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Interview Transcript – Ryan Tokarski Project Manager, Specialized Professional Services, Inc., 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: RYAN TOKARSKI, Project Manager
Specialized Professional Services

via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday,
February 8, 2023

APPEARANCES:

MARK DOUGHERTY, Hazardous Materials
Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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

PAUL CAREY, Retired Fire Chief
International Association of Firefighters

TERRY HEIDKAMP, Party Coordinator
GATX Corporation

RON LAWLER, Senior Director
Trinity Leasing

I N D E X

ITEM	PAGE
Interview of Ryan Tokarski:	
By Mr. Dougherty	5
By Mr. Stancil	15
By Mr. Carey	26
By Mr. Lawler	31
By Mr. Heidkamp	31
By Mr. Stancil	32

I N T E R V I E W

(8:01 a.m.)

MR. DOUGHERTY: Okay, good morning. Today is February 8th, 2023. The time is 8:01 a.m. This is a Microsoft Teams interview that 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 Mark Dougherty, that's D-o-u-g-h-e-r-t-y, and I'm a Hazardous Materials Accident Investigator with the NTSB. This is an interview of Mr. Ryan Tokarski of SPSI.

And we'll now go around the virtual room and we'll do introductions. If you could state your name, the spelling of your last name, and company name and position that you're with. We'll go ahead and start with Paul.

MR. STANCIL: Paul Stancil --

MR. CAREY: Hi, I am Paul Carey. Go ahead, Paul.

MR. STANCIL: Sorry, Paul. I'm Paul Stancil, Senior Hazardous Materials Accident Investigator with the NTSB.

MR. DOUGHERTY: Chief Carey?

MR. CAREY: Good morning, I'm Paul Carey, retired Boston Fire Chief. I'm with the International Association of Firefighters.

MR. DOUGHERTY: Could you spell your last name?

MR. CAREY: C-a-r-e-y.

MR. DOUGHERTY: Okay. And Terry?

MR. HEIDKAMP: Hi, I'm Terry Heidkamp. I am the Party (ph.)

Coordinator for GATX Corporation. The spelling of my last name is H-e-i-d-k-a-m-p.

MR. DOUGHERTY: Okay. And Ron?

MR. LAWLER: Ron Lawler, L-a-w-l-e-r, Senior Director, Mechanical Services for Trinity Leasing.

MR. DOUGHERTY: And, finally, Ryan?

MR. TOKARSKI: Ryan Tokarski, with SPSI, Specialized Professional Services. Last name, T-o-k-a-r-s-k-i.

MR. DOUGHERTY: Great. Perfect. So it's very important that everyone that's on the recording that we all speak loudly and clearly so it gets transcribed properly.

INTERVIEW OF RYAN TOKARSKI

BY MR. DOUGHERTY:

Q. Mr. Tokarski, are you aware that the interview is being recorded?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. If any question is unclear or you don't know the answer to the question, please ask the questioner to clarify or restate the question. And if you don't know the answer to any 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 the question.

The sole purpose of the investigation is to improve safety, not to assign fault, blame, or liability. Our mission is to improve transportation safety and prevent accidents. As such, the NTSB cannot offer any guarantee of confidentiality, immunity from

any legal proceeding by any other agency, whether it's local, state, or federal.

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

All right, Mr. Tokarski, first, thank you again for agreeing to speak with us today about the derailment. If you don't mind, could you tell us about your background, education, and experience?

A. My background, I've worked at Specialized Professional Services since about July of 2005, pretty much right at the start of our company, and I have been working in the rail industry that entire time. Education-wise, I started here right as I graduated high school, so no college or technical education, just basically all the hands-on education here and all the programming that we go to, industrial fire brigade, chlorine institute, HAZMAT specialist, all those types of things. I also work within our AARC-6 program daily here as SPSI working with railcars and paperwork for railcars every day.

Q. Okay. And so what all positions have you held with SPSI?

A. I started out as a technician here, moved up to supervisor, then senior supervisor, and I was the operations manager and dispatcher for about six years and then took a role as a project manager for about the last six or seven years, so that's where I've been as a project manager. And as a project manager at SPSI

you're a working project manager.

As you guys probably know, Drew is the owner of the company and heavily involved in the onsite portion of the derailment, and that trickles down to every single one of us here, so we are all working project managers.

