



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
Investigative Hearing

Norfolk Southern Railway general merchandise freight train 32N
derailment with subsequent hazardous material release and fires,
in East Palestine, Ohio, on February 3, 2023

GROUP	G
EXHIBIT	
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Agency / Organization

NTSB

Title

**Interview Transcript – Robert Wood
System Manager of 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
ON FEBRUARY 3, 2023

Accident No.: RRD23MR005

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Interview of: ROBERT WOOD, System Manager of 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

(9:37 a.m.)

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3 MR. DOUGHERTY: Well, good morning. Today is February 8th,
4 2023. The time is 9:37 a.m. This interview is being conducted in
5 connection with the Norfolk Southern Railway train derailment in
6 East Palestine, Ohio, on February 3rd, 2023. The NTSB number is
7 RRD23MR005.

8 My name is Marc Dougherty. I'm a hazardous materials
9 accident investigator with the NTSB. We are located at the
10 DoubleTree hotel in Youngstown, Ohio. This is an interview of
11 Mr. Robert Wood, Norfolk Southern Railway.

12 And I will now go around the room and we'll do introductions.
13 It's very important for the recording that we all speak loudly and
14 clearly. Go around and introduce yourself.

15 MR. LYNUM: I am Sean Lynum. That's S-e-a-n L-y-n-u-m with
16 the NTSB. Chief of the pipeline and hazardous material division.

17 MR. MECKFESSEL: My name is Dwight Meckfessel, M-e-c-k-f-e-s-
18 s-e-l. I'm an accident investigator with Pipeline Hazardous
19 Material Safety Administration.

20 MR. STANCIL: I'm Paul Stancil, senior hazardous materials
21 accident investigator, National Transportation Safety Board. And
22 my last name is S-t-a-n-c-i-l.

23 MR. WOOD: I'm Robert Wood. I'm the system manager of
24 hazardous materials for Norfolk Southern Railway. My last name is
25 spelled W-o-o-d.

1 MR. DOUGHERTY: And again, my name is Mark Dougherty. M-a-r-
2 c. D-o-u-g-h-e-r-t-y.

3 INTERVIEW OF ROBERT WOOD

4 BY MR. DOUGHERTY:

5 Q. Mr. Wood, again, if there's any questions that are unclear,
6 you don't understand a question, just please ask the questioner to
7 clarify or restate the question. If you don't know the answer to
8 any questions, it's okay to tell us you don't know. We don't want
9 you to speculate if you don't know the answer to a question.

10 The sole purpose of the investigation is to improve safety.
11 Not to assault fault, blame, or liability. Our sole mission is to
12 improve transportation safety and prevent accidents.

13 As such, the NTSB cannot offer any guarantee of
14 confidentiality, immunity from legal proceedings by any other
15 agency whether it's state, local, or federal. A transcript of
16 this interview will be placed in a docket for this investigation
17 which will be available via the NTSB website.

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

20 A. Robert Wood, system manager of hazardous materials. I've
21 been an employee of Norfolk Southern since 2012. My background, I
22 did 25 years in the fire service with the city of Birmingham Fire
23 and Rescue with their hazardous materials team. During that time,
24 I also worked as an ER contractor.

25 So I had been an ER contractor 13 years prior to going to --

1 being employed by NS. The list of certifications go back anything
2 for hazmat (indiscernible) hazmat specialist, hazmat technician.
3 My first specialist degree came back in '86 from the National Fire
4 Academy. It was one of the first classes they did. So too many
5 certifications to list and I really don't remember them all.

6 Q. Very good. And so, what positions have you held with Norfolk
7 Southern?

8 A. I was a hazardous materials compliance officer. I was an
9 assistant system manager of hazardous materials and now I am
10 assistant manager of hazardous materials.

11 Q. And how long have you had this current position?

12 A. Since 2019.

13 Q. So what are your duties in this position?

14 A. I'm responsible for emergency response and emergency
15 preparedness (indiscernible) system. I manage a staff of eight
16 regional managers and hazmat managers who are responsible the
17 subject matter experts for all modes of rail transportation of
18 hazardous materials. We do system compliance checks with our
19 crews for meeting regulations, DOT regulations related to rail.

20 We are responsible for a large portion of our outreach
21 training. We provide training to first responders free across our
22 22-state system and a combination of -- we have a railroad safety
23 train. Other training props. Couple of training trailers. We
24 come fire house level training. We average training probably
25 5,000 first responders a year, including these first responders in

1 this area. There was a tabletop held. I don't know the exact
2 date but I want to say it was within the last six months in this
3 general area.

