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Interview Transcript – Scott Deutsch Northern Regional Manager, Hazardous Materials, Norfolk Southern Railway, February 8, 2023

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:	*	
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NORFOLK SOUTHERN TRAIN DERAILMENT	*	
IN EAST PALESTINE, OHIO	*	Accident No.: RRD23MR005
ON FEBRUARY 3, 2023	*	
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Interview of: SCOTT DEUTSCH,
Northern Regional Manager Hazardous Materials
Norfolk Southern

Youngstown, Ohio

Wednesday,
February 8, 2023

APPEARANCES:

MARC DOUGHERTY, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

SEAN LYNUM, Chief of Pipeline and Hazardous Materials
National Transportation Safety Board

DAVE MECKFESSEL, Accident Investigator
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

PAUL STANCIL, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

(8:04 a.m.)

MR. DOUGHERTY: Good morning. Today is February 8th, 2023. The time is 8:04 a.m. This interview is being conducted in connection with the Norfolk Southern Railway train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, on February 3rd, 2023. The NTSB number is RRD23MR005. My name is Marc Dougherty. I'm a hazardous materials accident investigator with the NTSB. We are located at the Doubletree Hotel in Youngstown, Ohio. This is an interview of Mr. Scott Deutsch of Norfolk Southern Railway.

And I'll now go around the room and we'll do introductions. It's very important for the recording that we all speak loudly and clearly. All right.

MR. LYNUM: My name is Sean Lynum. I am the chief of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Division of the National Transportation Safety Board.

MR. MECKFESSEL: My name is Dwight Meckfessel. I'm an accident investigator for the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

MR. DOUGHERTY: Could you spell your last name, please, Dwight?

MR. MECKFESSEL: My last name is spelled M-e-c-k-f as in Frank-e-s-s-e-l.

MR. STANCIL: My name Paul Stancil, S-t-a-n-c-i-l. I'm a senior hazardous materials accident investigator with the National

Transportation Safety Board.

MR. DEUTSCH: I'm Scott Deutsch, Norfolk Southern Railroad northern regional manager hazardous materials.

MR. DOUGHERTY: And could you spell your last name, please?

MR. DEUTSCH: Deutsch, D-e-u-t-s-c-h.

MR. DOUGHERTY: Very good. All right. Mr. Deutsch, if any question is unclear or if you don't understand a question, please ask the questioner to clarify or restate the question. If you don't know the answer to any of the questions, it's okay to tell us you don't know. We don't want you to speculate if you don't know the answer to a question.

The sole purpose of this investigation is to improve safety, not to assign fault, blame or liability. Our sole mission is to improve transportation safety and prevent accidents. As such, the NTSB cannot offer any guarantee of confidentiality, immunity from any legal proceedings by any other agency, whether it's state, local, or federal.

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

INTERVIEW OF SCOTT DEUTSCH

BY MR. DOUGHERTY:

Q. So just to start off, if you could tell us a little bit about your background and education and expertise?

A. I've been in public safety for 40 years. I've been a fire

chief. I've been a county assistant chief, in Allegheny County. I worked in the chemical industry for 22 years in various positions from a union guy to a shift supervisor. Going over to management side, I was in maintenance and then I laterally moved to EHS, and then I was a plant fire chief at a chemical plant for Eastman Chemical along with some health and safety duties, things like that. From there I went into the private -- I left the chemical industry. I was in a college area for a while and I did EHS stuff for them. And then I looked for other positions, you know, better pay, all that stuff, and I went to the county, became an assistant chief of the county, Allegheny, where Pittsburgh is. And then from there, I went to the railroad.

Q. Okay. Perfect. And what positions have you held?

A. And I have a bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

Q. And so what positions have you held with Norfolk Southern?

A. The one I have a right now. I got hired in as the northern regional manager.

Q. Northern region manager.

A. Um-hum.

Q. Okay. And how long have you been in that current position?

A. This will be -- this is going on my eighth year.

Q. And so what are your current duties in this position?

A. We handle FRA violations. We do yard inspections of the cars. We teach and train first responders. We have a safety train; we go around and do that. The community we were just in,

we had a tabletop exercise on a derailment in October, Columbiana County. So we did that. Anything that government relations wants us to do as far as training or we have the safety train, we take -- it could be any local politicians or the news media around to see the safety train, show them what we train first responders on.

Q. Okay. And who do you currently report to?

A. Robert Wood.

Q. Okay. So to start off, if you could give us your detailed account of the accident from the time that you were notified up -- including through the event burn process up until today. I know it's a lot. To your best recollection.

A. Okay. I received a call -- I don't remember the times for none of this. I'll just go in the order that I can remember right now. I received a call from my boss that there was a derailment. The center calls him, he's notified. I was notified -- at the same time, I was notified by I believe Fabian Lowe (ph.) on mechanical or the one above him, I don't remember which one. But mechanical called me too and told me there was a derailment in Columbiana County and the milepost.

I started getting ready for that after I talked to my boss and he told me that there was a derailment and there was reports there were fires. Right after that, I called our first contractor, which is SPSI. I knew they have all the fire capability and the tank car specialists and everything. So they

were called first.

I proceeded down to my vehicle to start heading in that direction. I called two additional contractors to stage outside the area for assistance, and that was EnviroServe and Hepaco. The exact times when I called them and driving there, I don't remember. While I was en route, they said -- I said get me a consist; they got a consist. I don't remember where it came from. That was sent to me.