Q. Okay. And could you explain some of your duties as a project manager?

A. My duties as a project manager would be to receive phone calls from customers and mitigate whether, you know, they're having an emergency and we need to help them with their emergency or set up a scheduled job, a field repair of a railcar, a transfer, cleaning up a car. And I say cars but we're also -- you know, I could get a call about a tank, an onsite tank at a facility or piping or anything to that nature. I work with the oil and gas customers, and I'm actually meeting one this afternoon to review a piping project. So while it's natural for me to talk about railcars, I do work outside of the rail industry a bit, as well, so --

Q. Okay, great. And so who do you currently report to?

A. I report to Drew, Drew McCarty.

Q. Okay, all right. Well, thanks for that. So if you could walk us through, to the best of your recollection, your experience with the East Palestine derailment, from the time that you received the phone call notifying you of the derailment up until today? I know it's probably a lot of information, but to your

best of your recollection if you could just kind of go over from day one all the details?

A. Okay, yeah. I think I received the phone call around 9:30-ish p.m. on that Friday, and kind of got our bearings within the organization here and figured out that I'd just reported directly to the site since I'm located near the site, not too close but closer than our shop.

So I arrived near the derailment shortly before 11 p.m. that night and pulled down into the site where there was heavy, heavy fire in the derailment and a -- I would say a ton of fire trucks in the area, basically performing some rural water movement, shuttle dumping into dump tanks, and they were just putting some water all over the place, pretty close into that area. At that time I called Drew and said I'm kind of going to back out of here a little bit until we get our bearings. I'm kind of feeling like with the heavy fire that people are -- everybody is just a little too close for my comfort here. And Drew arrived shortly after me. I believe that maybe Scott from the railroad was there already.

So after that, Drew and I kind of got a staging area lined up, up the road, roughly three-quarters to a mile away, and that's where we started staging our guys. Drew had gone down into the site, and I waited up there for a while, and then -- you know, when I say a while, it might have been an hours or two, where Drew and Scott D., Scott Deutsch, from the railroad, were trying to get a game plan together with the fire department, get everyone to a

safe location.

Whenever Drew came and got me to come back down to the meetings at the fire department, it seemed like everybody had kind of cleared out to a safer distance at that point.

So then, throughout that first night, it was just a lot of talks at the fire department, a lot of meetings, a lot of different agencies coming in, and a lot of, lot of trying to figure out what car was what. And, you know, nobody could see anything due to the fire and the dark.

So I don't -- forgive me because I don't remember an exact timeline, but I would say somewhere around 3 or 4 in the morning I went down to the west side crossing and helped air monitor and use our thermal imaging camera with the mechanical department of the railroad to break the cars loose where they could to get a portion of those cars out of there that weren't affected with the derailment. And that would have been on the west side that we were at, the very first crossing west of the derailment. We -- they did what the mechanical guys do, got the cars loose, and I just had to air monitor and a thermal imaging camera to check. I believe that's right around the area where the beer box cars were. And, you know, they took about an hour and a half-ish to cut those loose and pull that section of the train out of there. And then, after that, until about daybreak, it was kind of like a stand-down portion for me just waiting while Drew was in some meetings and until daylight came.

At that point, I worked with the -- forgive me, but it was, it was a local guy with a drone. I can't even remember who it is, who it was. Commissioner. He was a, he was a commissioner. Worked with him a few times with the drone and just getting different footage for the command post. I basically just went with him as safety monitor to keep him in a safe location with an air monitor and, again, with a thermal imaging camera just to make sure he didn't put himself in any positions. At that point, it was daylight and we would have had -- still had some, you know, heavy fire in there, obviously, on that Saturday morning coming from the area of the, of the pressure release.

And after that, throughout the day was just, you know, monitoring of those cars -- of the cars, the whole, the whole derailment, the fire, and -- my brain's a little, a little foggy on that day with no sleep, but that's the timeline there throughout that day was just basically the same things. Just everybody wanted to get as much information as they could. I know there was a flyover with an airplane that day, so there was a lot of down time trying to get -- collect information that day.

So at the end of the -- at the end of that day, I was off site about, say, 7 or 8 -- 7:30 that evening and then reported back the next morning on Sunday. I'm trying to recall. All those days kind of ran together there the first week for me.

Sunday was the day where we, where we monitored those VCM cars. Well, I guess it's noteworthy to mention on -- you know,

while we were monitoring those VCM cars, the PRD on -- I'd say the -- it was the third one in from the east side -- it was, it was venting out of the PRD about every two minutes that Saturday, and I timed it myself and it would vent for about 30 seconds and then it would set again, and it would continue that all day. All day long that was venting like that, just shooting flames out until -- right up until the point I left that day.

