Abellar
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL CRASH OF A FREIGHTLINER BOX
TRUCK & BUS IN LOUISVILLE,
NEW YORK ON JANUARY 28, 2023

Accident No.: HWY23FH005

* * * * *

Interview of: JEFFREY VICE, Assistant Chief
Louisville Fire Department

Friday,
February 3, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RONALD KAMINSKI, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

JOHN HUMM, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. KAMINSKI: Today's date is February 3rd. My name is
3 Ronald Kaminski with the NTSB. I'm here with John Humm of the
4 NTSB. And we're going to be talking with Louisville Assistant
5 Chief Jeffrey Vice, V-i-c-e.

INTERVIEW OF JEFFREY VICE

6
7 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

8 Q. So why don't you just start from the point you got toned out
9 to -- and responding and tell me what you all saw, what you did?

10 A. So got the tones, responded. When I pulled up on scene, I
11 went past the first truck, which was the Penske truck. I looked
12 in, but I didn't -- obviously I didn't even see the guy sitting
13 there in the seat. Continued up to where the bus was, pulled past
14 the bus, got out of the vehicle. And as I approached the scene,
15 there was a gentleman there hollering at me -- hollering my name.
16 I knew the gentleman. He said that he had a victim, had just
17 stopped breathing. He wanted to do CPR on him, but we pulled him
18 up and realized that at that point we couldn't -- there was -- we
19 had other victims that were alive and breathing. So I then took
20 focus on vehicles approaching. At that time, I was just -- our
21 chief was on the radio and our communications were starting to get
22 a little scrambled, so I took channel 2 and he stayed on channel
23 1, and I kind of coordinated with vehicles coming in.

24 As people approached, Andy went down with a team to extricate
25 the live person. And at that point I noticed human parts --

1 (Crosstalk)

2 A. -- yes, on the roadway. I then tried to keep that preserved
3 and then once we got that all taken care of, I helped get the
4 surviving victims to the rescue squads, which at that point, they
5 had already made it there. And then at that point --

6 Q. The walking wounded?

7 A. The walking wounded, yes. At that point, I then -- after we
8 realized we had all victims accounted for, or all persons that
9 were involved accounted for, I then tried to orchestrate all the
10 departments that were there to get to their respective rigs so we
11 can get a count as to who was there and so that people weren't
12 trampling all over and disrupting the scene, because I knew at
13 that point it was going to be under investigation.

14 We then figured out what we needed and, you know, got rid of
15 the departments that we didn't need. At that point, the state
16 troopers took over their investigation. Once the troopers were
17 done with their investigation, I got with the tow truck driver.
18 We discussed how we were going to -- how he was going to bring the
19 bus up onto the roadway. Obviously at that point, you know, we
20 knew we had two victims trapped under the bus, so we were
21 discussing how we wanted to get them out.

22 I came up with the plan on how to extricate the deceased.
23 And when Massena Rescue showed up, I went with them, told them
24 what our plan was, and they said it sounded good. And he got the
25 bus up on the roadway after getting the two underneath the bus

1 removed and continued to remove the deceased that were in the bus.

2 Q. And there was how many -- at that point, there's how many
3 deceased on the bus? There was two --

4 A. Three deceased on the bus, yes.

5 Q. Can you explain where they were located at?

6 A. One was -- looked to be, I think, like the third seat back --

7 Q. On the --

8 A. on the -- so we he would have been in the third seat back on
9 the passenger side, but he was kind of in the aisle. So he was
10 kind of like half on the seat, half in the aisle.

11 Q. Is that the one folded up?

12 A. Yes, he would have -- yes, he was kind of folded a little
13 bit.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Yes. The other victim would have been -- looked to be like
16 the fourth seat maybe. And then --

17 Q. Driver's side?

18 A. Driver's side, yes. And then the other one was directly
19 behind him. Actually, when I first saw it, I didn't realize there
20 was two bodies there.

21 Q. Okay. So that -- so if he was in the fourth -- I think
22 there's only five rows, so --

23 A. Is it -- so there would have been -- I think the first one
24 was caught, then the second one, so maybe it was the third.

25 Q. Third and fourth row?

1 A. Third and fourth.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Because there's what -- was there five or six?

4 Q. Five rows.

5 A. Five rows.

6 BY MR. HUMM:

7 Q. Probably what you're thinking is that there's a shield.

8 A. Right.

9 Q. And so the shield --

10 A. Okay.

11 Q. And with the thing, the way it was mangled.

12 A. Okay.

13 MR. KAMINSKI: Yes.

14 BY MR. HUMM:

15 Q. When I went and looked at it, too, it was confusing at first.

16 A. Right.

17 Q. But then we saw an exemplar.

18 A. Yes, okay.

19 Q. And so we --

20 (Crosstalk)

21 Q. It might be that shield.

22 A. Okay.

23 Q. You know?

24 A. So, yes. So it would have been the third -- yes, so it would
25 have been the third and fourth. So the other guy would have been

1 in the second seat then.

