



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

**Columbiana County Emergency Management
Agency (CCEMA)**

Title

Interview Transcript – Director / CCEMA

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: PEGGY CLARK, Director
Columbiana County Emergency Management Agency

Via Microsoft Teams

Friday,
May 5, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RICHARD DOWNS, Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MARK DOUGHERTY, Hazardous Materials Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

CINDY LAKE, Safety Division
National Transportation Safety Board

TROY LLOYD, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL CAREY, Retired Boston Fire Department District
Chief and Hazmat Operations Chief
International Association of Firefighters

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:05 a.m.)

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3 MR. DOWNS: Good morning. Today's date is May 5, 2023, and
4 the time is 9:05 a.m. This is an interview which is being
5 implemented virtually using Microsoft Team, which is being
6 conducted by the investigative staff of the National
7 Transportation Safety Board in connection with the Norfolk
8 Southern Railway train derailment that occurred in East Palestine,
9 Ohio, on February 3, 2023. The NTSB accident number referenced is
10 RRD23MR005. This is an interview of Ms. Peggy Clark who is
11 affiliated with the Columbiana County Emergency Management Agency.

12 Ms. Clark, thank you for joining us today, and if you could
13 kindly please spell your last name, and state your current job
14 title for the record.

15 MS. CLARK: Clark, C-l-a-r-k, and I am currently the Director
16 of the Columbiana County Emergency Management Agency.

17 MR. DOWNS: Thank you. And, Ms. Clark, do you understand
18 that this interview is being recorded?

19 MS. CLARK: I do.

20 MR. DOWNS: Thank you.

21 Now, before we start this interview and questions, I'd like
22 to advise the interview participants that the NTSB interview
23 procedures under 29 C.F.R. 831.7 afford persons being interviewed
24 the opportunity to be accompanied by one representative of their
25 choosing in which that participating representative can be anyone,

1 or the interviewee can elect to have no representative to be
2 present.

3 So I'll ask our interviewee, Ms. Clark, have you elected to
4 have a representative accompany you in this interview?

5 MS. CLARK: I have not.

6 MR. DOWNS: Thank you.

7 Now purpose of this investigation is to improve safety, and
8 not to assign fault, blame or liability. The sole mission of the
9 NTSB is to improve transportation safety, and prevent accidents.
10 And as such, the NTSB cannot offer any guaranty of
11 confidentiality, immunity -- or immunity from any legal proceeding
12 by any agency whether it's local, state, or federal. Also I
13 wanted to note -- all the participants here a transcript of this
14 interview will be compiled and placed in the NTSB public docket
15 for this investigation which will be available through the NTSB
16 website, that being www.nts.gov.

17 Now with the above admin items covered let us go around the
18 virtual room here, and introduce ourselves. I ask that you please
19 spell your last name, what entity that you are representing or
20 affiliated with, and your employment title.

21 I would also like to remind everybody to speak clearly for
22 the recording and transcription.

23 Now we've identified already the interviewee. So I will
24 start off with myself, and then we'll go around the virtual room.
25 My name is Richard Downs, D-o-w-n-s, and I'm a Survival Factors

1 Investigator with the National Transportation Board out of
2 Washington, DC.

3 MR. DOUGHERTY: Good morning. Mark Dougherty. Spelling of
4 my last name is D-o-u-g-h-e-r-t-y. And I'm a hazardous materials
5 investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board.

6 MS. LAKE: And I'm Cindy Lake. Last name is L-a-k-e. And I
7 work in our Safety Division at the National Transportation Safety
8 Board.

9 MR. LLOYD: Good morning. My name is Troy Lloyd. I'm a
10 railroad accident investigator with the National Transportation
11 Safety Board. Spelling of my last name is L-l-o-y-d.

12 MR. CAREY: Good morning everybody. My name is Paul Carey,
13 C-a-r-e-y. I'm a retired Boston Fire Department District Chief
14 and Hazmat Operations Chief, and I'm here on behalf of the
15 International Association of Firefighters.

16 MR. DOWNS: Thank you Chief Carey. And let me mention Chief
17 is supporting the NTSB on the panel here for his technical
18 expertise support.

19 INTERVIEW OF PEGGY CLARK

20 BY MR. DOWNS:

21 Q. Ms. Clark, I have a few introductory questions here. Can you
22 tell us, please, about your background, your education, and your
23 expertise?

24 A. Background. I served in the U.S. Army for about four years
25 as a radiation specialist. I worked many years in medical

1 imaging. Around 2012, I was hired by Beaver County Emergency
2 Services as a planner, emergency planner and trainer, with the
3 main purpose of conducting education with first responders in the
4 event of an accident at a nuclear power plant that affects three
5 states and three counties. In 2015, I was hired by Columbiana
6 County Emergency Management as the Deputy Director. And in 2016,
7 I was promoted to Director of Columbiana County Emergency
8 Management.

9 Q. Very good. Let's see. You've touched at bit on what
10 positions that you've had with the organization. So starting in
11 -- correct me if I'm wrong -- starting in 2015 you were with
12 Columbiana County as a deputy, and promoted in 2016 as the
13 Director which is your current position; is that correct?

14 A. That's correct, sir.

15 Q. Great. And can you give us a snapshot of your duties as the
16 Director of the agency there? Just a --

17 A. Yeah. Wide range of duties. Responsible for all the
18 planning and training activities related to emergency management.
19 So I'm responsible for the County's Emergency Operations Plan, the
20 County's Mitigation Plan. Part of Columbiana County is in the 10-
21 mile emergency planning zone of the nuclear power plant. So we do
22 a lot of training and education with the first responders that
23 would be needed to respond to an accident at that facility. We
24 have about 22,000 people that live in that emergency planning
25 zone.

1 Q. And what's the name of the nuclear plant that you're
2 approximate to there?

3 A. Beaver Valley.

4 Q. That's the Beaver Valley. Okay. And that's been around for
5 quite a while now?

6 A. Yes, sir. The '70s, yeah.

7 Q. '70s. Okay, great. And who do you report to?

8 A. The Board of County Commissioners.

9 Q. Board of County Commissioners. Okay. And East Palestine, of
10 course, is within Columbiana County. How often do you get down
11 there to visit East Palestine? Do you make regular visits with
12 those folks or a lot of it is just telephone type of stuff?

13 A. Well, things have obviously changed since COVID. Before
14 COVID we did everything in person. Since COVID's over a lot of
15 that has sort of been some in person and some virtual.

16 Q. Yeah. The idea is that it's a fairly big county. So the
17 idea is to make sure everybody stays, stays looped in with the
18 latest developments on the planning components. We took a look at
19 your preparedness plan. It's quite comprehensive. Thank you very
20 much for sharing that on the Internet. That gets updated every
21 year or so?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 MR. DOWNS: Okay. I don't want to step on Ms. Lake's
24 questions here. I'm going to turn the, turn the floor over to
25 Ms. Lake now, and she'll proceed with the usual questions that she

1 has.