Sunday is the day, I believe, that that car had seemed like to us that it was calming down to a point, and then, you know, we decided that we would get in, make some entries in, and try to investigate and see -- you know, just get a little bit closer visual on what's going on, maybe some temperature readings and things like that. And that day is whenever that car decided to vent again after not venting for -- I think it was about three hours it didn't vent. It still had flames on top, obviously. All the rings and gaskets and such seemed to be burnt out of it, and it hadn't vented for about three hours, so we decided -- I stayed back and had two crews in there to monitor various portions of the derailment.

And as a couple guys were coming out, a couple guys would have been on our north side near the, near the VCM car that was by itself, I'll say. Forgive me for not knowing car numbers at this point.

Q. Okay.

A. This would have been the westernmost -- they were at the

westernmost VCM car. And that car had released -- not that car; the one that had been venting the whole time, the PRD popped again, and it went more aggressive than I had ever seen it the entire time at this point. And that would have been the point where it vented and it didn't quit for over 70 minutes from the time that it had actually started venting this time. And we had to get the other crews out of there and get them, get them to go out the west side. And we backed off and that's whenever everybody started becoming really concerned with the conditions of these cars internally.

After that point that day -- that would have been Sunday -- a lot, a lot of temperature monitoring once that car quit on all the cars on different portions of, you know, where the jacket was ripped here and the jacket was ripped there. And I referenced that westernmost car that was by itself. It had a high temperature the entire time we monitored it. When I say high, it was higher than all of the other cars. Those temperature numbers I don't have in front of me, so I can't recall. I just remember it being in the, in the hundreds somewhere, low one hundreds, like 130, somewhere around there, I believe. But we definitely documented all of that; I just don't have that in front of me right now.

So, yeah, there was a lot of concern about that car and its internal condition, as well, and then, obviously, the one that had vented the entire time.

So that was, that was Sunday. And like I said, Sunday night I believe the crews just continued to monitor the temperatures of those cars. And throughout Sunday different tactics and game plans were discussed across the board about how to handle these cars. Obviously, there were -- the idea of trying to do anything in the protective housing was not a good option for us or anybody else. So that's, you know, kind of the next level up from me to discuss different plans and things about vent and burn, and I believe those -- that would have been -- well, that led us into Monday.

And Monday, I think, is the day -- I can't recall if it was Monday or Tuesday whenever they actually did the vent and burn. But I think for me it was just the temperature monitoring, making sure that they were -- everybody was getting their readings is kind of what I was in charge of. If I didn't get the readings every hour, somebody was texting me to get those temperature readings to report. And that -- yeah, that would have been Monday.

Q. So how about the time -- and this is Mark Dougherty -- the time after the vent and burn and what was accomplished after the vent and burn?

A. Directly after the vent and burn?

Q. Um-hmm.

A. Would that -- that would have happened in the evening, the evening-ish, late afternoon, I'd say. So we really -- my shift

didn't do anything. I don't even think night shift did anything directly after that just -- we definitely didn't. We cleared the area and then ended up, you know, at the, at the command area that evening. The day -- the night, that night, I don't think anybody went near the area of the vent and burn and the next, the next day the crews -- I didn't personally make an entry in on that. I had very limited entries. I was kind of outside the whole time. I know that Drew and a couple of the other guys went in to, you know, just verify with the vent and burn guys that the detonations went as planned.

Q. Okay. All right. So just a couple of follow-up questions from me, and then we'll go around the virtual meeting here for any --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- follow-up questions. But appreciate that information. So you mentioned that thermal imaging was done and air monitoring was done. Do you happen to have a recorded or any type of records of that monitoring, written records that you could provide us?