I got another phone call that said we're trying to find out where the derailment starts. That's one of the first things we hear, it's starts in line 25 to 52 or whatever it might be. So they were given that information. They were working on that. Then they told me some of the cars that were actually in the hazard, that were in that line, I believe, which was the vinyl chloride cars, ISO cars. So I knew they were in there, and some lube oil cars, and exact order of where it was. And when I got that, I don't remember, but I was still en route driving because it's about an hour and 25 minutes or more from my house to there.

While I was en route I got called by the emergency management coordinator for Columbiana County asking if they should evacuate. I said, what are you seeing? They said there's big fires everywhere. And I knew about the vinyl chloride and the other cars and they -- I think they had a car number or a placard for something because I think she mentioned the vinyl chloride cars and what should they do. And I -- we're not allowed to call an

evacuation. You know, we may give guidance. So I told her look at the ERG, what does it say for a tank car on fire? And they said 1 mile. And I said, so that's your guidance, but I can't say go do it, you know. So they said okay and then they hung up.

So then a fire chief must have got in contact with her. They called me back and the fire chief -- they said the fire chief wants to know what to do. I said, let me give you a number and I'll give you somebody to guide you through that so that I can continue to drive there, and my phone's ringing with other things, like the contractors, we got this, we got that, we're heading there, all that. So I gave them Robert's number and then I called Robert and said the fire chief's going to call you and give them guidance on, you know, what to do.

The next thing, I was on scene. I saw fire probably for the length of the train, like probably 300 yards from my position where I came in. The fire department was everywhere. That's the video I have, will show you the fire department there and the amount of fire and locations. They had dump tanks set up in that hour and a half or so it took me to get there. They had dump tanks set up. They were pumping out of those dump tanks to all the hose lines. I think they had at least four aerial trucks up. And it was, you know, like 7 degrees that night and they were spraying water on the cars and -- and I don't know exactly where they were spraying water, but I saw the position of some of the cars, how they were stacked up all up against each other, and I

started going around and telling them you shouldn't be here, you need to get out of this area. And right prior to that, my contractor, Drew, from SPSI arrived and we started walking from the one end where we pulled in, from that gas station, staying back but getting down in there a little bit further like kind of where some of the fire trucks were parked. And we walked that length all the way down to just this side of that blue building before you get to Pleasant Street, Pleasant Crossing, and we saw fire all along there. And we had the discussion we need to get them out of there and that's what we started doing.

So we ran into little issues with that, where we would tell this fire chief and he would say that that truck's from another town, you have to find their fire chief. So then eventually I think I called Peggy, I'm not sure, or tracked down who the incident commander on the scene was and said you got to get everybody out of there. So we continued to tell people as we went -- headed back towards our vehicles, back up that area, and start planning out the operation.

And I told them just to disconnect their hoses and get out of there. And I explained to -- they had a guy, guys up in an aerial basket. I explained to them if that car vents, you can't get out of that aerial basket and you're too close. And they finally listened and they started putting everything down and getting their trucks out of there. They left all -- you know, they left the hose. I told them just disconnect the hose and go. So that's

how we got all of them out of there.

That's the initial, now start getting blurry because now it's all going to run together. But we started to try to figure out what was burning, like which cars, you know, that you could still report marks off and things like that. Drew did a lot of that work. Yeah, I can't remember, so many hours, so many days, but --

Q. Take your time.

A. Yeah, I'm trying to think what was next. I think, I still think we were sizing up the cars for a while to see what was actually burning, you know, and then we had the consist and was looking at that. I remember going to -- was it the fire station? I don't remember what day. So now, you know, I'm having a hard time with that. Then we started going, when other people started arriving, getting into the whole incident command system and going to the command post once we got everybody out of there, and just started working the problem. The rest of that's blurry.

The next thing I can remember is we started focusing on the vinyl fluoride cars and watching them vent, but at this time I can't tell you what time or nothing like that. You know, we saw the cars that were all stacked up, some of those cars venting and burning in there. And then, like I said, I watched that for several hours. So I don't know when the days changed, you know. I just remember they went up to check the one day and, you know, they were venting off. And then I went up and I timed it one other day and it was every 2 minutes. So it would vent for 2

minutes and shut off for 2 minutes. It would shut completely off like you shut a valve off and it would just stop. And then I sat there and watched the clock. Two minutes went by, it did it again. So it did that for several hours or less on that day. And then that's when the car just -- that particular car just shut off and it didn't vent anymore. And I believe that was the car that we had started planning going in to do better assessment in that hot zone, and that thing didn't vent for 3 hours, I think it was, and then I think around 5:30 or something, maybe a little bit later, they went in there and it vented, when it sat there all that time. So they knew -- they were pretty sure they thought that car was polymerized.

Then all the -- you know, after that, that started all the discussions on what we're going to do, let's look at different steps or boxes that we have. And obviously, like we said, at the -- well, their command post meeting, the last one is the vent and burn option. We try to look at the other ones, evaluate the other ones first. But then you had less and less venting out of the cars. That started to make it, you know, is it getting better from the big fires -- did it consume all the material or did it just blow out the -- you know, plug up the relief valve? So that was the thinking, that we had to start worrying about that. And somewhere in there, one of the cars did -- we cleared it, took out all the overheads and everything, and it relieved and it vented continuously, one of them. But I don't remember offhand because I

had multiple things to do. There was other people watching that stuff.

And then I had to get into the whole command post thing. We got thrown into the press release stuff, and then I was more away from operations then. And then I was in the meetings with the community at their municipal building, and we started explaining to their top people the potential to have to vent and burn and how important it was that no one was in the evacuation zone. Because we had people driving up to us, cars are venting, getting out and -- they were getting around the roadblocks. So then all of that, when the National Guard came, then that all increased the roadblocks, and more state police came and kept that all blocked off. That was pretty important because people were getting in there to take pictures and stuff.