4 That's kind of an overview of what we're responsible for.

5 Q. Perfect. So who do you currently report to?

6 A. I report to David Schoendorfer. He is the director of
7 environmental for Norfolk Southern Railroad.

8 Q. So to start off, if you could give a detailed account of the
9 accident from the time that you were notified up and through the
10 reported vent and burn process up until now just to your best
11 recollection.

12 A. It was -- I received first notification -- I am the --
13 generally, what I refer to as our hazmat duty phone which is a
14 pager system that we can forward to different (indiscernible) the
15 hazmat officers. I generally carry that phone or that pager rings
16 to my phone.

17 So I receive the initial call a little after -- somewhere
18 between 9 and 10:00 on Friday the 3rd from our network operation
19 center notifying that we had a main line derailment with reports
20 of fire. I don't believe the original name -- they gave me a mile
21 post. I think it was a 49.2, somewhere in there. Didn't have a
22 name of the actual city for probably 30 or 40 minutes after that.
23 They would've given me a reporting station. The name of it
24 escapes me.

25 From that point in time, I reach out to Scott Deutsch.

1 That's his territory. He's the first of the regional managers.
2 Got him started that way. He makes his appropriate calls
3 notifying ER response contractors. He notified SPSI. Originally,
4 ultimately, there was some more contractors called. Then I start
5 my notification chain up. Notified Mr. Schoendorfer we had a
6 significant incident.

7 And then the decision was made that we would send two --
8 three more additional hazmat managers to be able to accommodate a
9 24-hour shift (indiscernible) up there. So we started
10 Paul Williams, regional manager out of Roanoke, Virginia.
11 John Simpson, my hazmat manager out of Louisville, Kentucky. And
12 Scott Gould, hazmat manager out of Allentown, PA.

13 Then I was doing early startup operations. We forge in. Had
14 David Patton (ph.) out of -- my hazmat manager out of Greenville,
15 South Carolina, actually started the initial 201s that we
16 generated. Got our SDS -- our JSAs. Reached out to shippers and
17 got -- started making notifications. That was later on in the
18 evening getting some customer notifications out there to get some
19 SDSes.

20 But we have JSAs for about 40 to 45 of our most dangerous and
21 most common chemicals we haul that are basically a pre-
22 manufactured safety briefing chemical specific. So we did have
23 them for vinyl chloride. I think we put vinyl chloride, benzine
24 -- I would have to go back and refer to the file. They are in the
25 SharePoint folder all the -- JSAs and SDSes that we used that

1 night. And if you look through them, they're kind of a safety
2 briefing, PPE, monitoring equipment, those type things. They're
3 about a four-page document that makes it real quick. There's not
4 a lot of research. They're pre-done by toxicologists; produced
5 them for us through the CTH. Toxicologist produced them for us.

6 From that point, it is -- naturally, we're making all kinds
7 of notifications. I don't -- do not know when the NOC notified
8 the NRC. But they would have because there was hazmat involved in
9 derailment. I just don't know what time that took place. I would
10 have to refer back to the records on that.

11 From that point, it's just a matter of administratively. And
12 then we start making plans. When Scott got on the scene and we
13 actually got some pretty early cellphone video. It showed up on
14 YouTube like they generally do. And saw we had a -- knew we had a
15 running fire. Best we could tell from the -- I spoke with someone
16 from the fire service that night on the site and they said the
17 entire length of the derailment we had fire. Then when I saw the
18 video, we did.

19 So that entire footprint for them cars that were left there,
20 there was fire from one end of that to the other. From actual
21 scene activity that night, that's about my -- range of my
22 knowledge until Scott Deutsch got there. So his recollections
23 would be far greater than mine because our plan is -- I'm getting
24 him resources but I'm not bothering him. His hands are full right
25 there. He'll give you reports when he can which he did later

1 report to me we actively had several PRDs going off at several
2 portions.

3 At that time, do not know which cars PRDs were going off
4 because it was a mass of smoke and fire. But there were active
5 PRDs that were cycling on/off, on/off, on/off. And then later on
6 in the event, he was reporting they were solid PRDs going off.

7 So it was -- determination was made. There was a group out
8 of -- I'm based out of Atlanta, Georgia. So the -- we were put on
9 a corporate jet the next morning and flown into Pittsburgh and
10 then Norfolk Southern Police delivered us to the site.