2 MS. LAKE: Thank you, sir.

3 BY MS. LAKE:

4 Q. So, Peggy, we're going to start talking about the night that
5 the, the train derailment occurred. And, I guess, let's just
6 start off. If you want to tell us in your own words kind of how
7 that unfolded for you, how you were notified, your response to the
8 scene, just those initial, I guess, let's talk about the initial
9 hour --

10 A. Sure.

11 Q. -- to begin with.

12 A. I have some notes. So I'll probably be referring --

13 Q. Sure.

14 A. -- to those just because there's been a lot that's happened
15 since February 3rd.

16 MR. DOWNS: Yes. By all --

17 MS. LAKE: Yeah, the --

18 MR. DOWNS: -- means, Ms. Clark, you're free to use any notes
19 or whatever --

20 MS. CLARK: Okay.

21 MR. DOWNS: -- documents that you need to access in this,
22 absolutely.

23 MS. CLARK: Very good. So I was notified by a cell phone
24 call around 2110 that evening that there was a significant
25 derailment in the village of East Palestine with significant fire

1 involved in that. I was requested to start reaching out to some
2 neighboring hazmat teams, and immediately started getting dressed
3 to make my way to the scene.

4 BY MS. LAKE:

5 Q. Okay. And when you, when you say the neighboring hazmat
6 team. So I understand the Columbiana County hazmat team that's
7 Chief Jones out of --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. -- East Liverpool, correct?

10 A. That's correct.

11 Q. Okay. And then what were some of the other hazmat teams that
12 were --

13 A. Beaver County.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Beaver County from Pennsylvania, and Mahoning County, which
16 is our county to the north of Columbiana County also has a hazmat
17 team.

18 Q. Okay. Great. And is that typical for you to provide that
19 support in this type of event?

20 A. Most often it's an EMA director to EMA director request for
21 those assets. So, yes, that --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. -- would be typical if it was outside resources for me to
24 request.

25 Q. Okay. And then, I guess, for any kind of train accident,

1 derailment or fire, does EMA automatically get involved in that?

2 A. No. It is up to whoever the incident commander is to
3 determine the level of support that they are going to need. I
4 have an excellent relationship with all of our fire chiefs and
5 regularly attend their chiefs meetings, and they know they can
6 call me at any time for anything.

7 Q. Okay. Great. Thank you. Okay. So you got dressed, and
8 then you headed to the scene?

9 A. Right.

10 Q. Is that correct?

11 A. Right. Yep.

12 Q. Around what time was that? Or what time did you arrive
13 approximately?

14 A. My notes show that I was on scene around 2147, I believe.

15 Q. Okay. Great. And so what -- tell us your first impressions
16 upon arrival.

17 A. Well, I was making multiple phone calls, obvious, as I was
18 driving there. So not only had I made contact with the Beaver
19 County hazmat team, and the Mahoning County dispatch to get
20 theirs. But I was also making phone calls to Norfolk Southern to
21 our hazmat. I'm not sure exactly what his title is, but he's our
22 hazmat representative that we regularly work with. So I was on
23 the phone with him. I had notified the county commissioners. I
24 was receiving phone calls from multiple other fire chiefs asking
25 if we were going to need their support, and really just relaying

1 that information. A couple back and forth calls with Eric Brewer,
2 who is the county EMA Director in Beaver County, and also in
3 charge of their hazmat team, just giving him updates on this is
4 what I'm being told, this is the location that you need to, to
5 send the team to, contacting the Ohio EMA, letting them know the
6 gravity of the situation.

7 Q. Okay. Great. And so the Norfolk Southern hazmat was that
8 Scott Deutsch or Robert Wood?

9 A. Yes. Scott Deutsch.

10 Q. Scott? Okay.

11 A. Scott Deutsch is our direct contract (verbatim).

12 Q. Okay. So you, you already have an established relationship
13 with him?

14 A. Yes. Actually a very long one. When I worked in Beaver
15 County, Pennsylvania, Scott previously was employed by Alleghany
16 County Emergency Management which are neighboring counties. So we
17 were familiar with each other prior to even our current positions.

18 Q. Okay. Great. And then in -- now in your role with
19 Columbiana County have you continued a professional relationship
20 with, with the intent of preparing for --

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. -- an event like this?

23 A. Yes, absolutely. So we actually hosted, I believe, in 2019,
24 a -- what they consider an enhanced tabletop exercise with Norfolk
25 Southern and a contractor that they bring in. And the scenario is

1 always a hazardous materials train accident. We did that -- our
2 county's pretty large geographically. So we did that with the
3 responders in the northern half of the county. And then in
4 October of '22, we performed that exercise again, and we invited
5 all the responders from the southern half of the county.

6 Q. Okay. Great. Yeah. We've heard about the October 2022 from
7 other folks that we've talked with. So that, that's great. And
8 so when you reached out to Scott Deutsch what were your initial
9 questions and conversation as far as this accident?

10 A. I really wanted to make sure that he was aware that this had
11 occurred, and who was Norfolk sending to the scene to assist.
12 And, again, that was prior to even arriving. Just the magnitude
13 of what was explained to me on the phone I knew we were going to
14 need them to be there to assist in identifying which cars were
15 involved, and what the chemicals were.

16 Q. Okay. So did he share that information? Was he able to
17 share the information about the chemicals --

18 A. So --

19 Q. -- at the time that you contacted him?

20 A. Not in the first phone call. Because he was already in his
21 car driving in my direction whenever we made contact, and that was
22 part of the conversation that we had that I needed a copy of the
23 consist immediately. So he -- I'm assuming that he began working
24 on that after our immediate conversation because I believe by --
25 and, again, I'd have to check my e-mail to be sure, but around 10

1 -- right before 10 o'clock I had the consist in my e-mail. So --

2 Q. Okay, great. And then upon receipt of that consist did then
3 you disseminate that to others?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And how -- who received that, and how was that communicated?

6 A. Right. So I believe that the first individual that I spoke
7 to when I had the consist was a representative from Norfolk
8 Southern. I don't know exactly what his job title was, but he was
9 one of the first people from Norfolk that showed up. We were
10 concerned because of -- there was so much fire, and the train is
11 no longer on the track in a straight line. It was difficult to
12 assess which cars were off the track, which ones were on fire.
13 The engineer was not there. I learned later that they had
14 disconnected the engine and the non-involved cars, and moved it
15 further down the line. So typically we would expect the engineer
16 to come to command pretty quickly, and be able to provide that
17 information. So as soon as I had that consist I was showing it to
18 the Norfolk representative, and he was looking through it, and
19 then we started to have hazmat representation show up. So we were
20 able to get that -- a paper copy of that printed, and disseminated
21 to my county, Chief Jones, hazmat, and he started doing his
22 investigation of his research, his hazmat research.

23 Q. Okay. Great. Thank you. And then, let's see, so as far as
24 the evacuation can you talk a little bit about your role in that?

25 A. Sure. So initially as -- I mean, as soon as I got there, I

1 have, I have described this to others when they ask, it was like
2 you were watching a disaster movie is what it looked like when I
3 got on scene. There was fire everywhere, and it was obviously
4 dark. It's 9 o'clock at night, and it's 6 degrees outside. So it
5 was -- nothing was ideal about the entire situation. Even prior
6 to knowing what chemicals were on the -- in the affected cars, I
7 had utilized our local notification system, which is called WENS,
8 and we had sent out a shelter in place for one mile. Because,
9 obviously, there was a danger. We just didn't have the
10 information to identify how much of a danger, but we certainly
11 didn't need people coming to the scene. So that message I had
12 sent out at 2153. So within just a few minutes of me arriving we
13 had sent out using the local system a shelter in place.