We had that meeting, we explained what we think we're going to have to do and that we'd gather more information and be back, but we wanted them to know that and we explained the process to them. Exact order of that and what day, I don't remember. It was in the evening around when I switch shifts, so it's near 7 o'clock probably, somewhere around there, maybe. They had a meeting right prior to us and then we had that meeting.

And then we flew the guys in -- or I think they were already there that do all that, from Louisiana. So --

Q. Okay. Well, I appreciate that.

A. I'm sorry I don't have detailed information. If we had a

much smaller derailment, I could tell you probably every hour what I did, but --

Q. Perfectly understandable.

A. -- several days and this many hours, it kind of goes together, you know, but --

Q. That's understandable. So just a couple follow-up questions from me and then I think we'll go around the table and everyone will get a chance to ask some follow-up questions, if you'd answer them to the best of your knowledge.

A. Okay.

Q. So one of my first questions regarding the first responders, are you able to give a timeline when the first responders were given the hazardous materials information, what was contained on the train?

A. From -- you mean like when they got the consist?

Q. Correct.

A. Oh, I don't -- can I look for something?

Q. Sure. Take your time.

MR. STANCIL: Yeah, take your time.

MR. DEUTSCH: I don't -- I'm trying to see if I -- if they sent me it and I sent it to Peggy, the emergency management coordinator, or if Atlanta did.

BY MR. DOUGHERTY:

Q. Okay.

A. I mean, both might have occurred, but I thought I sent her

the consist Friday night.

I sent it to her Friday night. My boss sent it to me. Let me see if it -- I sent it at 9:56.

Q. And who was that sent to?

A. Main line derailment line fire with this train. It was sent to Peggy Clark, Columbiana County EMA, and there is a consist attachment.

Q. And so do you know NS policy for the crew paperwork, what the procedure is during a derailment for the crew to communicate or get the paperwork to the first responders?

A. Yeah. The crews that still have paper paperwork will, upon request, show or give it to the -- they can't release it, I believe, because the FRA has to have the original paperwork. So they can let them make a copy, they can show it to them, go through it with them. With the fire, though, one of their procedures, they normally disconnect from the train and go to the next crossing or get to what they call a safe area and then a first responder would have to go down there till -- to use it. But we also have the AskRail app that has that consist all in it. If they get one car number on that train, like even way back at the safe end, they got that, they would have the whole consist if they hit "Train" on that app, if they have that app.

I don't know 100 percent if the electronic consist that they use the phone on is up here yet because it was being tested in the south and some other places, and I don't know if it made it up

here. If they had that version, and at the request, they can email it to them just like I emailed it to Peggy. That's new though, and I don't believe that's systemwide yet.

Q. Okay. So per NS policy, does the crew, if feasible, have the obligation to take that paperwork or communicate with the first responders, if able, of the hazardous materials that are on the train?

A. I don't believe they leave the train. They don't have the ability to do that.

Q. Okay.

A. They're going to stay at their locomotive and then if they came up to them, they give it to them.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. Thank you. And another question. So you had mentioned part of your duties is to train first responders, do tabletop exercises. Do you know if Norfolk Southern has worked with East Palestine Fire Department and the volunteer fire departments in this area for any training, tabletop exercises, and, if so, do you know round about when the last one was?

A. Yes. The last one was in October. It was in their area of the county and we split the county with Peggy. We did the other half of the county, near Salem, Ohio -- it was held in Salem, Ohio. And this one was held -- let me look at which town, but we did that other part of the county. And several of the firemen

that were there for East Palestine were in the tabletop. I remember them. I don't have their sign-in sheet right now, but I can give you the date. I want to see if it's -- there we go. October 27th, CAI tabletop Ohio.

Q. 2022. And so what do you typically do during those tabletop exercises?

A. It's a consultant comes out of Florida, CAI Consulting. They have a program put together that has screens around the room. Those screens start off with a call that looks like a dispatcher call from a derailment. It says train such and such, such derailed. We have it usually set up to have a gas -- maybe a gas, an acid, and a fire of some type. Not a fire this big, but usually just maybe a fire around a manway or something to make them think through dealing with, you know, a gas or liquid fire and an acidic -- acid in different parts of the train. They throw in injects and it's all on a screen. They tell them what the weather is, they tell them -- maybe a power line came down or different things like that. And the main thing is them to work the problem and get used to the incident command system.

A lot of places, they're used to a house fire, one person stands outside and they command the whole thing. And what we stress is a derailment could be, you know, a quarter mile long, several hundred yards long, and you have different things going, you can't stand in one place, you're not going to be able to operate it that way. So we go through all that. We teach them

how to have the incident command table. They get trained on a PIO part of it for like the county person that's the PIO, they get to work with that. Some of them we may have somebody from the railroad call in and work with them like a simulated from our corporate comm. We have them figure out the problem, research chemicals, all of that.

MR. DOUGHERTY: All right. Thank you.

We'll go around the table and any follow-up questions.

BY MR. STANCIL:

Q. Okay. This is Paul Stancil again. Mr. Deutsch, you mentioned that you were contacting a couple of organizations, SPSI and Hepaco. Could you describe what functions they provide for Norfolk Southern?