11 The original command post was in East Palestine's fire
12 department there on Main Street. I think 75 Main Street in
13 Palestine. And that's where all operations were initiated out of
14 at that time.

15 We had ER contractor -- SPSI was already on site. Two of the
16 hazmat -- by the time I got there, all of our hazmat managers were
17 there. And two of them I'd already sent to the hotel so that they
18 could come in and take over night shift.

19 Basically, for the first until well into Saturday -- I can't
20 exactly remember a time -- access into the site was limited
21 because conditions. A couple of times they went in there to make
22 -- when PRDs calmed down -- to make some initial assessments and
23 every time they went in, the PRDs would start going off. So that
24 was a quite common occurrence all the way through most of
25 Saturday.

1 So we got limited information. We knew we had something else
2 released. Suspected it was the butyl acrylate because acrylates
3 have a very unique smell to it. So didn't know how much. But we
4 knew we had a release. So we had dammed the ditch lines up down
5 the derailment. But the fire service laid some water hose and --
6 on the original night of the derailment and ultimately, the water
7 inundated the dams. Blew them out.

8 So we ended up with product farther down the -- in the
9 creeks. And it wasn't just -- it wasn't until later on -- I mean,
10 like into Sunday we discovered we had some propylene glycol
11 issues. But when the fire settled down on Sunday, it made the
12 scene manage to get in and do a little better assessment. We
13 still had some PRDs that were cycling. But they weren't cycling
14 hard. They were a pretty steady fire.

15 So we managed those situations through the day. Tried to
16 make some preliminary attempts to kind of assess the issues we
17 had. And eventually, we watched those fires burn. Started making
18 preparations down the road. We knew we were going to have some
19 issues with vinyl chloride.

20 Then into Saturday night and into Sunday, Sunday morning,
21 fires died down enough we could get some temperature readings on
22 the cars. Three or four of them we were getting tick readings of
23 65 when we could get to the -- I say we. The -- our responders
24 could get in there. Then the one car in question was at about
25 135. Still had just small flames on the fittings out the tops of

1 the car. Then within an hour, that car was at 138. So after --
2 we had some consultation with Occidental. And we got differing
3 opinions from Occidental. Some said that this product they didn't
4 believe would polymerize and others who definitely said yes, this
5 stuff is going to polymerize.

6 So as those temperatures kind of crept a little bit, I
7 brought word here to the incident command. That was the first
8 folks we went to. We had conversations with the fire chief. Told
9 him that -- what our belief was. That these cars were
10 polymerizing inside and that eventually, if we didn't do
11 something, the cars would come apart.

12 That's when had to explain to them that there's limited stuff
13 you can do. And we were pushed to our backs against the wall that
14 the ultimate way to prevent over-pressurization and catastrophic
15 failure of the car was to perform vent and burn.

16 The original thought was maybe we only had to do it on one
17 car. But after some consultation, especially with the demolitions
18 folks, they said you run too much of a risk -- when this goes off,
19 the extreme heat, you're going to exacerbate the problem in the
20 other cars.

21 And after witnessing the fire, I agreed with that. So the
22 decision was made that they all five needed to be done. So that's
23 when consultation with incident command took place with some long
24 discussions. We did reiterate to them we didn't know how much
25 time we had.

1 And ultimately, governors were brought in and there was
2 consultations. And I -- it was expressed to the governor that --
3 how critical this situation was. There was an initial one-mile
4 evacuation area that they ordered evacuation. I do not know how
5 many folks in that evacuation area actually left originally. And
6 I don't know that they ever got a good number on that, how many
7 were there.

8 So when this escalated to this point, we asked them to follow
9 up. So they did. Began doing door-to-doors. Checking. And they
10 were making notes who was staying. Some more folks left. They
11 were told about where shelters were. We were setting up a family
12 assistance center. Norfolk Southern was. So they were given all
13 that information.

14 I think it was actually reiterated later on when we got
15 closer that we were going to do this, that the sheriff's
16 department was going to go out and make one more sweep. Then they
17 sent the, for lack of a better term, an Amber alert went out
18 across to everybody's phone that was in that area, including mine,
19 about needed to get out. And then preparations were made to fly.

20 Actually, the demolitions folks from Explosive Services,
21 Incorporated got in about midnight that night on Sunday. And we
22 were already making preparations, digging the pit, trenches. I
23 think we completed construction of the infrastructure about 10
24 a.m. on that Monday morning.