14 After we -- after hazmat was able to determine what chemicals
15 were involved, I had made contact with the mayor, and we had a
16 quick discussion about, okay, this is the chemicals that are
17 involved. I think my recommendation to him was to change this to
18 a one mile evacuation, establish a shelter, and not only use our
19 local system, but use the federal IPAWS system also to send out a
20 message to make it a one mile evacuation not just a shelter in
21 place.

22 Q. Okay. Great. So is that ultimately, like, I understand you
23 consult with the elected officials. Is that ultimately your
24 decision and determination or in collaboration with the elected
25 officials, the mayor --

- 1 A. It's always in collaboration with --
- 2 Q. Okay.
- 3 A. -- the elected officials.
- 4 Q. Okay.
- 5 A. It's their jurisdiction. My role is to provide support. So
- 6 I would, I would never assume that I could overrule between the
- 7 elected officials and whatever the fire chief's wishes are.
- 8 They're ultimately responsible.
- 9 Q. Okay. Great. And were you also consulting with the incident
- 10 commander at the time, which I believe was Deputy Chief Gorby?
- 11 A. We were, yes. We were attempting to. East Palestine is a
- 12 very small fire department made up of volunteers. So he was
- 13 actively trying to direct firefighters, and talk to us about what
- 14 was going on, and talk to hazmat, and trying to come up with a
- 15 plan. So --
- 16 Q. Okay. Great. And so then was a subsequent message sent out
- 17 then once that one mile -- the, yeah, the one mile evacuation?
- 18 A. Yes.
- 19 Q. And around what --
- 20 A. Yes. So --
- 21 Q. -- what time? Sorry. And that's where you said you used the
- 22 federal IPAWS system --
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Q. -- as well?
- 25 A. So my notes say 2259 we determined it was the vinyl chloride

1 and a one mile evacuation was needed, and the IPAWS message was
2 sent.

3 Q. Okay. Great.

4 A. So 2259 is what I have for that.

5 Q. Great. Thank you. Appreciate that. Let's see. And so the
6 -- so your WENS is kind -- is your public notification system,
7 correct?

8 A. It is.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. It's a sign-up system. So people actually have to register
11 for it.

12 Q. Got you. Okay.

13 A. So that's sort of the difference between the WENS and the
14 IPAWS system.

15 Q. Right. Okay. Great. Okay. And then so did you establish
16 an emergency operations center or was it more that you were part
17 of the command post it sounds like throughout the --

18 A. So, yeah. Initially I was part of the command post. When
19 Chief Drabick got on scene I had asked him if he wanted me to open
20 the EOC and fully staff it, and he did not want that. He wanted
21 EMA to stay and become part of command. Ultimately we utilized my
22 EOC with some enhanced staffing for answering phone calls from the
23 public. So they were answering phone calls, providing direction
24 on, you know, we were quickly able to get some frequently asked
25 questions documents over. And at one point we broadcast an

1 official hotline that people could call and ask questions. So we
2 staffed that from like 8 to 8 each day.

3 Q. Okay. Great. And then so related to your, your 911
4 dispatch. So we have requested and received the CAD from Chief
5 Brown for East Palestine. But so does Columbiana County then have
6 its own dispatch? And how does that work with the jurisdictions?

7 A. So Columbiana County has five PSAP locations --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- throughout the county. So one of those is the county
10 sheriff. So they cover the jurisdictions that don't have their
11 own PSAP in their, in their jurisdiction.

12 Q. Okay. So which, I guess, which jurisdictions then have their
13 own PSAP? I'm guessing East Palestine is one.

14 A. Yes. So East Palestine.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. East Liverpool.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Salem.

19 Q. Um-hmm.

20 A. Columbiana.

21 Q. Um-hmm.

22 A. And the sheriff's office.

23 Q. Okay. Got you. Thank you.

24 A. And Columbiana is the village of Columbiana. I want to
25 clarify that because it's confusing. We have a --

1 Q. Gotcha.

2 A. -- village named Columbiana, and then the county is named
3 Columbiana.

4 Q. Okay. And I don't think any -- has anyone requested -- well,
5 I guess, like you said there isn't a county one. So, okay. So I
6 guess we could look at requesting from each of those entities
7 their CAD --

8 A. Sure.

9 Q. -- records.

10 A. So, yeah. And the system is set up so that if -- if any of
11 the entities don't answer a call it rolls over to the county
12 sheriff.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And then if the county sheriff wouldn't answer a call, then
15 it rolls to another county.

16 Q. Great. Okay.

17 A. So some of our --

18 Q. Thank you.

19 A. -- PSAPs are very small, and are only staffed by one person.

20 Q. Okay. Great. And then so you, you had mentioned -- you
21 mentioned the exercises both that you did with Norfolk Southern,
22 and then I see you have an LEPC committee as well. So can you
23 just talk a little bit about what kind of training and exercises
24 you all have done as a county, and particularly if East Palestine
25 was part of that --

1 A. Sure.

2 Q. -- in the past several years?

3 A. So annually we offer training to all the first responders.
4 We try to host a hazmat awareness and a hazmat operations class.
5 And actually in 2022 East Palestine was the host agency for that
6 training. I believe it was the end of October, beginning of
7 November timeframe that they did a hazmat operations and awareness
8 class in East Palestine.

9 Q. Okay. Great.

10 A. We are required annually to perform an exercise. So we
11 always meet that standard. We are allowed if we have a hazmat
12 incident to take credit for that incident if it meets all the
13 criteria of what we would have needed to demonstrate for the, for
14 the exercise itself.

15 Q. Okay. So you're covered for 2023 I think --

16 A. We are covered. The papers to fill out for obtaining the
17 credit remain on my desk in the giant pile of other things that I
18 haven't been able to get to.

19 Q. Yes.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. I'm sure. I'm sure.

22 (Crosstalk)

23 MS. LAKE: Yeah. All right. So I'm going to pause, and let
24 my colleagues see if they have questions, and we'll, we'll go
25 around from there. Thank you, Peggy.

1 MS. CLARK: Sure.

2 MR. DOWNS: Thank you, Ms. Lake.

3 Let's see who is next in the queue. Mr. Lloyd, if you want
4 to take the floor.

5 MR. LLOYD: Either Mark or I. Mark, you want me to take it
6 next?

7 MR. DOUGHERTY: Yeah, go ahead. I don't have any questions
8 right now.

9 BY MR. LLOYD:

10 Q. Okay. Yes. I just have a few, Peggy. Again my name is
11 Troy. I'm a railroad accident investigator with the NTSB.
12 Spelling of my last name is L-l-o-y-d. You were talking about
13 the, the incident command training that you guys do, table tops
14 and all that stuff. So with the jurisdictions, maybe strictly
15 within East Palestine, are the trained at like at an IMS 300, 400
16 level where you talk about the unified commander versus the area
17 command, all that stuff?