A. I don't have anything right now. I personally had the monitor and had no reading on that -- on any of those entries, and I'm pretty clear on the timeline of the -- of that myself being -- and I potentially have text messages to help myself with that timeline. But I do know roughly that when I was with mechanical was early Saturday morning when I would have been with the commissioner. It was, you know, daybreak Saturday morning. So,

yeah, I could, I could definitely put something together.
Q. Okay. Yeah, any running notes that you may have --
A. At this point in the game, I'm not sure if I could find the exact monitor that I had at that time because we were rotating so many in and out, but I could check and see if we could find that -- those records on our, on our PIDs, on our IBRIDs (ph.), our system.
Q. How about, how about temperature recordings or any (indiscernible)?
A. The temperature recordings that I was hitting that day with mechanical would have been for those box cars that they cut loose just to try to get a -- you know, some sort of sense of if there was a fire inside that box car before they pulled away, and there was nothing. You know, obviously, I didn't have any readings of those box cars. They pulled those ones down the tracks a bit.
Q. Okay. All right, great. And so did you keep a log of timeline, by chance, of sequence of events as they happened?
A. No, I did not.
MR. DOUGHERTY: Okay, okay. All right. So let's go around and for any follow-up questions. Paul Stancil, do you want to start us off?
MR. STANCIL: Sure. Thank you, Mark.
BY MR. STANCIL:
Q. Yes, Ryan, I appreciate your narrative there. I do have a few follow-up questions. Regarding the temperature readings that

you mentioned that were taken every hour, those were recorded?
A. Yes.
Q. Tell us about -- what's the form of that documentation? Is that something that you have available?
A. It's not something that I have available. I had the crews go and get the temperature readings, get them to me, and then I sent them off. So I don't have a formal document with temperature readings personally.
Q. So you sent them off how?
A. I have via text message.
Q. Did you save those?
A. Let me check. Yeah, I didn't delete anything. I don't have anything deleted. So whatever I sent in text message I still have.
Q. Okay. Yes, we would be interested in preserving that, Ryan, if you could somehow get that put together in a documentation format. That would be extremely helpful to us.
A. Okay.
Q. So what temperatures were being measured exactly?
A. Excuse me? I didn't hear you on that one.
Q. Yes, sir. What temperatures were being measured exactly?
A. We were basically finding different -- you know, there were various points in each car where a portion of the jacket had been ripped open and we could get to the internal tank and get a good temperature reading on whether, you know, one tank had three

jacket tears in it and we can get three different readings on it, or one had one and we could get a reading there. We kind of did that and hit the same spots every time and had an average of, you know, the temperature readings. And, yeah, I just -- I did just pull up my message here, and I have -- I do have a timeline, a log.

Q. Okay. Can you read us from that what you have there?

A. Yeah. One second. Let me go back. Now, I have to -- I will have to look into this because I was texting two different managers, so I have one pulled up right now at 9:40 a.m. on 2/6/23. And the cars are numbered 1 being the easternmost car on the tracks, then as follows suit to 2, 3, 4, 5, and 5 being the one that was kind of by itself on the western side there, for reference. So we were averaging about 65 degrees on 1; 65 degrees on 2; 65 degrees on 3; 65 degrees on 4; and 126 degrees on number 5. And that stayed consistent there throughout the day for 9:40 and 10:30, 11:30, and I have a 12:30 and a 1:30, and then it kind of got a little lax there at 2:57. And that's what I have in that record. And --

Q. So throughout all of those measurements, the temperature did not change?

A. The temperature maintained, yeah. It maintained on those.

Q. Was there any --

A. And --

Q. Was there any point in time where the temperature did change?

A. The one -- the temperature that day, not that I can recall. The 126 kind of stayed around. Number 5 kind of stayed around 126 to 130 from what I recall.
Q. Okay. Any further measurements that indicated that a change was occurring?
A. Not off the top of my head, to my knowledge. Not that I, not that I have.
Q. Okay. Did the temperature ever get higher -- you mentioned in the 130s. Did the temperature ever get higher than 126?
A. I'm trying to, I'm trying to look back in my messages and see if I had anything else. Actually, let me see something here. Yeah, I'm not -- I'm just not finding any messages from the guys who were reporting it back to me at the moment. I'm trying to search their names. Yeah, at this time I don't, I don't -- I can't seem to find any other, any other messages about the temperatures. That's all I have right now.
Q. Is that something you could put together for us or preserve those messages?
A. Yeah, the ones that I had there, that I read you, absolutely. And I'll continue to look because if somebody sent me a message and it was in with a group of another person, I might, I might just be overlooking that, so I can look through a little more detail.
Q. Who did you send, who did you send these messages to?
A. The managers from Norfolk Southern.