A. Yes. SPI [sic] can provide just about anything you need. They're one of the few contractors in the country that work for CHLOREP and work for the different manufacturers of acid to be able to respond to that type of incident. Not all contractors can do that. The two that were here, ended up being here was SRS -- they're the other one. They're really the only two in the country for fluorine tank cars, for the most part. And they have -- they're the high hazard chemical people, for the most part. He also has all the other equipment that I might need. He has -- that company has boats, heavy equipment of any kind, all kind of vac trucks, pull-behind vac trailers. So if I deploy them, I can send them anywhere along the derailment and they have the

equipment to do it. Some other ones have smaller amounts of that equipment. So his job was going to be the train and the fire.

And I assigned the other two to do runoff and go check anything around the tracks, get any kind of runoff stopped and all of that. That's what their function is. And I believe to this day, that's what they did throughout the incident, was work on the contamination that went to the stream. That's what the Hepaco and EnviroServe, the initial ones I called.

Once we were here a couple days, then we called Lewis Environmental and backfilled with some additional vac trucks for things that we might have to do, just to work in different places as that stream went further.

Q. Was there some sort of accounting for how much equipment they brought initially to the scene, people, resources, equipment? Can you talk about that?

A. They would have all of that. We just -- since it's a fire, our foam trailer that's stored there, they pull it for us. And we wanted to get -- it's fluorine-free foam. We wanted to get that there because we didn't want the fire department to use theirs because it probably isn't. And so we have -- they brought, I believe, their foam trailer right away, manpower to operate that, and I believe I requested an engine and telesquirt out of the station. And he came -- he comes out first from their base and then he's assigning other people to bring different equipment for the fire aspect of it. I believe that equipment all came first

from there. And then his command trailer came and heavy equipment and other things after that.

Q. So after they do a size-up, they ramp up as required; is that essentially --

A. No. So we kind of do like a fire department run if I hear there's a fire, this, this and this is out like on the alarm. Okay? So when I call them and I say I got a fire, I want the foam -- I'm going to need foam, I want the engine, I want the aerial truck, you know, and all that comes first. And then -- and a response trailer that has, you know, pads and Pigs and drums to clean up stuff, one of them usually comes also. So as his guys pulled into his place, they start pulling them out in that order to get to the scene.

Q. Okay. So how do they coordinate with the local firefighters here, the local first responders?

A. It's usually I would coordinate with them and then if we -- say we needed additional engines to help our operation, we try to work with the local fire departments as much as we can for things. But there's sometimes we don't want them in certain high hazard areas where we'll put our people in there, you know, to protect community assets and people, and we'll use our assets. But then we might use them down the road at a dump tank or lake and pump water. And usually that's coordinated with one of our hazmat managers, to work with them out of the incident command system.

Q. Okay. So what actually happened here with -- you mentioned

there was a problem with firefighters being down range and you asked them to pull back. What was going on there?
A. They got the call the moment the train derailed, there was a fire, so they responded like they would normally respond. So they laid in -- they knew they had bad water pressure over in that part of town so they set up the dump tank and they went and attacked the fire.
Q. And why was that not good?
A. Well, it's not good up where the tank cars were. They had a ditch fire down at the one end and they put that out; that was good, down by Pleasant. One of the guys I talked to a couple days later, they said that ditch was on fire and they put that out. And but up at the other end where the tank cars, you don't know where the relief valves are orientated. So if they go up in an aerial truck -- which I'll show you that picture, the cars are all piled up here; the cars are like this. On that angle, you know, like towards, I will say 9 o'clock or 3 o'clock, based on where it's at, if that pool fire and all that's under there heats up the material and pops that relief valve, it'll spray that up there -- it'll spray material out first, right? And then it's going to light off from the heat of the fire and they're going to be in the aerial truck.
Q. Were any of those situations covered in the training that they would've had with --
A. I don't, I don't remember that exact thing, if it was

covered. The training, we always talk about the relief valves and worrying about relief valves and don't spray them with water and freeze them up and, you know, like on LPG cars and things like that. We do discuss that in our train training.

Q. Did you observe them doing anything that was contrary to the training that they were provided?

A. No. Just the situation with the cars and the way they were, we needed to get them out of that area. They were doing everything correct as far as how they established a water supply and they were -- you know, there was a big, long ditch fire, which you'll see in that video. And, you know, they saw that and that's what they were putting out. They had a couple of pallet cars. One pallet car, I seen the one aerial truck spraying water on because it was -- you know, fire was rolling out of that, so they were focused on that.

I don't remember for sure the cars that were piled up, what they were spraying there or if they were just trying to protect the building with the water spray. I don't remember for sure right now, but --

Q. Okay. And what agencies were on scene when you got here?

A. That whole half of Ohio. I don't, I don't know. I don't know. I only remember one aerial truck, that ladder truck that said Salem on the side I walked by. I don't remember what -- all the towns the other ones were.

Q. So it's safe to -- it was a mutual aid response?

A. Yes. Yes. Yeah, yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. I think they have like a tanker task force they had put together that responds for all the dump tanks and there was a lot of tankers lined up on the road when I was driving around them to get in there to go to those dump tanks. I don't know what communities though.
Q. And again, what time did you arrive on scene?
A. I don't know. The best would be -- the video I took, the time on it says 11:45, but I was already walking there, doing things, and then took that video so that I'd have documentation on the length of the fire.
Q. Were you the first Norfolk Southern official on scene or were there others?
A. I believe there -- I was the first hazmat one. I believe there was other people on scene before me, but I don't know for sure who that is.
Q. Okay.
A. There are ones that live closer than I do, that live, you know, by the airport. The one DMMO, I believe he might -- he was on scene -- yeah, he was on scene before me and he was working with the incident commander already, and I think I sent that to Peggy and I think he got the consist out of Atlanta possibly at the scene. Because I -- I don't have it on my phone, I don't think, anymore. I had so many calls I deleted it by now.