18 A. Yeah. So we, again, attempt to offer that training annually,
19 a ICS 300 and 400, which is open to any of -- any responders
20 throughout the entire state actually. And I believe we did host
21 one in '22. And then in '23, I believed, it was just a few
22 weekends ago that we did a ICS 300 and 400. And we try to move
23 that around throughout the county. It's difficult for volunteers
24 to attend those trainings because they are so long. I understand
25 they're a lot shorter than when I took it many, many years ago,

1 but I believe it's still a full week. One class is three days,
2 and the other class is two days. So we struggle getting
3 volunteers to basically take a week off work. We have scheduled
4 them on weekends also. The one that we just did in '23 was on,
5 was two weekends I believe. They did like a Friday night, and
6 then all day Saturday, all day Sunday, many hours to try to get it
7 all, all in. So the classes are offered through my office almost
8 annually.

9 Q. So do you know if, like, I guess, the -- we'll talk about the
10 career portion of the fire departments in your county such as
11 Drabick, Jones, all of them. Are they required to have a minimum
12 level of incident command training such as maybe they stop at ICS
13 200 or, or they pretty much mandatory to expand to the 300, 400
14 level?

15 A. I honestly don't know the answer to that question.

16 Q. Okay. Okay. So that would be something that -- would that
17 be a document or something that we might be able to get the
18 minimum training levels to be a fire chief in East Palestine or
19 Liverpool or Selma or something like that?

20 A. I would think the Ohio fire marshal's office would --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- be able to provide you what, what those rules are.

23 Q. Okay. So I got just two more short ones. So I think you
24 mentioned. I just want to confirm that during the, during the
25 emergency response everybody's on scene, they're seeing the big

1 fire ball in the sky, and chemicals burning, and I think you
2 mentioned that you asked about opening, about staffing, a full
3 staffed EOC center, and the chief said, no, I'd rather have you at
4 the command post, right?

5 A. Correct. Yeah. It was quickly expanding level of responders
6 that were at the command post, and quite honestly I would say
7 multiple members of my EOC staff were already on scene. And
8 instead of assuming what we would do in the EOC they were filling
9 ICS positions.

10 Q. So and that leads me to the next question. So what do you
11 think would, would trigger the chief not to -- because we know we
12 need a -- a big incident like this you need a fully staffed EOC to
13 expand your incident command. It's very expandable for what your
14 needs are. What would draw him not to, to want your staff to
15 staff the EOC to take that burden of communications and paperwork
16 and all that staff and run some decisions through. What made --
17 triggered him not to want to expand that way?

18 A. That was just not his preference. He did not want the EOC
19 staffed. He instead wanted me to contact Ohio EMA, and activate
20 the fire chief's response plan, and get an incident management
21 team through the Ohio fire chief's response plan.

22 Q. Okay. And I guess parts of the incident command you guys
23 were filling which would have been the emergency management stuff,
24 the finance, administration type stuff, but not more of the fire
25 rescue type stuff --

1 A. No, yeah, no, I --

2 (Crosstalk)

3 Q. -- division chiefs --

4 A. I don't have any --

5 Q. Okay. I got it.

6 A. I am not a tactics person. I am --

7 Q. Understood.

8 A. -- I'm the resources person.

9 Q. Got you.

10 A. Tell me what you need. I'll figure out how to get it for
11 you.

12 Q. So do you, do you feel that a fully staffed EOC might have
13 helped in this, in this major event?

14 A. You know initially I was disappointed that that was the route
15 that he chose to go, but as the additional agencies began to
16 arrive it became apparent that the majority of them they are used
17 to operating in an ICS structure. So we ended up with literally
18 hundreds of people in the -- in a giant ICS structure within a few
19 days.

20 Q. Pretty big.

21 A. It was massive.

22 Q. It's almost hard to manage without a fully staffed EOC so
23 they can just take that burden from those ones that are making the
24 emergency response decisions.

25 MR. LLOYD: Mr. Downs, that's all I have.

1 Thank you very much, Peggy. I appreciate it. Thank you.

2 MS. CLARK: Sure.

3 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Who do we want to go next? That comes
4 down to Mr. Dougherty or Chief Carey.

5 MR. DOUGHERTY: I don't have any questions.

6 MR. DOWNS: Chief Carey you have the floor.

7 CHIEF CAREY: No questions, Mark?

8 MR. DOUGHERTY: No, not yet.

9 BY CHIEF CAREY:

10 Q. Good morning, Peggy. Thanks for joining us today. So can I
11 talk to you a little bit about the training? You mentioned that
12 one of the things you do in the county is provide training. Who
13 provides that training actually, like, boots on the ground? Who
14 are the people that do that?

15 MR. DOWNS: Are you asking if there's a contractor or is that
16 personnel of the county? Is that what you're asking, Paul?

17 CHIEF CAREY: Yes.

18 MS. CLARK: Yeah, typically it's a contractor that we hire.

19 BY MR. CAREY:

20 Q. Okay. Who would be that contractor? Do you know?

21 A. It varies. I had the -- for the ICS 300 and 400 that we did
22 the end of 2022 I had the city of Pittsburgh fire chief who has
23 his own consulting business come in and provide that training.

24 Q. Okay. And who provides the hazmat training? You mentioned
25 the -- you periodically offer awareness and operational level

1 hazmat training. Who does that training?

2 A. It's typically a contractor that specializes in that. We
3 don't have any -- I believe Chief Jones in his department has
4 trainers, but I think they also use an outside contractor. But
5 whenever either EMA or LEPC is coordinating that we use an outside
6 contractor.

7 Q. Okay. Have you ever utilized the IFF hazmat training
8 programs?

9 A. I don't, I don't know. Is that a certification or it is --
10 you would go to the IFF and ask them?

11 Q. It would be requested by EMA, and this is typically done on a
12 regular basis around the country. It's grant driven, and it's --
13 it gives the participant a Pro Board recognized certification at
14 the operational level.

15 A. So here's what I understand about that. There is -- because
16 our forces, and this might be a misconception on my part, Chief,
17 so correct me if I'm wrong. We, the Ohio certifications are
18 through the Ohio fire marshal's office, and they have specific
19 roles about the levels of certification. It's difficult for us
20 because most of our responders are volunteers. They have specific
21 requirements about if you're going to reach that, and, again, I
22 think you said Pro Board certification level, or the certification
23 level that Ohio uses, they actually have to travel to the fire
24 marshal's office proper to take their final exam. It is not
25 something that they are permitted to do locally. So although we

1 offer the training, and they get a certificate from the training,
2 they do not typically travel to -- it's basically near the capital
3 of Ohio to take that test unless they choose to do so.

4 Q. Okay. So that's for the state certification?

5 A. Yes, sir. Yes.

6 Q. Okay. The IFF provides Pro Board certification which is good
7 anywhere in the United States, and it comes right to the local
8 department, and it's a 24-hour training program, just so you know.

9 A. I'm making a note.

10 Q. So just, I just had a couple of questions. Do you know if
11 that -- you talked about how en route you were on the phone with
12 Scott Deutsch.

13 A. Um-hmm.

14 Q. And he e-mailed you the consist and --

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. -- at around 2259 you had received that consist, correct?

17 A. No. 21 -- yeah, I had it, yeah, I had it almost at the same
18 time that I was arriving on scene --

19 Q. Oh, yeah --

20 A. -- I had the consist.

21 Q. -- that's right. You said around 10 o'clock. Okay.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Do you know if the IC, the Deputy Gorby was given that
24 consist?