25 The original schedule was we were -- we thought we would get

1 these done started about 3. Was what the original hope. They
2 were still (indiscernible) we didn't have okay. So there was no
3 explosives planted. We had to have the okay before that started.

4 We didn't get the okay until -- I want to think it was around
5 1:00. So they were shooting to make the vent and burn at 3:30
6 after doing their double checks on their wires and everything.
7 And I think we had to suspend the countdown to do it it was either
8 two or three times for people driving into the hot zone for --
9 they were not work-related personnel. I'm not sure who they were
10 or how they got there.

11 But ultimately, somewhere in the neighborhood of about -- I
12 want to say quarter -- 20 to 5. Somewhere in that neighborhood.
13 The vent and burn took place. I think the fire -- the pit fire,
14 for the most part, burn out, I want to say -- I had to come to the
15 NTSB meeting that night. Gave a report. When I got back, the pit
16 fires were way down. There was basically spot fires in it. But
17 the five cars still had fire burning inside of them that we could
18 see. We had a remote camera that had thermal imaging on it that
19 you could see the cars.

20 So that was pretty much operations through Monday. And then,
21 in earnest, we went in to start trying to clear the wreckage and
22 mitigate the other hazards we had there and find where spilled
23 product was. We found them in some drainpipes. I think there was
24 an old water separator back in there somewhere. It was some big
25 hole. That's all I know. That was full of multiple products, I

1 think. Didn't find any acrylate there. But it appeared to be
2 some of the propylene glycol just the nature of the consistency of
3 the product.

4 And we are actively working on mitigation. The hold-up --
5 the last hold-ups were we had two or three -- three hoppers cars
6 of plastic pellets that ultimately, we could -- we try to knock
7 them down every now and then. Get them drug into the clear
8 because we're not going to get them put out until we can actually
9 shear the cars open.

10 And we didn't want to shear the cars open because you have to
11 have a place to spread everything out which means you got to have
12 a lay down area. So actually, that's being done this morning. As
13 we speak, they're putting those fires out. And I think when the
14 fires are out, they will lift the evacuation order. I do not know
15 that for sure. But that was kind of the message that was done.

16 So right now, overnight, they were -- they cleared the last
17 rail car about 2100 last night. Had already had some pre-working
18 panels and been laying rail through the night with support hazmat
19 crews in case we ran across some vapor issues and things we could
20 address. And that's where we're at this morning.

21 Q. Thank you for all that. Just a couple follow-up questions
22 and then I -- we'll go around the table. There's some acronyms
23 that we just want clarification for that you brought up if you
24 could. But starting with the initial 201s that were started, do
25 you know who has those in possession and if we can get a hold of

1 them?

2 A. They should be in the -- in that folder. I finally was able
3 to open that folder last night. There should be the initial 201.
4 Should be in there. Because understand, Norfolk Southern, that's
5 a standard protocol (indiscernible). In actuality, we were not
6 the IC. We provided that 201 information to the fire chief. But
7 ultimately, they brought in -- I want to say the company was -- I
8 guess there's an IMT group out of Ohio that helps manage. And
9 they're actually the ones that set up the ICS system.

10 Chief Drabick was still the incident commander but they were
11 actually doing his -- dotting I's and crossing the T's. But that
12 -- I think that didn't -- they didn't come in I want to say until
13 late Saturday.

14 Q. Can you explain to us what JSAs are?

15 A. Job safety analysis. They are specific -- you can have job
16 safety analysis for chemicals. We also had a JSA for initial
17 derailment assessment. So it goes in and there's specific
18 functions and gives you basically a safety briefing and what to
19 look for. Those are also in the SharePoint folder. Every JSA and
20 SDS we sent out that night is in that folder.

21 Q. NOC and NRC, can you explain what those are?

22 A. NOC is our network operation center. That's where our train
23 dispatchers are. That's the nerve network of our system. NRC is
24 the National Response Center that is manned by the Coast Guard
25 that all the derailments -- if you derail a hazmat or you hit

1 certain thresholds, you have to notify NRC, so our NOC is
2 responsible for notifying the NRC in our notification network.

3 MR. DOUGHERTY: Perfect. Thank you. I think that's what I
4 have for now. We can go around. Paul?

5 BY MR. STANCIL:

6 Q. Mr. Wood, thank you for that detailed narrative on the
7 incident. I just have a few additional questions. What
8 environmental monitoring was going on on behalf of Norfolk
9 Southern? I know you have a contractor. Can you tell us about
10 that?