I just saw a fax with his name. He was there I believe working with incident command and doing things, but I can't remember if he was at the fire station when I got there or if he was up on the scene with the -- he was up on the scene in this little trailer they had -- not a command trailer, it was just a trailer in the parking lot and they were standing by that. And then he was talking to them and I went down. He's a Sentinel trained NS employee.

Q. Okay. So the --

A. That means he went to (indiscernible).

Q. Okay. The incident commander was the fire chief for --

A. East Palestine.

Q. -- East Palestine Fire Company.

A. Yeah. I believe on scene it was the assistant chief. I'm not 100 percent.

Q. Were either of those two individuals at the training you spoke about in October?

A. I don't remember 100 percent if the chief was, but I believe the assistant chief was.

Q. Okay. And you mentioned a safety train. Was that part of that training in October?

A. No. No. This was just a tabletop exercise.

Q. Okay. All right. So the vinyl chloride cars, the PRD actuation, do you know when it first actuated? Were they going when you got here or was it sometime later that --

A. No, when I got there they hadn't vent out of relief. I don't believe they -- they weren't venting out of the relief yet.
Q. Okay. So about how long after you arrived on scene did they start venting?
A. I don't know the exact time because I think I had to go down to the command post they were setting up or something. I don't have the exact time they started venting. Drew and those guys were up in there; they might have it. I don't know. They would have some idea.
Q. Who is Drew?
A. He owns SPSI. He's the one that came first when I made the phone call.
Q. Okay. Was anyone keeping track of the chronology of events? Anyone scribing any of this or recording any data that was being observed?
A. Drew might have been doing some because we were -- you know, planned out what we're going to do based on what we're seeing occurring, but right now I don't know. I took little notes for different things I had and people calling me, but I wasn't 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock, I wasn't doing that, because I was the only one there at the time. So it's not detailed.
Q. So let's go back to the vinyl fluoride cars. It may sound like a simple question, but what caused the pressure relief devices to actuate?
A. I'm not 100 percent because I couldn't see in there real good

because it's dark, but I believe it had a pool fire and everything underneath it and it heated up the cars. That's my best guess from what I could -- what I could see when I got there, there was fire all around there and I believe there was, I think, maybe -- there was a pellet car near there somewhere, too, I think that was on fire. And that pool fire heated up the material and then I believe it, you know, caused that to vent.

Q. Do you know what the source of the pool fire was?

A. There was a butyl acrylate -- I believe it's butyl acrylate car that was ruptured and that's what spilled into the stream and set the ditch fire. Because that smell, that material is from Pleasant all the way through the site.

Q. So butyl acrylate was burning?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay.

A. That's what I think the product was that was burning. There was a couple non-haz lube oils. They'll burn once the fire's hot enough, but butyl acrylate you could smell along the ditch line.

Q. So it's our understanding from the consist we have five vinyl fluoride cars in the derailment --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- correct? You mentioned that some were venting continuously and others did not vent. Can you tell us which ones did which?

A. Not off the top of head, I can't.

Q. All right. How about --
A. Drew may have them written down, which one -- the numbers. Because I think we had to keep using drone footage to try to fly over to see and figure out which one's where, and then they used where other cars are positioned to try to get the report marks because they're burned off the cars.
Q. Would it be helpful if I showed you an overflight photo of the scene? If you could maybe point to which car was venting continuously or which ones were throttling? And I'll ask you to circle on that photograph if you can do that.
A. I pulled up in here on the one where I had every 2 minutes, and it'll be one of the cars up in here.
Q. So for the record --
A. From what I can see on the --
Q. -- we're pointing to the eastern --
A. Eastern side.
Q. -- eastern side of the derailment.
A. And then I believe the car that did the continuous vent, I could be wrong, but it was at the other end of the pile. I'm not 100 percent which one though. But I believe --
Q. Are you talking about the westernmost?
A. The western side, yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. I believe.
Q. So the westernmost vinyl chloride car was venting --

A. Because of the way you could see it. But Drew and those guys worked with a drone in the position where to see -- between Drew and SRS together, to try to see each car and what it was doing and identify each car's report marks with the drone from the sheriff. So he probably has a better documentation on that, that you might want, and that information than me. Because I was getting told, you know, on the phone that the cars are venting. I saw it vent when I went up to the scene, but I wasn't there knowing when each one would start to go off. I didn't witness that.

Q. Okay.

A. To identify the exact car, so --

Q. All right, sir. Just a few more questions. You talked about the process that led up to the vent and burn. Could you tell us a little bit more about the decision-making process and how it was determined that vent and burn was the course of action you were going to take?

A. So the discussions I was in were also the same, pretty much the same exact thing we told when we met with the community incident commanders. Options, you know, we go in and hot tap it, send that to a pit the same way you do with the operation, vent and burn. And not knowing if there was any vapor space left to hot tap, no one was going to send anybody in to tap a weld on that car like you would do a normal hot tap. They didn't want to -- that wasn't going to be safe to do.

The way they had witnessed other cars, because these are the

crews that do this stuff, and, you know, Chip Day and SRS have done this before also in some places, and they way the car acted with the relief valves venting, venting, venting, if it just kept doing that, I think they were -- you know, we could let it take its course and that's what we did. Then when it shut off, that's when they went in there and they wanted to get temperatures and stuff. So the -- around the protective housings there's no way to put gauges on everything; everything was burned up. When they got in there and they flew the drone down, I believe they could see, you know, different valves burned off and all of that. So the only thing would have been to go towards that hot tap area plan.