25 A. There were multiple people gathered around my laptop that

1 evening looking at the consist. After Chief Jones got there he
2 was able to print a copy. He had a printer in his, in his
3 apparatus, and then that was shared with all of the experts that
4 were trying to make that determination of which cars were
5 involved. But I cannot state 100 percent if Chief Gorby was
6 standing there or not.

7 Q. Okay. And yeah I understand it was a very chaotic event.

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. A lot of moving parts, and stuff like that. I'm a little bit
10 familiar with that environment myself. As far as unified command,
11 do you feel as though you were plugged in appropriately into a
12 unified command? And did they at least have -- even though there
13 was no EOC up and running did they have a command board, and it
14 was pretty delineated as far as who was plugged in where and doing
15 what?

16 A. Initially the documentation was being done by the local fire
17 department, and then once the IMT arrived then they took over all
18 that documentation and doing the official ICS forms, and the IAP
19 and all that. So the fire department was handling all of that
20 documentation.

21 Q. Okay. Great. So you provided a valuable resource at that
22 incident, and I thank you for your service.

23 CHIEF CAREY: And that's all I have.

24 MR. DOWNS: Very good. Thank you there, Chief.

25 Mr. Dougherty, any questions that might have evolved?

1 MR. DOUGHERTY: No, sir. You have -- you all have answered
2 the questions that I had.

3 MR. DOWNS: Very good.

4 MR. DOUGHERTY: Thank you.

5 MR. DOWNS: Okay. I'll revert back then to my follow-up
6 questions, and we'll make one more round here.

7 BY MR. DOWNS:

8 Q. Ms. Clark, the WENS system, W-E-N-S, the shelter in place, is
9 that in essence a reverse 911 type of operation?

10 A. Yes, sir. Reverse 911 is actually the name of a company. So
11 that's why we just refer to it as our public notification system
12 and not reverse 911, yes.

13 Q. Okay. Yeah. Many, many people can relate to the reverse
14 911. So we'll just probably in the, in the report make it a
15 footnote type thing similar to --

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. -- the reverse 911. The train line that goes through East
18 Palestine that's an Amtrak line; is that correct?

19 A. I don't know the answer to that. I have it on my map --

20 Q. It's a --

21 (Crosstalk)

22 A. -- Norfolk Southern line.

23 MR. DOWNS: Say that again Troy.

24 MR. LLOYD: That's a, yeah, that was an Amtrak passenger
25 lines, two trains a day.

1 MR. DOWNS: Two trains a day.

2 MR. LLOYD: One eastbound, one westbound.

3 BY MR. DOWNS:

4 Q. Okay. The question is, is that the 49 C.F.R. 239 requires
5 jurisdictions through which the Amtrak trains or passenger trains
6 for that matter pass to have training activities conducted
7 annually and so forth. Do you happen to know if your county has
8 conducted Amtrak training to address that requirement?

9 A. I have been here for eight years, and I've never had any
10 contact with anybody from Amtrak. Again, on my map I have that
11 marked as a Norfolk Southern line, and that's why my contact with
12 Scott Deutsch continued.

13 Q. Okay. Well, we, we can follow-up with Amtrak or NS on that,
14 that point. Incident command versus unified command. Correct me
15 if I'm wrong. The way I'm reading it is when you arrived there
16 was an incident command process established. Would that a fair
17 appraisal?

18 A. Yes. I immediately asked who the incident commander was, and
19 I was told that it was Mr. Gorby.

20 Q. The deputy chief, yeah, okay. Where was that physically
21 located?

22 A. I'm not sure how familiar you are with the site, but at the
23 Leake Oil property is where everybody was initially gathered.

24 Q. Yeah, that's what I'm looking for that buzz word the Leake
25 Oil Company in essence parking lot. It's basically a large

1 gasoline filling station, yes?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Okay. And was the command site the, the assistant chief's
4 car or what was it physically comprised of? Do you remember?

5 A. The proprietors of Leake Oil were onsite, and actually opened
6 up a small building. Again, it was six degrees outside. And we
7 sort of gathered into inside this little office to start having
8 discussions once, like I said, additional hazmat units started
9 arriving on scene.

10 Q. Okay. So and when you arrived, you found the building open,
11 and people --

12 A. I was initially outside on the back of a tailgate, and the --
13 like I said, one of the owners said I can open the building. You
14 guys can come inside. It was so cold that the cold was like
15 sucking my laptop battery down to almost zero within minutes. So
16 it was fabulous that they --

17 Q. That was great. That was great that they could support that
18 effort.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And that was essentially just after you arrived?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Perfect. Okay. And roughly how long did the command remain
23 at that location, top of your head? I'm looking -- not looking
24 for a perfect time stamp.

25 A. I think it was about two hours, and then it was determined

1 that the chemicals that were on fire were too unsafe to remain --
2 people to remain on scene, and we moved command back to the East
3 Palestine Fire Department.

4 Q. That's the, that's the Clark --

5 A. Not the Clark Street Station, and I'm -- I might have the
6 address in my notes, and I --

7 Q. Not important. That's basically the building that's a
8 combination police department and --

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. -- fire department?

11 A. Yep, yep, yep. We took over the empty bays of that facility,
12 and set up command in there.

13 Q. Perfect. Okay. That's what I'm looking for. Little bit on
14 the logistics here.

15 A. I have a little bit after midnight that IC relocated to the
16 East Main Street Fire Department.

17 Q. East Main Street.

18 A. Right.

19 Q. Shortly after midnight. Okay.

20 A. So probably two and a half hours after I arrived that's when
21 that relocation if I'm doing my math correctly.

22 Q. All right. Okay. Perfect. The establishment of unified
23 command when we go from incident command to unified command, tell
24 me a little bit about that. Was that during when you were on
25 scene there?

1 A. So I, after I made contact with the mayor, and it was
2 determined that we were going to have to do an evacuation, I
3 started going through all the other things that I need to do,
4 contacting the Red Cross, establishing a shelter, getting a
5 building open, and I immediately told the mayor I'm, like, if this
6 is going to be an evacuation people have to have somewhere to go,
7 and you need to get on TV. So not only are we sending this
8 message out using the IPAWS system, but you're on TV giving more
9 details because you are character limited in those messages of
10 what you can actually say. So we needed him on TV giving a better
11 explanation to his residence about what was going on. So I took
12 him, and we left the initial command site, and went down to the
13 village hall, grabbed a couple of reporters that had already made
14 it on scene, and said come with us. We're going to do a press
15 briefing to try to get that information out.

16 Q. Perfect. Okay. It sounds like you had your act together
17 pretty good. The evacuation sites we've identified as being the,
18 the high school; is that correct?

19 A. Yes, sir, yes.

20 Q. Okay. And that's just outside of the one mile limit --

21 A. It is. It is --

22 Q. -- from --

23 (Crosstalk)

24 A. -- outside of the one mile, yes.

25 Q. Okay. Great. And you were at the empty bays there for a

1 while. Correct me if I'm wrong. Up to the point it was
2 established you really needed to relocate again outside of the one
3 mile limit. And at that point it was transferred to the
4 elementary school; is that correct?