11 A. CTH is one of our contractors. We have a couple. But CTH is
12 who we contacted to do our community air monitoring. All of our
13 ER contractors have some ability -- they carry air monitors but
14 it's not the ability to community air monitor. We bring in a
15 third party to make responsible for community air monitoring. And
16 then we take a segment out of that and when we actually start
17 doing work, a (indiscernible) then performs worker air monitoring.
18 Two different functions.

19 But the community air monitoring was set up -- I'm going to
20 -- I think it's about six or seven hours after the incident that
21 they -- they have to -- a couple of them came out of Pittsburgh so
22 there was two people doing some mobile air monitoring from CTH.
23 Got there about 1 a.m. on Saturday morning. The rest didn't
24 arrive until somewhere around 4, I think, that morning that comes
25 in. That brings the package in with all the remote transmission

1 area rays. And that's continually supplemented.

2 On top of the stationary stations, they'll do mobile -- they
3 do the PIDs (indiscernible). They have chemical specific monitors
4 if we know what we're dealing with. I don't know how many air
5 samples for laboratory analysis they actually pulled but to my
6 knowledge, they pull those, too.

7 Q. Do they report directly to you what they're finding?

8 A. They'll report to who our incident commander is there until
9 we get IH personnel. And then, in this case, Mark Duttle (ph.)
10 was our industrial hygiene for the company. Our occupational --
11 they -- he actually managed CTH which ultimately reports up to me
12 or Scott, whoever is in serving in charge for NS on that day.

13 Q. Can you tell us anything about what they found so far with
14 the monitoring?

15 A. To my knowledge, there was no significant findings at any
16 time. More than likely due to the fire consuming most things.
17 But other than -- particulate has been the biggest thing. I'm
18 sure they probably close to the site pick up VOCs and along that
19 creek line where the butyl acrylate got, when you're within those
20 areas especially and in (indiscernible). I'm sure they got VOC
21 readings. But to my knowledge, I never heard anything significant
22 even after the vent and burn.

23 Q. Are you sharing their results with EPA or the local agencies?

24 A. They have -- every bit of knowledge we have, they have. And
25 they're actually doing their own monitoring in addition to what

1 CTH is doing. But yes, we share -- everything we have we share
2 with them.

3 Q. Will there be some sort of summary report on the incident as
4 a whole?

5 A. Yes. There will be a summary report. We will get written
6 reports from all of our ER contractors on site for the work
7 performed. CTH puts together a comprehensive report for air
8 monitoring. Every major incident we have, they've always done
9 that. So yes, there will be a finalized report of the incident.

10 Q. And how long do you expect them to be on scene doing the
11 monitoring?

12 A. Until there's non-detects. That's our goal. When it's a
13 clean site -- because we're going to still have some issues. When
14 we dig the soil, we got to get it in (indiscernible) so we have to
15 be prepared to -- but we do not expect anything to be detects off
16 site. Even now, what detects are there and the point parts per
17 million for the commodities that we're concerned about, whether
18 that be vinyl chloride or the butyl acrylate or --

19 Q. So in terms of the non-detects, so there's non-detects for
20 vinyl chloride, phosgene? Can you kind of go down the list as to
21 what they're looking for and what they might've found?

22 A. Well, during the vent and burn, they would've been looking --
23 because we asked for phosgene -- to my knowledge, there was never
24 any phosgene detected. Other than just the next morning and some
25 particular areas right around the site, there was some minute hits

1 of hydrogen chloride. Most was particulate. And then VOCs, if
2 you got around a pocket of material like acrylate or whatever is
3 in the ground.

4 They did -- after the burn, we had I think some -- they
5 performed some tube sampling for vinyl chloride and I do not have
6 that information. If they had anything, it wouldn't have been
7 significant or we would've been notified.

8 Q. What sort of environmental remediation needs to be done for
9 the site?

10 A. Well, there will be some excavations that'll have to be done.
11 Some initial recovery trenches we'll put in based on the products
12 that (indiscernible) because some are water soluble, some are not,
13 some have a very low odor threshold. They'll be excavations. And
14 then, once we get a lot of this steel out of the way, then my
15 assumption is -- sorry, I shouldn't say I assume.

16 We'll bring in geo probes and then start looking at
17 footprint. But I -- we're going to be there for a while. So I
18 can't speak exactly what the final -- we have a remediation group
19 that'll come in and decide what's the best system for making final
20 cleanup. But it'll be a good bit of excavation done. But a lot
21 of it we can't do until we get the steel out of the way.