When they got -- when they went in at one time, that's when that went off again after it hadn't done anything for hours. So that was an indication from, I believe, their experience and possibly the chemist that was there from (indiscernible), discussion that that's polymerized. So that presented a problem where all the other options started to go away.

Q. So explain for us what the problem would have been with polymerizing?

A. If you let the car continue to polymerize it'll fill up with that material in the entire shell of the car. That'll put pressure then on the outside walls of the car and then it'll catastrophically fail the car.

Q. And when you say catastrophically --

A. It'll blow the car apart. So your ERG is based on data from

other incidents. Okay? So right now the distance, the furthest a tank car apart from that catastrophic failure is three-quarters of a mile, the data that I was always trained on. And that's why the zone is 1 mile for a burning tank. So the -- where we were located, we couldn't have, you know, potentially four, maybe five, cars catastrophically fail when they wanted to and fly out through the community. So it was decided the vent and burn option allowed us to control when that happens, and plan and dig the trench and flare it and do that. So that's why that decision was made.

We did explain that to the community, that if we don't -- and I had to explain it in the press conference, that if didn't control it ourself, it would control us, you know, and cause greater harm. So we wanted to have a controlled detonation and venting and liquid coming out of the car. And when it was denotated, the guys on scene said just a tiny bit of vapor come out on the first charge on the top of the vapor space and polymer shot out on fire. So it was polymerized all the way up into the vapor space already. You'll have to ask him which car that was. I don't know exactly what car. But two of the cars did already have polymer come out the vent hole on the top.

Q. Did the vent and burn process achieve the desired result?

A. Yes. Yeah, so after vent and burn, when you started to see the fires die down on any drone footage you might see, the cars were raging inside burning off the remaining -- they could see it -- I think they flew the drone over again and they can see it

down through the manway or the holes where they cut into the car, they could see it all on fire in there.

Q. Who did the drone?

A. I think that one was the sheriff, too, possibly.

Q. Columbiana County?

A. Yeah. Unless they got that just from the team that went in to inspect once everything calmed down and the bulk of the fire was out. But they said there was fires still inside the cars just burning off what polymer's probably stuck to the walls of the car.

Q. Who else was collecting video during the vent and burn?

A. I think only them.

Q. It's Columbiana County Sheriff?

A. Yeah. We didn't have a drone there, or fly a drone there. They flew the drone. And then one of them -- military or somebody else had another one, I thought, but I'm not 100 percent sure.

Q. Did you or anyone else at Norfolk Southern collect any video of the event?

A. Of the vent --

Q. Of the vent and burn?

A. Vent and burn? There's some. There's some of them calling out the countdown. We have that, and then you can see that. I have that.

Q. Okay.

A. Because one of our guys was with Drew and them. So you hear them through the countdown for the blast and --

Q. Okay. So you have that video here?
A. Yeah. I can show it to you when we're done.
Q. Okay.
A. If it's -- and then if you want it, then I can send it to you.
Q. Yeah. We would like to have a copy of it.
A. I'll have to text it to you. It's on my phone.
Q. Okay. Okay. The train crew, were they ever approached by any first responders?
A. I have no idea. The transportation department would have handled them, so they would be the ones to answer that question.
MR. STANCIL: All right. I'm going to pass it on to my colleague.
BY MR. LYNUM:
Q. This is Sean Lynum again. That's S-e-a-n, last name L-y-n-u-m, with the NTSB. Just a few questions for clarification for the record. You mentioned that early on in your response the acronym RG. Could you explain what that is?
A. ERG.
Q. ERG. Okay.
A. Yeah, ERG, Emergency Response Guide, the --
Q. Got it.
A. -- orange book, yellow book. I mean, it's on the phone now.
Q. Yes. Another question I have is can you explain who the guys were that flew in for the vent and burn that you mentioned?

A. SRS flew in to assist us with that, with vinyl fluoride cars. That was Chip Day and Terry Rockwell, the ones I know. There was -- Kent was with them also. I don't remember his last name. They're from SRS. They're a contractor similar to SPSI.

And the guys that flew in are from -- I think it's Explosive Systems International. They're out of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. And I don't remember, right at the moment I don't remember exact name, but --

Q. And what exactly --

A. They're like the only ones that do this.

Q. Right. What exactly do they do when they come in to do a vent and burn? Just try to walk us through that.

A. They met with SRS and SPSI. They went over the site, looked at what they had; determined, you know, when they could go in there; set up all the safety protocols that they follow, all these, I believe, these different checklists; and then they determine where they want the material to go and where they want a trench dug, where they want all that. That's between SPSI, SRS, and them. And then they put those charges, the shape charges, I believe they are, in the locations that'll allow the flow to come out of the cars towards those trenches.

Q. Okay. I don't want to get in too much detail, but could you just quickly -- you mentioned shape charges. You know, when they send those off or when they set them off, just walk us through the sequence of how that works and what's the purpose of doing that

and what happens to the material once they do go off.
A. Okay. I'm not the expert on that, but I'll give you from my understanding of it. So you put one high in the vapor space of the car. Okay? You put one low in the liquid level. You detonate the top one first in the vapor space. Just like if you were opening a can or something, to be able to pour it, you got to be able to vent the air off. It's the same system like. So you --- a matter of seconds, and I think you can see it in the video, the top one goes first to vent and then the bottom one goes right after that. So it's like you vent off some pressure and the material starts to come out. And there's flares lined up in that trench and as the material comes it starts lighting off.
Q. And this is like the last question on this particular event. About how long did it take for the material, just your best guesstimate, for the vinyl chloride to burn off, for the most part?
A. Their estimate was -- that I gave in the news conference was we expected the pit to burn, you know, like pretty good for at least 1 to 3 hours. I know it -- I think it was definitely 3 hours or maybe a little bit, but that's a guesstimate on how much you think was consumed, initial venting and all that. That's not an exact science.
Q. Let's see. You mentioned earlier a gentleman's title DMMO. Could you explain what that means?
A. He's the division mechanical supervisor.