5 A. Yes, sir, that's correct. So we were there at the Main
6 Street Fire Department basically Saturday and Sunday. And then
7 Sunday evening whenever the chief was notified that it was not
8 going to be a simple unloading process because of the issues with
9 the tank car that's when it was determined we needed to move
10 incident command into a bigger facility because we knew we were
11 going to have many, many more experts arriving on scene. And I
12 believe we were, like, 8 or 9 tenths of a mile away from where
13 those cars were. So nobody had a real comfort level knowing what
14 was going to need to happen that we weren't truly at least a mile
15 away.

16 Q. So the movement from the combo building, the empty bays, to
17 the elementary, when did that occur? Do you remember?

18 A. I believe it was Sunday evening.

19 Q. Close enough. That's good enough, Sunday evening. Okay.
20 Yeah. We're principally looking at only say the first six or
21 eight hours of the on scene at this point. Because at that point
22 it's, it's -- the situation appears based upon what we're hearing
23 in the interviews the situation had stabilized. Regarding the
24 incident command process would you say would it be a fair
25 characterization to say it was up and running when you arrived?

1 A. They had identified the individuals, and it was in the
2 process. I think that's something that takes a little bit of time
3 to get going.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And the more responders that are showing up it takes some
6 time to communicate that, okay, this is where command is, this is
7 what we want you to do. But when I arrived there were multiple
8 fire departments already on scene, and they were starting to
9 establish water tanker operations -- shuttles and all of that. So
10 it was in the process of being established although they had
11 definitely designated who the incident commander was, and were in
12 the process of identifying other responsibilities.

13 Q. Okay. And during your tenure let's say through the eight
14 hours or so that you were working the case, working the scene,
15 would you say the incident command was running smoothly? Was
16 there communication problems? Set the scene for us a little bit
17 if you would please on how functional it was operating.

18 A. I mean as far as I know everything was going as I would have
19 expected responding to this level of an incident. I think
20 initially it was chaotic, but I don't know how else it would not
21 have been chaotic. We do have, I guess I should say we do not, we
22 do not have a radio system in the county that is used by all
23 jurisdictions. So I assume there were some radio communication
24 issues, but that was eventually rectified by requesting Marks
25 radios from the state, and they brought in their portable tower

1 and a cache of Marks radios that were able to be distributed to
2 all of the responding agencies. Many of the locals that routinely
3 work together have common radio frequencies. But when we were
4 getting, obviously, responders from Pennsylvania and outside of
5 our county that creates a bigger problem.

6 Q. All right. Thank you. The transition from incident command
7 to unified command. Was there any kind of definitive time point
8 that that occurred that you'd be able to offer?

9 A. There was -- and, again, I guess, I guess I don't know how to
10 -- 100 percent answer your question, whether you want me to tell
11 you what I assume was going on or what I actually saw happening.
12 After I left the initial incident command site at Leake Oil, I was
13 made aware that they were as, again, more responders and more
14 chiefs from other departments arrived, they were working on
15 establishing all of the ICS positions that needed to be filled.
16 And it was apparent when we moved from Leake Oil to the Main
17 Street Fire Department bays that they were 100 percent getting
18 that in order. They were moving tables, doing report-outs between
19 the different assignments. So that was certainly underway by
20 around midnight-ish, I guess, whenever we moved over to the Main
21 Street Station.

22 Q. Okay. That may be -- so that might be a good point to kind
23 of delineate between the incident command on scene and the
24 transition to unified command.

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Would you say that's a fair --

2 A. Yes. I would say so. Because we had other outside agencies
3 there by that time. The EPA was there. Outside of fire response
4 those other agencies were arriving also.

5 Q. Okay, good. Not that we're looking for definitive time
6 points, but around midnight your thinking is that your -- the
7 situation was being transitioned over to a unified command.
8 Perfect.

9 A. Yes. Yes.

10 MR. DOWNS: Okay. We've covered the evacuation, radio
11 systems. Okay.

12 Does anybody else -- we're going to go around the table
13 again. Anybody else -- has that prompted any further follow-up
14 questions?

15 Ms. Lake.

16 MS. LAKE: Nothing from me.

17 MR. DOWNS: Or Troy.

18 MS. LAKE: Go ahead Troy.

19 MR. LLOYD: Yeah, just one question, and Mr. Downs, you hit
20 on it.

21 BY MR. LLOYD:

22 Q. Peggy, your EOC center dispatch all that stuff would it be
23 possible for recorded dispatch stuff that would be -- if we would
24 put out a request for the first half-hour, 45 minutes of the
25 communication between the dispatcher and the, the original

1 incident commander just to hear the overall what was taking place?

2 Is that, is that -- can that be --

3 A. Sure.

4 Q. -- can that be done?

5 A. So you can, you can do a request from each of the PSAPS.

6 Like I said, East Palestine would have been the primary where
7 calls would have been initially routed to. And once they were not
8 picking up after a certain number of rings it rolls over to the
9 country sheriffs. So I would recommend if you're looking for that
10 first short time frame those would be the two jurisdictions to
11 request those recordings from.

12 Q. Okay. So --

13 A. So that would be East Palestine Police Department and the
14 county sheriff.

15 Q. Okay. So the emergency communications between dispatch
16 center and the fire department stuff that's all recorded, and it
17 could be obtained?

18 A. The phone calls are all recorded. You would have to check
19 with those specific departments to see if -- how much -- what the,
20 what the radio traffic is that's recorded.

21 Q. Okay. All right. Thank you.

22 A. I kind of only -- 911, you know, I -- after it gets down to
23 the radio I'm not 100 percent sure. So I don't want to speak out
24 of turn, but each of those either police chiefs or the county
25 sheriff runs those centers. So they'd be able to answer those

1 questions better than me.

2 MR. LLOYD: Okay. That might be something might want to
3 reach out for, Mr. Downs, if we wanted to get the radio
4 transcripts of the, the emergency responders talking back and
5 forth to the dispatch stuff.

6 MR. DOWNS: Yes, absolutely. Thanks. Thanks --

7 MR. LLOYD: Thank you.

8 MR. DOWNS: -- Troy.

9 Next we have Chief Carey. Paul, any follow-up questions?

10 CHIEF CAREY: That's a negative.

11 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Mr. Dougherty.

12 MR. DOUGHERTY: No, sir.

13 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Did I hit everybody? Last call.

14 Okay, very good. Let's go down to the next group of
15 questions here.

16 BY MR. DOWNS:

17 Q. Okay, Ms. Clark, I always like to wrap up the interviews with
18 a couple of final follow-up questions. So my final questions to
19 you in this are as follows. First, being relative to your role in
20 the accident event in retrospect knowing what you know now, and
21 that's kind of important, might you be able to offer any thoughts
22 or observations on lessons learned or is there anything that you
23 might have done differently so to help circumvent challenges,
24 pitfalls and the like?

25 A. What would I have done differently? So I don't know if

1 there's anything that I personally could have done differently.
2 I, again, I'm not sure how to say this. I wish there would have
3 been a few other things that others would have done differently
4 that might have had -- and I can't even say that we had a bad
5 outcome. Obviously --

6 Q. No on scene, no on scene injuries which --

7 A. No.

8 Q. -- is always a plus.

9 A. Nobody was -- had significant injuries. Nobody died. We got
10 people evacuated. I thought in a reasonable amount of time
11 establishing shelters. I mean, I know there's things that are
12 going to come out of this that we can obviously all be better, and
13 I look forward to hearing those things. I know that we have
14 deficiencies as far as our radio communications go. I don't have
15 the mechanism to fix that. I think that's a funding -- continues
16 to be a funding issue for our volunteer fire departments to make
17 that happen.