22 Q. In terms of impacts to the community, anything -- you say the
23 site. What is defined as the site and how far beyond that -- have
24 there been any impacts?

25 A. Sulphur Run, Leslie Run are two creek streams that lead to

1 the Ohio River. We know we got product in it. There were fish
2 kills downstream. Do not know whether that was from acrylate or
3 glycol. Propylene glycol or other products. There's some
4 lubricating oil, too. Which that's easily found. It'll float.
5 The other not -- does not.

6 So downstream, we've been dealing with it and we'll be there
7 the same way, too. It'll -- we'll have to address the water and
8 have been actively addressing the water whether it be aeration,
9 vacuum truck removal, damming of areas. And that's ongoing. It's
10 been ongoing since Saturday.

11 Q. So you looked at the town water supplies. Is that municipal?
12 Municipal water? Has there been any impact to that?

13 A. Any of those -- CTH and our (indiscernible) folks and our
14 legal teams will deal with those. We -- we're aware of -- there's
15 -- I believe they're on a well system there. I know there was
16 some contacts about well water. Ohio EPA addressed that. Said
17 that everything they're finding is surface. So they don't -- well
18 depths or drinking water is pulled from or from depths. But they
19 advised in a press conference they saw nothing or were lead to
20 believe nothing would be impacting drinking waters.

21 Q. But you're -- you mentioned geo probing. You're going to be
22 looking for impacts to ground water?

23 A. Yeah. That'll be part of what a geo probe will do. Our
24 remediation group -- we'll bring somebody in with us in Arcadis or
25 -- sets up. They're long-term remediation sites all over the

1 country so they -- our -- we're going to address the immediate
2 concern and get rid of anything that's going to cause impacts to
3 the air and what have you around the area.

4 Q. You mentioned the cycling of the PRDs and then there was a
5 time when one of them at least stopped cycling. Do you have the
6 timing on any of that? These are --

7 A. The two that concerned me that just quit, quit at about 6
8 a.m. on Sunday morning. We had been watching them all night. We
9 had them on video camera. The car in question had slowed down to
10 a lazy flame and had been like that for roughly 10 hours. But it
11 was -- still had a flame at the top of the car. It never got
12 really intense. But the ones quit -- it was about 6 a.m. Sunday
13 morning.

14 Q. So there's one car where -- of most concern. Is that the one
15 that had the highest temperature reading?

16 A. Yes, yes.

17 Q. And where was that in the derailment in terms of east, west?

18 A. The four cars that were grouped together were on the railroad
19 eastern end of the derailment starting about four cars in. And
20 without looking at the spreadsheet I had, the car of concern
21 somewhere was in the 58 to 60 range position relative to the -- I
22 know there had been some issues about which cars were derailed.
23 And I had explained that it depends on what document you're
24 looking at. If somebody gives you a consist, it counts the
25 locomotives. If they give you a wheel report, it doesn't count

1 the locomotives. So that can get you some discrepancy in car
2 counts there. If you're talking to two different people.

3 Q. But the car that had the highest temperature was the one
4 where the pressure relief device stopped working?

5 A. The first. And that car was also oriented a little
6 different, too. So it was in the liquid phase to begin with which
7 more than likely made the fire worse under -- when it was jetting,
8 it was throwing liquid out.

9 Q. So tell me a little bit more about that. How was it
10 oriented?

11 A. All we could see was from video camera. I want to say the
12 housing looked to be about 1:00. Maybe 2. Somewhere in that
13 neighborhood. It was really hard to tell because it was mashed up
14 against a hopper car, plastic pellets.

15 Q. So would that mean the pressure relief device was in liquid
16 instead of vapor?

17 A. It made it more likely. At that point in time, I don't know
18 what the level was in the car because of the length of burn and
19 what have you.

20 Q. And what does that do to the pressure relief device?

21 A. It will operate. But it doesn't relieve pressure as fast
22 because it's pushing liquid. You really need the vapor to come
23 out to drop the pressures. So two things. Plus it's a monomer
24 and so it's pushing that monomer that wants to polymerize when it
25 gets to some oxygen out through the ports that you're wanting that

1 vapor to release. So I -- it exacerbates the problem --

2 Q. You had -- you mentioned some conversations with the fire
3 chief. Can you tell us about how your interactions with the local
4 -- well, with the incident command and the local fire departments
5 -- how did that go?