Q. Gotcha. Okay. Could you recall -- and again, if you can't, that's okay -- about how soon after you arrived or unless it happened before you arrived, did the -- was an evacuation perimeter set up?
A. I don't know. All I know is when I talked to the EMA director on her phone asking about should they and setting up the 1 mile. I don't know when they actually did that though.
Q. Do you know who put that out, who made the decision to set up the 1-mile perimeter?
A. It would have been their incident command, between the fire chief and probably EMA coordinator and their community team. I don't know.
Q. And the last question I have is, you mentioned a pellet car, could you explain what that is?
A. They're little -- they're the little pellets that are made in the different chemical industry, plastic pellets.
Q. I see. And do you recall about how many there were that were involved with the derailment? If you don't know, it's okay.
A. I think on your map there's two up there burning in the corner. Without looking at the consist, after all this time, I don't know. I think these two, these are pellet cars.
MR. STANCIL: So you're pointing to the two cars at the far east end --
MR. DEUTSCH: I believe that's them.
MR. STANCIL: -- of the derailment, correct?

MR. LYNUM: Those are all the questions I have.

MR. DEUTSCH: I'd have to look at the consist to give you an exact number because there could be ones that were in that train that didn't, you know, didn't burn or whatever.

MR. LYNUM: No, that's fine. I just -- we're just trying to get an idea what it was and how it affected the fire. That's all I have.

BY MR. DOUGHERTY:

Q. Just a couple follow-up questions regarding the failure or the potential for failure of the pressure relief devices. Do you have a timeline or know maybe the day and/or time that you realized that the valves were starting to fail?

A. I don't. I would think maybe SPSI does, Drew. But -- or SRS. I don't because I got -- I ended up at the command post.

Q. Okay.

A. So I can't give you an exact time when that started to occur.

MR. DOUGHERTY: Okay. That's all I've got.

BY MR. STANCIL:

Q. Paul Stancil here. Last question for me. You mentioned the temperatures and pressures were monitored; is that right?

A. The temperatures.

Q. The temperatures.

A. With a thermal imaging gun. They went in there -- that's what they were doing when that one vented when they were in there, I believe. Because they went in -- we went in every hour leading

up to the detonation. I forget when we started that, but -- which day it was, but we went in every hour and got readings.

Q. Okay. Tell us what the temperatures were doing on the cars.

A. The one car that was a concern, the biggest concern, I believe is 139. And then it was --

Q. 139 what?

A. F. F. Yeah, sorry.

Q. Okay.

A. I think it was like maybe 136, went to 139 F, and then the sun went down and it got a little bit cooler out and that car dropped a little bit. And it was just doing that -- I think it was going up a couple degrees, back down. Then I left. So then I came back for my shift and they were at -- one was at 62 F, three were at 65, and that car, I think, was down to 126, that I can remember from the top of my head, when I returned the one morning. I just remember it because I checked that when I got onto the scene.

Q. Was that the most recent reading prior to the vent and burn?

A. That -- since that occurred at 4, I don't know what it was later on.

Q. Did somebody record those temperatures somewhere?

A. Yes.

Q. And that would have been Drew?

A. Their guys were recording. Let me just -- if I have any kind of date.

Q. Are you -- is Norfolk Southern getting any of -- collecting any of the documentation from -- you know, notes or temperature measurements or observations from your contractors?
A. I believe we will have all that. It'll all be in a report from them, from SPSI, is the lead contractor.
So I do have one text message at 11:30, and I have the car numbers. They all were 65, and 126. And that was on Monday.
Q. Monday at 11:30?
A. Yes. Because I was sending these to Atlanta when they'd send me a text with the temperatures.
Q. Say that again.
A. I can give you the car numbers if you want them.
Q. Yes, please. Yes.
A. Okay. So the first car is TILX402025, 65 degrees Fahrenheit.
Q. Okay.
A. The next car is OCPX080235, 65 degrees Fahrenheit.
Q. Okay.
A. The next one is OCPX -- it's a zero, not an O; sorry -- 80179, 65 degrees; GATX095098, 65; and then the last one OCPX80370, 126.
BY MR. LYNUM:
Q. Okay. This is Sean Lynum again. I just had one more follow-up question. You mentioned thermal reads. Can you please explain briefly what needed to be done to the cars in order to get the most accurate thermal read?

A. Okay. I believe on all the cars, maybe only one they used a thermal imaging camera and there was tears in the jacket so you can get to the internal steel. And they would shoot that there because that's your best temperature because you can't go by the jacket, the insulation and all that. So they had tears in the jacket, so the actual tank was exposed and they shot the thermal imaging there to get their temperatures. If there wasn't a tear in the jacket, the other option is up on a pressure plate because that's a steel that's part of the car and you shoot there. I'm not 100 percent on which cars they shot where, but those are the two locations. And I know because I heard -- we talked a little bit and they said there's a tear in there and we got the temperature at that tear in the jacket and -- on that discussion about getting accurate temperatures.

Q. And just for the record, these are insulated cars so there's essentially a tank within a tank, insulation?

A. I didn't look this particular car up what they were, but they should -- you know, that's probably correct.

Q. Yeah.

A. Some don't have insulation; only have a thermal wrap and then the jacket. But I don't -- too much going on, I didn't look if it's a 105 or whatever, you know. So --

MR. LYNUM: That's all I have.