18 Q. Right. Radios do cost money, yes.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. You mentioned -- so is it your thinking maybe the logistics
21 of the arriving and responding mutual aid might have, have been
22 advantageous if there was a little more logistics coordination?
23 Would that be a reasonable observation?

24 A. Yes, sir. And, obviously, having a 911 center that's trying
25 to receive all these phone calls and traffic that is, you know,

1 one person, staffed by one person they were quickly overwhelmed
2 with the, with the response to this. So --

3 Q. Okay. Yeah, that's certainly, certainly understandable to
4 recognize that backup should be available if necessary as a
5 reasonable. I think that's mentioned in your county preparedness
6 plan there as well isn't it?

7 A. I'd have to look at it to verify --
8 (Crosstalk)

9 Q. Not --

10 A. -- what section you're referencing.

11 Q. Yeah. Not important right now. Okay. After action report.
12 Has your agency done or participated in any after action
13 activities?

14 A. We, I have been speaking directly with Chief Drabick, and we
15 are going to work on doing a joint after actions report between
16 the village of East Palestine and the county. We have discussed
17 this with the state also. The state is apparently going to do
18 their own after actions report separately. My thoughts are that
19 this is going to be an enormous undertaking, and that we will
20 likely hire a contractor to assist us with that effort.

21 Q. That's probably, probably a good idea, yeah. You're right.
22 These after actions, I've attended dozens of them myself, and they
23 can get quite unwieldy as it were. Okay.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On top of that, Peggy was a, was an
25 immediate hot wash done, I guess, after the first couple of days

1 after the incident after all the feds rolled out of there and all
2 that stuff? Do you know if a, if a hot wash was done between
3 departments just to get the dos and don'ts, the lessons learned,
4 the real quick stuff that you could fix immediately?

5 MS. CLARK: I'm not aware if one was done, but, again, that
6 might have been a direct communication with Chief Drabick and not
7 -- and I may not have been included since it was a more tactical
8 discussion versus a resource discussion.

9 MR. DOWNS: Good point, good point. Yeah. Totally skipped
10 my mind. Been 30, 35 years or so since I was a firefighter, and
11 totally skipped my mind as well.

12 Did after action.

13 BY MR. DOWNS:

14 Q. And roughly your joint report, are you going to have a
15 meeting, I guess, to get together and put your notes together on
16 the report?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Is that going to be a near term, far term? What's your
19 thinking?

20 A. I would like to do it relatively soon. But we are still
21 actively involved on a daily basis to the response and
22 remediation. I know the state's not planning on doing theirs for
23 a while. I would like to get ours done within the next month or
24 so.

25 Q. It's not scheduled just yet?

1 A. It is not scheduled, no. We are in discussions on how to go
2 about that, and probably starting to look for contractors that
3 have the experience to help us with that effort.

4 Q. That would take a little bit to get organized in itself.
5 Yes, I can see that. Okay. Because we'll probably ask for a copy
6 of that report ultimately when it becomes available as well.
7 Okay. So we've hit the, we've hit the in retrospect lessons
8 learned point. Lastly, I'd like to go into --

9 MR. DOWNS: Oh, did you have a question there, Ms. Lake?

10 MS. LAKE: I did, sorry.

11 MR. DOWNS: Jump right in there.

12 MS. LAKE: I had taken a note on this.

13 BY MS. LAKE:

14 Q. So do you -- the -- in your EOP it said that the hazmat plan
15 sits with the LEPC. Do you have a copy of your hazardous
16 materials plan?

17 A. I do.

18 Q. And, if so, would you be able to share that with us?

19 A. (No audible response.)

20 Q. Okay, great. Thanks.

21 MS. LAKE: That's all.

22 MS. CLARK: And actually the, the hazmat chief is the author
23 of that. Him and I worked together jointly on that, and that's
24 how that's incorporated into the plan.

25 BY MS. LAKE:

1 Q. Okay. So Chief Jones?

2 A. Yes. I absolutely have a copy, and I can send it to you.

3 MS. LAKE: Thank you.

4 MR. DOWNS: Thank you. Thank you there.

5 BY MR. DOWNS:

6 Q. Okay, Ms. Clark, my final question, and I always like to wrap
7 up with this final point, we've asked a number of questions today.
8 So to close, is there anything we haven't asked you or might there
9 be information or knowledge that you have relative to the accident
10 which you believe might be important to the investigation which
11 you would care to share with us regarding the investigation?

12 A. I can't really think of anything that you guys haven't
13 already asked me about that I could add to the, to the
14 conversation.

15 MR. DOWNS: Okay, perfect. That's fine. We always like to
16 touch on -- give you the final opportunity. Well, you forgot to
17 cover this or that. And that's, that's important. We want to get
18 everybody there. Okay. Well, if there is anything that happens
19 to come up you can think of, by all means you've got a contact
20 information with Ms. Lake. She's originally contacted you.
21 Please reconnect with her if you happen to think of something that
22 we didn't touch on or you want to add anything for the record.

23 So that completes the interview.

24 Again thank you, Ms. Clark, for your time, and for your
25 responses to our questions today.

1 This will conclude our interview. The time now is 10:08 a.m.
2 And you can cease the recording.

3 (Whereupon, at 10:08 a.m., on May 5, 2023, the interview was
4 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 Peggy Clark

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD23MR005

PLACE: Via Microsoft Teams

DATE: May 5, 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.



Katherine Motley
Transcriber



National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Railroad, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Investigations
Washington, D.C. 20594

Date: May 19, 2023

Interviewee: Peggy Clark / Columbiana County, OH, Emergency Management Agency

Reference: **Errata Sheet Transmittal / Transcribed Interview**, regarding the February 3, 2023, Norfolk Southern Railway train derailment and fire, in East Palestine, OH -- NTSB Investigation number RRD23MR005

As indicated during the subject interview, attached for your attention and response, please find a copy of the transcript of your interview that was conducted on May 5, 2023, which was compiled as a preparation activity [element], of an NTSB Public Hearing, that is being scheduled to address the above referenced accident. Kindly please review the enclosed transcript for accuracy, and please utilize this sheet to convey (to the investigation) any necessary editorial changes.

Your response in this may be either ...

- [1] submission of an 'itemized tabulation' of your suggested transcript changes (i.e., in a tabulation format, cite the relevant page and line number, along with any suggested change(s)), -- or --
- [2] you may 'redline' (i.e., manually, or digitally markup, with an inserted corresponding notation) any suggested changes to a copy of the transcript, to which kindly please initial any changes cited, in which only the individual pages containing the cited changes need to returned in your response.

When replying, please use this transmittal sheet for your response, even if there are no changes identified in your review, to which, please be sure to apply a checkmark to one of the three statements below, and please affix your signature and date. It's requested that you kindly please submit your response to me, via reply email, by not later than the CoB of May 24, 2023.

I have reviewed the enclosed transcript(s) from the above referenced accident, and ...

- I have no comment(s) to offer,
- my comments are submitted herewith (as an itemized tabulation), --- OR ---
- my comments are indicated on the attached / marked-up ("redlined") transcript copy.