Q. Which is?
A. Scott Deutsch.
Q. Anyone else?
A. I potentially would have sent them to Scott Gould but I'm not seeing that. If I -- I'm looking for a group message maybe. The ones that I read you were in a message to Scott Deutsch.
Q. Okay. And this, again, was on what day?
A. One second. I'm out of that. Let me go back. It's the third -- Monday, February 6th.
Q. Was that the, was that the only time you were collecting temperatures? Or was there any over the previous couple of days?
A. Sunday, that's what they were in there trying to accomplish, whenever that PRD had vented, and I don't have any documentation of those readings. I'm not sure if Drew had those, but I don't have those ones from that day. I know they were trying to go in and get pressure reading off of the first VCM car, and they were working on the west side, investigating that car, but I don't know if they got readings from those and gave them to Drew. I don't have them.
Q. Okay. How were the temperature measurements being collected?
A. I'm sorry? Say that one more time?
Q. Yes. How were you or your crews collecting the temperature measurements? What instruments, what technique? How was that being accomplished?
A. We had a Draeger thermal imaging camera, as well as a FU

(ph.) handheld, for lack of a better term, point-and-shoots, with a digital display.

Q. Do you have the make and model numbers of those, by --

A. I don't have those right now, no.

Q. Okay. And who was doing the actual measuring?

A. It would have been a handful of folks from our company and -- yeah, mainly our company. Guys -- Alex Klepcic (ph.), Charles Filby (ph.), DeShawn Herrera (ph.). DeShawn Herrera was on night shift, so he potentially has more from -- it would have been Sunday night, I guess, Sunday night into Monday night, into that date that I gave you. Yeah, so those three guys primarily. Potentially Blaze McDonald (ph.) but he's a possible. Alex Klepcic and Charles Filby for sure, and then DeShawn Herrera for sure on night shift.

Q. So let me understand the flow of affirmation from them to the Norfolk Southern manager, is it correct that they forwarded the measurements to you and then you texted them to the Norfolk Southern managers?

A. Yeah, yep. Yeah, they would either call me on the radio, my crew, and then I would give them to the Norfolk guys.

Q. So were all of the communications by text message or were others by radio?

A. There would have been both.

Q. So the other measurements, were they written down anywhere or recorded somehow or just verbally?

A. I would have to check my notebook and review that and see because I do see in some of these messages some pictures of my notebook. That's kind of how -- if I wrote them down, I was out, you know, in the, in the field, I wrote them down in my notebook and just sent a picture of that to them. Or, you know, the crew sent me a picture of a notebook and I just forwarded it along.

Q. All right. Let me move on to a little bit of a different topic. Regarding the -- you mentioned there was some concern about the internal conditions of the car. Could you explain that a little bit more?

A. Yeah. The third car in that was venting all day Saturday and then had that, had that 70-some-minute release, as well as the car with the elevated temperature, there were just concerns. I mean, when that PRD went off that time, it definitely was a concerning audible noise as well as a visual fire again, and I know that, you know, some folks were brought in to -- chemical specialists or whoever they were from the manufacturer of the chemical about polymerization for the product, the VCM product. And forgive me, I can't remember what company they were from at this point, but, yeah, a couple folks were brought in to monitor, help monitor, and figure out -- try to figure out what was going on inside of those cars.

Q. And what do you remember about those discussions?

A. Just that it was a potential for polymerization inside those cars with that product. I know they had -- I heard that briefly

from those folks but, you know, nothing was ever said for sure that I heard. And then, you know, they obviously went to various meetings, and I don't -- I wasn't in those meetings.

Q. Okay. You mentioned that there were some discussions about tactics and game plans that ultimately led to your decision to vent and burn. What -- did you have any role in those conversations, and can you tell us what the options were?

A. Well, I know hot tap was an option at one point or a discussion at one point, to hot tap those cars to try to get the product out and manage it, but then that -- you know, know that there was definitely a safety concern with being very close for quite some time to those cars trying to hot tap weld a nipple on and hot tap those cars and -- yeah, that one was definitely a discussion, but it -- I don't recall that I was a part of a discussion to not do that. I just know it went the route to not do that.

Q. Do you know why?

A. I think it was a personnel exposure risk, and I don't mean chemically exposed; I mean fire and pressures and just putting someone or a group of folks in there to try to hot tap these cars and potentially have this stuff polymerized already and then all that be for naught because we can't get anything out of our hot tap.