BY MR. STANCIL:

Q. So, Mr. Deutsch, is there anything that you can think of that

we haven't asked you that you think might be important for us to know?

A. Let me see. I think if you got the first arriving engine on the scene and talked to that crew, they could tell you exactly what they seen because they should have did a scene size-up there, the first arriving unit. The fire investigations we do, that's who we start with, that tell me what the house looked like when it was, you know, burning and stuff. But they may be able to tell you exactly where they saw fire. Because they were spraying water when I got there so the video I have will show you -- it shows a trench on fire in places, but I don't know what they put out. I just know for sure because the next day after the fire in that trench was out, we had an engine come down because there was some crossties started to burn, and that guy goes, we pulled in down here and this whole trench was on fire and we put it out. He was just telling me that. That's how I got that information to tell you, you know. So I knew the fire went all the down to Pleasant Street. But they might be able to give you, you know, a better size-up of what they saw when they initially got there.

It's hard to remember which cars started venting when. Drew might have that information. I think that would probably be key; you'd probably want that.

That's about it. Or maybe initial drone footage from that sheriff when he first got out. I got a picture of his drone when I was there, where he's in -- he's like in the plume over those

cars with that drone. I mean, he had it in there when they were really burning. So he might have really good pictures if you didn't talk to any of them.

Q. And who is this again?

A. That's the sheriff, the sheriff's department. It's actually the county commissioner who flies a drone for the sheriffs. Let me see. See how he had it in there? That green light at the top of the smoke?

Q. Oh.

A. Here's another picture. So he flew it right in there. And that's right behind that gas station, because that's where we went up there and he flew out of that gas station's parking lot right over the derailment, and that's where the vinyl chloride cars are. And that's why he was flying because that's what we worried about. But what he did prior to my arrival, he may have footage -- I don't know how long it took him to get there. He would be a good contact, I would think, to see what footage he has.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. That's it.

MR. DOUGHERTY: Any other questions? If no one has anything else --

MR. DEUTSCH: If you want to see this, this is the video I told you about when I arrived on scene.

MR. DOUGHERTY: Okay.

MR. DEUTSCH: The whole -- you can see the aerial trucks are --

MR. DOUGHERTY: Okay. Perfect. All right.

Well, I thank you for your time. If there's anything else that you can think of that may be important to the investigation, please --

MR. DEUTSCH: Okay.

MR. DOUGHERTY: -- feel free to reach out to us.

I think it's a good time to stop. So thank you very much. The time is 9:10 a.m. and going to stop recording now. Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, at 9:10 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

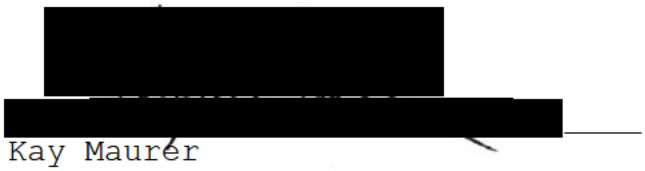
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	NORFOLK SOUTHERN TRAIN DERAILMENT IN EAST PALESTINE, OHIO ON FEBRUARY 3, 2023 Interview of Scott Deutsch
ACCIDENT NO.:	RRD23MR005
PLACE:	Youngstown, Ohio
DATE:	February 8, 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.



Kay Maurer
Transcriber

National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Transcript Errata

Subj: Transcript Review Request for: Derailment of Norfolk Southern Railway Train 32N with Subsequent Fire and Hazardous Materials Release, East Palestine, Ohio, on February 3, 2023.

Accident No.: RRD23MR005

To: Scott Deutsch, Norfolk Southern Railroad

Dear Mr. Deutsch,

The enclosed transcript of your interview on February 8, 2023, is provided for your review and comment to ensure its accuracy. It is not for public release.

The transcript is investigative information of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) created as part of the NTSB's investigation into the derailment of Norfolk Southern Railway train 32N with subsequent fire and hazardous materials release in East Palestine, Ohio, on February 3, 2023. (NTSB Accident No. RRD23MR005).

NTSB regulations prohibit the public release of investigative information prior to release by the NTSB without the permission of the NTSB Investigator in Charge (IIC). See 49 C.F.R. § 831.13(b). The IIC has not approved public release of this information at this time. Therefore, we request that you refrain from any further dissemination of this transcript.

Kindly review this transcript for accuracy and provide corrections, if any, in the attached table. Please print, sign, and return it to me via email by **April 3, 2023.** Please return or destroy the transcript after providing your comments.

Requests for an extension of this deadline must be in writing and received prior to the due date. If comments are not received by the due date, we will consider the transcript to be final without comment.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. If you have any question regarding the process, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

Marc Dougherty
Hazardous Materials Accident Investigator (RPH-20)
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, SW
Washington, DC 20594
Cell: [redacted]
[redacted]

National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Transcript Errata

TABLE OF CORRECTIONS FOR TRANSCRIPT INTERVIEW WITH: SCOTT DEUTSCH
RECORDED ON FEBRUARY 8, 2023

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
7	17	Fabian Lowe	Josiah Saxe or his boss
11	18	Fluoride	Chloride
18	20	Fluoride	Chloride
22	12	pallet	pellet
22	13	pallet	pellet

If, to the best of your knowledge, no corrections are needed kindly circle the statement "no corrections needed" and initial in the space provided.

NO CORRECTIONS NEED. _____
Initials

R. Scott Deutsch

_____
Printed Name of Person providing the above information

_[redacted]
Signature of Person providing the above information

03/29/2023
Date