Respondent's signature [Redacted Signature] Date 5/22/23

Please note that investigation transcripts must be maintained as confidential at this time, in which the transcript [provided at this time, for your accuracy review] is for your use only, and not for release outside of the investigation. Upon NTSB receipt of your errata sheet response to this, a copy of the transcript and corresponding errata sheet may be placed in the public docket. If you have any questions, I welcome you to contact me by phone, or by reply email.

Thank you for your support to the investigation, and for your assistance and cooperation in this response.

-- Richard Downs, Jr. / Technical Panel 1 – Emergency Response Efforts



Richard M. Downs, Jr., P.E.
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1 Thank you very much, Peggy. I appreciate it. Thank you.

2 MS. CLARK: Sure.

3 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Who do we want to go next? That comes
4 down to Mr. Dougherty or Chief Carey.

5 MR. DOUGHERTY: I don't have any questions.

6 MR. DOWNS: Chief Carey you have the floor.

7 CHIEF CAREY: No questions, Mark?

8 MR. DOUGHERTY: No, not yet.

9 BY CHIEF CAREY:

10 Q. Good morning, Peggy. Thanks for joining us today. So can I
11 talk to you a little bit about the training? You mentioned that
12 one of the things you do in the county is provide training. Who
13 provides that training actually, like, boots on the ground? Who
14 are the people that do that?

15 MR. DOWNS: Are you asking if there's a contractor or is that
16 personnel of the county? Is that what you're asking, Paul?

17 CHIEF CAREY: Yes.

18 MS. CLARK: Yeah, typically it's a contractor that we hire.

19 BY MR. CAREY:


20 Q. Okay. Who would be that contractor? Do you know?


21 A. It varies. I had the -- for the ~~ICS 300 and 400~~ that we did
22 the end of 2022 I had the city of Pittsburgh fire chief who has
23 his own consulting business come in and provide that training.

24 Q. Okay. And who provides the hazmat training? You mentioned
25 the -- you periodically offer awareness and operational level

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 Number: 1 Author: pclark Subject: Cross-Out Date: 5/22/2023 11:39:11 AM
I misspoke and this was the Hazmat Awareness and Operations training that was conducted by the PGH Fire Chief

 Number: 2 Author: dowlr Subject: Sticky Note Date: 5/22/2023 1:22:50 PM
P Clark [inserted comment]:
I misspoke and this was the Hazmat Awareness and Operations training that was conducted by the PGH Fire Chief

1 hazmat training. Who does that training?

2 A. It's typically a contractor that specializes in that. We
3 don't have any -- I believe Chief Jones in his department has
4 trainers, but I think they also use an outside contractor. But
5 whenever either EMA or LEPC is coordinating that we use an outside
6 contractor.

7 Q. Okay. Have you ever utilized the IFF hazmat training
8 programs?

9 A. I don't, I don't know. Is that a certification or it is --
10 you would go to the IFF and ask them?

11 Q. It would be requested by EMA, and this is typically done on a
12 regular basis around the country. It's grant driven, and it's --
13 it gives the participant a Pro Board recognized certification at
14 the operational level.

15 A. So here's what I understand about that. There is -- because
16 our forces, and this might be a misconception on my part, Chief,
17 so correct me if I'm wrong. We, the Ohio certifications are
18 through the Ohio fire marshal's office, and they have specific
19 ~~roles~~ about the levels of certification. It's difficult for us
20 because most of our responders are volunteers. They have specific
21 requirements about if you're going to reach that, and, again, I
22 think you said Pro Board certification level, or the certification
23 level that Ohio uses, they actually have to travel to the fire
24 marshal's office proper to take their final exam. It is not
25 something that they are permitted to do locally. So although we

1 A. So I, after I made contact with the mayor, and it was
2 determined that we were going to have to do an evacuation, I
3 started going through all the other things that I need to do,
4 contacting the Red Cross, establishing a shelter, getting a
5 building open, and I immediately told the mayor I'm, like, if this
6 is going to be an evacuation people have to have somewhere to go,
7 and you need to get on TV. So not only are we sending this
8 message out using the IPAWS system, but you're on TV giving more
9 details because you are character limited in those messages of
10 what you can actually say. So we needed him on TV giving a better
11 explanation to his ~~residence~~ about what was going on. So I took
12 him, and we left the initial command site, and went down to the
13 village hall, grabbed a couple of reporters that had already made
14 it on scene, and said come with us. We're going to do a press
15 briefing to try to get that information out.

16 Q. Perfect. Okay. It sounds like you had your act together
17 pretty good. The evacuation sites we've identified as being the,
18 the high school; is that correct?

19 A. Yes, sir, yes.

20 Q. Okay. And that's just outside of the one mile limit --

21 A. It is. It is --

22 Q. -- from --

23 (Crosstalk)

24 A. -- outside of the one mile, yes.

25 Q. Okay. Great. And you were at the empty bays there for a

1 A. They had identified the individuals, and it was in the
2 process. I think that's something that takes a little bit of time
3 to get going.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And the more responders that are showing up it takes some
6 time to communicate that, okay, this is where command is, this is
7 what we want you to do. But when I arrived there were multiple
8 fire departments already on scene, and they were starting to
9 establish water tanker operations -- shuttles and all of that. So
10 it was in the process of being established although they had
11 definitely designated who the incident commander was, and were in
12 the process of identifying other responsibilities.

13 Q. Okay. And during your tenure let's say through the eight
14 hours or so that you were working the case, working the scene,
15 would you say the incident command was running smoothly? Was
16 there communication problems? Set the scene for us a little bit
17 if you would please on how functional it was operating.

18 A. I mean as far as I know everything was going as I would have
19 expected responding to this level of an incident. I think
20 initially it was chaotic, but I don't know how else it would not
21 have been chaotic. We do have, I guess I should say we do not, we
22 do not have a radio system in the county that is used by all
23 jurisdictions. So I assume there were some radio communication
24 issues, but that was eventually rectified by requesting Marks
25 radios from the state, and they brought in their portable tower

1 and a cache of ~~marks~~ radios that were able to be distributed to
2 all of the responding agencies. Many of the locals that routinely
3 work together have common radio frequencies. But when we were
4 getting, obviously, responders from Pennsylvania and outside of
5 our county that creates a bigger problem.

6 Q. All right. Thank you. The transition from incident command
7 to unified command. Was there any kind of definitive time point
8 that that occurred that you'd be able to offer?

9 A. There was -- and, again, I guess, I guess I don't know how to
10 -- 100 percent answer your question, whether you want me to tell
11 you what I assume was going on or what I actually saw happening.
12 After I left the initial incident command site at Leake Oil, I was
13 made aware that they were as, again, more responders and more
14 chiefs from other departments arrived, they were working on
15 establishing all of the ICS positions that needed to be filled.
16 And it was apparent when we moved from Leake Oil to the Main
17 Street Fire Department bays that they were 100 percent getting
18 that in order. They were moving tables, doing report-outs between
19 the different assignments. So that was certainly underway by
20 around midnight-ish, I guess, whenever we moved over to the Main
21 Street Station.

22 Q. Okay. That may be -- so that might be a good point to kind
23 of delineate between the incident command on scene and the
24 transition to unified command.

25 A. Yes.