2 Q. Got you.

3 A. And we removed them as they were, like we did the first guy,
4 then the second guy, and then the third guy.

5 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

6 Q. When you had to cut out some seats to get to them --

7 A. So we had --

8 Q. -- cut the seatbacks.

9 A. Yes, we had to cut the seat. We got one seat, the -- I think
10 that seat was already -- the back of the seat was already removed.
11 That might have been the one that -- I'm not sure if that's the
12 one Andy removed.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. But we removed the seat itself and then got the first one
15 out. After that, all we did was cut the backs of seats to get the
16 other two.

17 Q. Okay. And approximately how far do you live from -- or how
18 would -- your response when you got there, the chief was there --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- how many other people were there?

21 A. I don't think there was anybody else there --

22 Q. No.

23 (Crosstalk)

24 A. Yes, I was like the second, yes, because I'm only
25 approximately two and a half miles.

1 Q. Yes, he's -- I think he's like 10 miles --

2 A. Yes --

3 Q. -- yes.

4 A. -- yes.

5 Q. Okay. Any issues with the -- out at scene? You stabilized
6 the bus --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. -- and all that?

9 A. So after I got there, and I was seeing some of the equipment
10 coming in, there was a tow truck that showed up. He's -- threw a
11 chain over the bus real quick to kind of stabilize it.

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. Waddington Fire then came in and used two -- I believe they
14 had two jacks on the bus, on the driver's side of the bus to kind
15 of try to help stabilize it.

16 Q. Okay.

17 MR. KAMINSKI: Anything, John?

18 BY MR. HUMM:

19 Q. Do you -- the third deceased person that was outside the bus,
20 not the two trapped under the front, the one that you were
21 thinking about doing CPR first.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. So do you know where his location -- or that person's
24 location was when --

25 A. When I -- when -- not officially.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. When I first arrived, the gentleman had him probably about
3 maybe the length of the table away, so about 8 feet from the back
4 of the bus. And I think he said he got -- I'm not sure, but I
5 believe he said he was in the back of the bus.

6 Q. Oh, he's in the back.

7 A. I believe -- that's the way he came out where -- not where he
8 was located on the bus, I don't know.

9 Q. Oh.

10 A. But I think he -- that's how we got them off the bus was
11 through the back door --

12 Q. Oh.

13 A. -- because he was right there.

14 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

15 Q. So you don't think he was ejected then?

16 A. I don't know for sure.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I can find out, because I do know the gentleman that was --

19 MR. HUMM: Yes, that would be great.

20 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

21 Q. Yes, I'll give you my business card.

22 A. Actually I could probably call him right now. He's probably
23 at home.

24 Q. Okay.

25 MR. HUMM: That would be great.

1 MR. VICE: Do you want me to call him while you're --

2 MR. HUMM: Sure.

3 BY MR. KAMINSKI:

4 Q. Well, we could --

5 (Crosstalk)

6 Q. Yes, we can do it after. I think we're about done here.

7 A. Okay.

8 MR. HUMM: Yes, that's kind of one of the mysteries or things
9 we're trying to solve now is that --

10 MR. VICE: Okay.

11 MR. HUMM: -- you know, that person --

12 MR. VICE: Yes, because of -- yes.

13 MR. HUMM: -- where their location. Because initially we saw
14 the pictures and we thought oh, he was ejected far from the bus.
15 And then we talked to --

16 MR. VICE: Right.

17 MR. HUMM: -- we talked --

18 MR. KAMINSKI: The chief said it --

19 (Crosstalk)

20 MR. HUMM: And then he was dragged out.

21 MR. VICE: Yes, he was behind the bus and then we dragged him
22 up through --

23 MR. KAMINSKI: Right, to try and do CPR.

24 MR. VICE: Yes, because yes -- because once I got them up
25 there, obviously his coat came open and I looked at him, and

1 that's when I heard other commotion going on that we had
2 survivors. And I just -- it's the hardest decision in the world
3 to make sure --

4 MR. KAMINSKI: Oh, yes.

5 MR. HUMM: No, we're just trying to figure out where he was
6 exactly, because it kind of helps us --

7 MR. VICE: Okay.

8 MR. HUMM: -- document --

9 MR. VICE: Yes, I can -- yes, as soon as we're done, we can
10 -- I can get a hold of that gentlemen.

11 MR. KAMINSKI: Okay.

12 MR. HUMM: Thank you.

13 MR. KAMINSKI: You good?

14 MR. HUMM: I don't have any other questions. Thank you.

15 MR. KAMINSKI: Okay. That concludes our interview here with
16 Assistant Chief Jeffrey Vice. We're at the Louisville Fire
17 Department Station.

18 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)
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24
25

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ACCIDENT NO.: HWY23FH005

DATE: February 3, 2023

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.



Maria Socorro R. Abellar
Transcriber