Q. Understood, okay. Going back to -- you mentioned that PRD, pressure relief devices, began activating. Do you recall when

that started happening?
A. I believe that pressure relief device was activating when I got there Friday night. It was very hard for me to tell that night. There was -- it was -- I mean, I'm telling you, it was the most chaotic scene I've ever came up on in my life with the amount of firefighters and the ladder truck being set up so close to those vinyl chloride cars. But I do believe there was heavy fire in there that night, and at least at some point that Friday night, early Saturday morning is whenever that PRD was going. I don't know exactly what time. I cannot say.
Q. Were all of the vinyl chloride cars releasing material through the PRDs?
A. To my knowledge, I don't think the number 1 was; the one that was number 1 would have been the east side. As far as I know, the other ones were, as far as I know. They had heavy fire around their protective housings.
Q. Okay. Let's move on to hazard communications. You mentioned there was some issues or difficulty identifying which cars were which. Can you sort of explain that a little bit more?
A. Oh, well, that's -- the difficulties there would have been just the heavy fire in the derailment burning off the numbers of the cars, not being able to see all the cars from ground level, which is where the -- you know, the drones helped collect the data. The airplane ride that somebody had been in to help collect the data and get visuals and pictures and start looking at

pressure cars, general service cars, and just start building that map as we do. That's every derailment I've ever been on has been very difficult in the first hours trying to figure out what everything is and where it's all at. I do -- I mean, as far as knowing what cars we were looking for, I feel like somebody -- well, Drew had a list and we were working through a consist and placing cars where we, you know, around about where we thought they were and identifying the VCM cars and any acrylate cars or benzene cars or any of those things.

Q. So when you arrived, you said before 11 p.m., was there a train consist available at that time?

A. Honestly, I do not know.

Q. What about placards? Did any cars have placards that helped you identify which ones were which?

A. In the first night there were none visible. Anything that we could see was just too dark, too piled up, too mangled at that time. But -- and that's in the direct area of the wreck. Now, like I said, when -- on the west side at the crossing we could kind of see some beer cars and a couple other cars that we could identify and, you know, rule out those cars. I do believe that's maybe where some empty residue benzene cars were, if my memory serves me right. But, yeah, on that side, you know, wherever placards weren't burnt up, yeah, they were definitely helpful.

Q. Okay. And at what point were all of the HAZMAT cars ultimately identified?

A. Officially, I'm not sure of that answer. I couldn't say for sure. I know we had a good list going sometime Saturday, but I would say definitely that all of them were not identified as to where they were. But officially I don't have that answer.
Q. All right. Can you tell us what cars were breached in the derailment?
A. Aside from the VCM cars that were releasing PRDs?
Q. Correct.
A. Would have been --
Q. What about the other cars? What can you tell us about them?
A. I do know that there were some oil cars that were breached and an acrylate car. I don't know which one. At this point I can't remember if it was a butyl acrylate or which acrylate it was. And there was, there was at least one more car that was breached, but I can't remember what was in it. And I apologize. I do believe it was a DOWX car.
Q. Okay. Any other non-hazard materials that were breached?
A. You'll have to forgive me. I don't remember.
Q. Was it, was it you who put together the list that shows the status of the cars? Was that your list?
A. We compiled that list together between myself and Drew and Mike Klein (ph.). We compiled that list in our, in our command center.
Q. Is that the most accurate information that you have about what cars were breached and what weren't?

A. Yeah, that would be the most accurate information that I would have available to me and that I would have had available to me at that time from an SPSI standpoint.

Q. Okay. Well, thank you, sir. I appreciate it.

MR. STANCIL: And I'm going to pass to the next person. And appreciate what you've done there. Thank you.

MR. TOKARSKI: All right. No problem.

MR. DOUGHERTY: Chief Carey?

MR. CAREY: Hello?

MR. DOUGHERTY: Hello?

MR. CAREY: Hi. Am I up next?

MR. DOUGHERTY: Yes, sir.

MR. CAREY: Okay. Paul Carey here.

BY MR. CAREY:

Q. Ryan, thanks a million for joining us today, and thanks for all the information.

A. Yeah, no problem.

Q. So I just have a few questions. When you got there, you said there was heavy fire and a lot of fire apparatus. Was most of the fire from pull (ph.) fires exposing the tank cars?

A. There were pull fires, there were -- seemed to be 3-dimensional fires. There seemed to be just a lot of fire.

Q. Okay. And what was the, what was the fire department engaged in at that point? Were they providing water to try to cool those tank cars?

A. Yeah. Whenever I arrived on scene they had two aerials set up. One directly over the VCM cars which would have been 2, 3, and 4. Would have been pretty much directly near in that area. They also had another aerial ladder set up on the east side down near the -- I don't know what the business was, but there was a large business on the east side. They would have been around that way near where the beer box cars were with that one.