6 A. As normal. I mean, it's -- this was an incident that they
7 had never had and would more than likely never have again. Again,
8 we had conducted some tabletop exercises with some of these first
9 responders, I believe, within the previous six months. Everything
10 was very cooperative, professional. So nothing that would've --
11 that raised any alarms to Norfolk Southern.

12 Q. How would you characterize their level of preparedness of an
13 event like this?

14 A. Well, that's a relative term. They were prepared to do
15 everything they were capable of doing with the equipment and
16 manpower they had. They called in mutual aid. So from that
17 aspect, they were operating as business as normal. I do not know
18 how much -- how many different mutual aid departments showed up.
19 But they were up against a no-win situation. If I questioned
20 anything, it would be I would have never made an offensive attack.
21 Attempt to put an offensive attack on that fire. Especially once
22 the PRDs started going off. But I was not the one there in the
23 seat of that truck either.

24 Q. The -- going back to the PRD issue, do you know when the
25 first one started cycling, when it first actuated?

1 A. I would have to defer to somebody on site because even for
2 Scott Deutsch, he's probably an hour-and-a-half after the initial
3 incident, before he gets there. So I don't know if they had
4 started cycling before he got there or after. When he went in
5 there to check, he was going in there, they heard the PRDs. They
6 were going in there to tell the fire department they need to get
7 out.

8 And there were actively PRDs cycling. Do not know how many.
9 But I know one started cycling when he was on the phone with me.
10 And you could hear the roar. He was there getting folks --
11 getting the fire department and getting them out of there.

12 Q. In terms of known materials to have released in the
13 derailment, both hazardous and non-hazardous, what can you tell
14 us?

15 A. We will know all of it today because we'll actually
16 physically be able to inspect all the cars. We know we lost a
17 carload of butyl acrylate. We know we had releases through PRDs
18 on five vinyl chloride cars in the fire. We know we've had a
19 release of some propylene glycol. I can't put a quantity to that
20 yet.

21 We know we've had some lubricating oil released but I can't
22 quantify most of -- those are what we know. There's still a
23 couple of more hazmat cars that were in there. Some combustible
24 liquids. And we do know the two benzine cars are intact. No
25 problem. The isobutylene car is intact. No releases from it.

1 Which the benzine cars were residue cars.

2 But believe it or not, it was the air monitoring action
3 levels to get into respirators were based on benzine. It being a
4 known carcinogen. (Indiscernible) numbers. So even during the
5 wrecking process, all the wrecking crews were in APRs. That just
6 -- we just -- rather than trying to chase with a meter, we said
7 while this is going until we can kind of get a handle, you're in
8 APRs.

9 Q. APR is --

10 A. Air purifying respirators.

11 MR. STANCIL: Thank you. That's all I have.

12 BY MR. LYNUM:

13 Q. Sean Lynum with NTSB again. Can we go back just as a point
14 of clarification. Explain what damming of the ditch lines means.

15 A. Along the rail right-of-way, there's drainage ditches or
16 storm water conveyances. So we knew we had a running fire. So
17 the concern -- they were going to try to do initial stuff they
18 could to stop the flow which worked for a while but when the fire
19 department started throwing water, whether it was from it, or
20 somewhere else, water flow picked up and blew the dam. I don't
21 know how many of those dams or how big. That was just word
22 conveyed to me. I believe Scott Deutsch conveyed that to me.

23 Q. Who is Occidental?

24 A. Occidental Chemical or Oxy Vinyls, they are the shippers of
25 record for the five vinyl chloride cars. I believe they own three

1 of them. The other two, the TILX and the GATX, I don't know
2 whether they own or lease those or not.

3 Q. To the best of your recollection, who made the decision to go
4 ahead with the vent and burn as far as -- I know ultimately you
5 had to jump through a bunch of hurdles to get whatever. But who
6 actually said yes, we're going to do this?

7 A. The governor of Ohio, Mike DeWine, ultimately made that
8 decision. I think he even expressed that in his news conference
9 after he was given all the facts.

10 Q. Do you know when the original evacuation order went out and
11 who made that decision?

12 A. That night, early on, I was on the phone with the fire chief
13 that night. And he asked me -- and I told him, I said you're
14 there, follow the ERG guidebook. So I pulled up and told him what
15 ERG guide to look at. And when he pulls it up and look, it says
16 this rail car on fire, one mile. I think they had already set a
17 half mile before they were referred or contacted us but I do not
18 know that as fact. But I know -- I said all I can tell you to do
19 -- I'm not there. Follow the ERG and those were the exact
20 instructions.