Q. Yeah.

A. And they --

Q. And did you, did you interact with the fire department incident commander?

A. I did not. At that point I made contact with Drew and tried making contact with Scott Deutsch who, I believe, was on site already. And I really couldn't -- I couldn't determine what was going on at that point and who was who and what was where because of the amount of people that were there. It was, it was an -- you know, there was nobody identified as incident commander or any type of organization. There were a lot of people standing around at that point, a lot of people moving.

Q. Okay. And then, and then a decision was made to have the fire department pull back, and you said that you pulled back about three-quarters of a mile and set up a staging area for your folks?

A. Yeah. I had, I had people coming in myself from my company, so I went back and found the location about three-quarters of a mile to a mile back. And that was just simply due to the fact

that that's where that parking lot was. You know, there was no -- I didn't calculate anything at that point. I just moved, you know, back and found a parking lot where we could stage our trailers. And, you know, we had a lot of equipment coming in.

Q. And did the fire department pull back to that point, as well?

A. They moved to where, you know, their fire departments or the other side of town. I don't exactly know where they all went, but they didn't come back that direction.

Q. Oh, okay. And you mentioned the air monitoring and the use of the tech, and the tech was only useful where you could access the tank where it was breached on the cars because you couldn't really get a good reading on the jacketed cars, right?

A. Right. You wouldn't get any -- you know, you'd get the heat effect off of the fire, pull firing on the jacket. But to get a good -- you know, to get a good temperature reading on the, on the cars, we definitely got the tank.

Q. All right. And what kind of air monitoring was being done at that point?

A. We had our hybrids with PIDs and LEL monitors, oxygen monitors, personals. But CTH was there with their air monitoring equipment Friday night at some point. You know, late Friday night. And I don't know exactly what time they got there, but they were there midnight-ish, maybe.

Q. Okay. How were pressure readings obtained on any of the cars?

A. That night? We didn't do any.
Q. Yeah.
A. No pressure readings were obtained that night.
Q. Okay. And when they finally did, do you know what kind of methods they used to determine the pressures in the cars?
A. We -- well, they wouldn't have taken any pressure reading on a car where there was a pressure -- a 3-D fire or any kind of fire in the housing. So to my knowledge, 2, 3, and 4 were too dangerous to try to get any kind of pressure readings or impossible to get any kind of pressure readings off of.
Q. Okay. And when you -- do you know of any discussions they had -- I'm sure they had a unified command set up. Are you aware of that?
A. They had a command set up, yeah.
Q. With agency representatives from all the different parties on scene?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. And do you know what kind of data they were tapping into to determine safe distances, evacuation distances, protective action distance, anything like that? Were you party to any of that?
A. No, I'm not.
Q. Okay. So that was kind of above your level, right?
A. It was above my level. I know that Drew had expressed to us that the Emergency Response Guidebook was -- recommended one mile.

Q. Oh, okay. So they -- somebody was tapping into the ERG?
A. Yeah, I believe that that was discussed. At least Drew had talked about it.
Q. Okay, good. And you said that, you know, due to the damage and the 3-dimensional fire and things like that you couldn't get good information off the rail cars with stencils or anything like that, but you said that there was some information able to be gleaned from some placards that were intact?
A. Yeah, that's basically what I would refer to there with any placards that were visible would have been on the east side of the derailment, specifically where the crossing was where we were able to cut the cars and identify. You know, those were box cars, and then there were a couple other general service cars, I believe, there that were left. So I would say that those ones -- I believe, I believe those ones had placards on them.
Q. And who were the folks that were cutting loose some of those cars and moving them out initially?
A. It would have been Norfolk Southern Mechanical.
Q. And would it be SRS? Would they do that?
A. No. At that point, SRS wasn't there.
Q. Oh, they weren't there?
A. No. That -- whenever they, whenever they removed that train, that end of that train, that was early Saturday morning, roughly around 4 a.m.
Q. Okay. And finally, which of the VCM cars did that PRD

venting for 70 minutes or so?
A. My memory is the third VCM car, number 3, what I call number 3. So that would have been the third one from the east side.
Q. East?
A. Yeah.
Q. That's what I --
A. One, two, three, yes. One, two, three, yeah.
Q. Okay, good. I think that's all I have for you, Ryan.
A. Okay.
Q. Appreciate you. Appreciate everything you did in helping us out.
A. Okay, yeah. Not a problem.
MR. CAREY: All right, thank you.
MR. DOUGHERTY: All right, thanks, Chief.
Let's move on to Ron Lawler.
BY MR. LAWLER:
Q. Hey, good morning. I think you answered my question. I was just wanting to know about the five VCM cars, did they all vent, and you said all of them (indiscernible), correct?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Thank you, sir.
MR. DOUGHERTY: All right, perfect. And, lastly, Terry Heidkamp?
BY MR. HEIDKAMP:
Q. Yeah, hi, Ryan. Thanks for your summary and thanks for your

service out there. Just one clarifying question: You labeled the tank -- the VCM cars 1 through 5 but you don't have the specific car numbers that match up with each of those numbers; is that right?

A. I don't have them on me right now, no.

Q. Could anybody, could anybody map the specific car numbers to the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 position?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mark, should we pull the mapping up and let him look at it?

MR. DOUGHERTY: Yeah. Let me see if I have -- I don't know if I have that one readily available here.

MR. HEIDKAMP: Well, I can't, I can't see the map right now. I'm just on a call. So if we have those, that's great. I just, I just wanted to, I just wanted to clarify that.

MR. DOUGHERTY: It may take --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, I think we ought to let Ryan take a look at it.

MR. HEIDKAMP: All right, thanks.

MR. DOUGHERTY: Paul, do you happen to have -- Paul Stancil, do you happen to have the overview map handy, by chance? Quick reference?

MR. STANCIL: Stand by. I'm trying to pull it up here now.

Okay, I'm going to share my screen. That's a little bit larger.

BY MR. STANCIL:

Q. Okay. Does this help? Now, if you look to the, to the left of this photo, this is a photograph that is a layout produced by the Federal Railroad Administration. To the left side of the photograph is east.
A. Okay. So TILX402025 would have been what I believe is number 1 VCM, if I remember correctly. It's hard to tell for me because I looked at it from a different angle for six days.
Q. Okay. Which would be your number 3 car?
A. Ah, I -- I'm trying to put myself on the other side of this picture and look back. I think it's OCPX80179, but I -- I think that's the one I'm referring to is number 3. And I could get that real number that I, that I know for sure. Right now, like I said, I'm looking at this picture from this angle, and I was on the ground, on the, on the south side of this thing.
Q. Let me un-share this. I'm going to see if I can come up with a (indiscernible) photo up here. Bear with me for one moment, sir. Okay, I think I have one. Does that help your recollection?
A. Yeah.
Q. We're looking, we're looking at image number 554 which is a ground-level photograph showing --
A. Okay.
Q. -- THEX95098 and OCPX80179 and OCPX80235.
A. Right, with the white number 1 not pictured. And then, yeah, OCPX080179, I believe, would have been number 3.
MR. STANCIL: That's -- throw that back to you, Mark. Are

there any other questions?

MR. DOUGHERTY: Yeah, appreciate that.

Yeah, does anyone have any follow-up questions for Ryan?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Nope.

MR. DOUGHERTY: No? Okay.

All right, well, I appreciate all the information, Ryan. It's been great helpful for us. We went over a lot today, obviously, so one final question for you: Is there anything that we didn't ask or is there any additional information that you may have that you would -- that you could give us that would be helpful to our investigation?

MR. TOKARSKI: Nothing that I don't think we covered already. I think, I think that's it. I mean, I've told you everything that I could think of.

MR. DOUGHERTY: Okay. All right, well, thank you again. I appreciate your time and information.

And this will terminate the interview and I will stop the recording. The time --

MR. STANCIL: One thing. One last thing --

MR. DOUGHERTY: Oh, go ahead, Paul.

MR. STANCIL: -- before we stop the -- yeah, one last thing before we stop the recording. I would request that you preserve your text messages, particularly about the temperature measurements.

MR. TOKARSKI: Okay.

MR. STANCIL: And also please compile your notes because we'll be requesting those items as well.

MR. TOKARSKI: Okay.

MR. STANCIL: Okay?

MR. TOKARSKI: Yes, sir. I will not delete anything and I will preserve it.

MR. STANCIL: Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

MR. TOKARSKI: All right, all right.

MR. DOUGHERTY: All right. Thanks again, Ryan. And this will terminate interview. I will now stop the recording. The time is 8:59 a.m. Thanks.

(Whereupon, at 8:59 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 Ryan Tokarski
ACCIDENT NO.:	RRD23MR005
PLACE:	via Microsoft Teams
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.

[redacted]

Angie Duray
Transcriber