21 Q. About what time was that?

22 A. I want to say 10:00. Maybe a little before then.

23 Q. 10:00 that Saturday?

24 A. No, 10 at night.

25 Q. 10 p.m. okay.

1 A. Yeah, on Friday night. Yes, this was Friday night. Yes.

2 Q. Just want to make sure.

3 A. It would've been -- since the advent of the incident and
4 before Scott Deutsch got there.

5 Q. And this is my last question. About how long did it
6 generally take for the fires to go out on the vinyl chloride cars
7 after the vent and burn occurred just to your best recollection?

8 A. The pit burned roughly -- the major fire -- somewhere in the
9 three-and-a-half range. There was still some spot fires but early
10 on, some of those spot fires were spot fires that were already
11 there. It didn't have anything to do with the vinyl chloride.

12 So I can't say whether they were actually related to that.
13 Then the cars were still burning inside -- a little flame. Not
14 any roaring fire. Until at least, I want to say midnight. And
15 that's about as close as I can get after that. Because they're
16 being remotely viewed from thermal imaging. So even if the fires
17 went out, we couldn't have told the difference because of how hot
18 the metals were.

19 MR. LYNUM: That's all I have.

20 BY MR. DOUGHERTY:

21 Q. So one follow-up question for me. And this is Marc
22 Dougherty. Is there any concern of the HCL or acid particulates
23 that were released from the vent and burn to the surrounding
24 community as far as the attack on any metals or anything that
25 would cause issues?

1 A. To my knowledge, no. In this particular case, there was --
2 what had happened -- there was little to no wind. This thermal
3 column went straight up and basically comes straight back down.
4 And even in immediate areas around there, we really didn't get
5 that big a detect. I think in the nature of it, it's probably
6 incorporated in the -- some of the particulate and moisture. But
7 we have not seen any effects of it.

8 MR. DOUGHERTY: Any additional questions? No. Okay. So one
9 last question for you. I've obviously asked you a lot of
10 questions today. Is there anything that we haven't asked you that
11 you think we should have knowledge of that would be important to
12 our investigation?

13 MR. WOOD: Nothing comes to mind right offhand. This was a
14 very unique incident. I hope to never have to deal with it again.
15 But I do think it does quantify that there are times when we have
16 to take drastic measures.

17 MR. DOUGHERTY: Well, if there is anything else that you can
18 think of throughout this time that you think would be helpful,
19 please feel free to reach out to us and contact us.

20 MR. WOOD: Will do. And I will have one -- another one of
21 those incident status reports but it won't be ready until sometime
22 this morning. I'll add it to the folder.

23 MR. STANCIL: Thank you.

24 MR. WOOD: It'll cover the operations through last night.

25 MR. DOUGHERTY: Well, great. Thank you very much for your

1 time. Appreciate it. And the time is 10:23 and we will stop the
2 recording now. Thanks very much.

3 (Whereupon, at 10:23 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: NORFOLK SOUTHERN TRAIN DERAILMENT
 IN EAST PALESTINE, OHIO
 ON FEBRUARY 3, 2023
 Interview of Robert Wood

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.



Katie Leach
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: Robert Wood, Norfolk Southern Railroad

Dear Mr. Wood,

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: ROBERT WOOD
RECORDED ON FEBRUARY 8, 2023**

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
6	10	Assistant manager	System manager
6	15	(indiscernible)	Across the NS
6	16	Responsible the	Responsible as the
6	24	Come fire house	Bring for fire house
7	14	(indiscernible) the hazmat officers	Hazmat managers
8	11	John Simpson	Jon Simpson
8	16	Got our SDS our Jsas	Got our JSAs
8	23	Benzine	benzene
9	5	CTH	CTEH
9	19	For them	For the
10	13	Palestine	East Palestine
10	19	First until	First night until
10	22	--	An assessment
11	12	Manage	Manageable
11	22	Tick	TIC
12	12	When had	When we had
14	2	(indiscernible)	Undecided
15	6	Pellets that	Pellets that were still burning
16	6	--	Kite
17	11	CTH (twice)	CTEH
17	17	(indiscernible)	Separate team
17	22	CTH	CTEH
18	1	Rays	RAEs
18	2	--	Air monitoring
18	10	--	Safety/IH
18	11	They --	(delete these words)
18	11	CTH	CTEH
18	20	(indiscernible)	Incident site
19	1	CTH	CTEH
19	7	CTH	CTEH
19	17	Million	Billion
21	13	CTH	CTEH
26	3	Benzine	Benzene

