



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	
14	

Agency / Organization

Beaver County Emergency Management Services

Title

Interview Transcript – Director of Emergency Services, Chief of Hazard Materials, Beaver County Emergency Management Services

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: ERIC BREWER, Director of Emergency Services
Chief of Hazard Materials
Beaver County Emergency Management Services

Via Microsoft Teams

Thursday,
May 4, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RICHARD DOWNS, Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

CYNDI LAKE, Safety Division
National Transportation Safety Board

MARC DOUGHERTY, Hazmat Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

TROY LLOYD, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

CHIEF PAUL CAREY, Party Representative
International Association of Fire Fighters

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I N T E R V I E W

(1:10 p.m.)

1 MS. LAKE: Started.

2 MR. DOWNS: Good afternoon. Today's date is May 4, 2023, and
3 the time is 1:10 p.m. Eastern. This interview which is being
4 implemented virtually utilizing Microsoft Teams is being conducted
5 by the Investigative Staff of the National Transportation Safety
6 Board in connection with the Norfolk Southern Railway train
7 derailment that occurred in East Palestine, Ohio on February 3rd,
8 2023.

9 The NTSB Accident Number Reference is RRD23MR005. This is an
10 interview of Mr. Eric Brewer is affiliated with the Beaver County
11 Emergency Management Agency.

12 Mr. Brewer, 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 MR. BREWER: Last name is Brewer, B-R-E-W-E-R. My main title
16 is Director of Emergency Services for Beaver County. I am also
17 the Chief of Hazardous Materials for Beaver County.

18 MR. DOWNS: Sorry. Say that again, please.

19 MR. BREWER: And of course -- I'm sorry. I was getting
20 another team's call.

21 MR. DOWNS: If you could please repeat that last affiliation
22 you had.

23 MR. BREWER: Yes, my main title is Director of Emergency

1 Services for Beaver County. I also serve as the Chief of
2 Hazardous Materials for Beaver County.

3 MR. DOWNS: Very good. Mr. Brewer, do you understand that
4 this interview is being recorded?

5 MR. BREWER: Yes.

6 MR. DOWNS: Great. Thank you. Now, before we start the --
7 this interview and questions, I like to advise the interview
8 participants that NTSB interview procedures under 49 C.F.R 831.7
9 afford persons being interviewed the opportunity to be accompanied
10 by one representative of their choosing in which that
11 participating representative can be anyone. Or the interviewee
12 can elect to have no representative to be present.

13 So, I will ask you, Mr. Brewer, have you elected to have a
14 representative accompany you in this interview?

15 MR. BREWER: No.

16 MR. DOWNS: Thank you, sir. Okay. Now, the purpose of this
17 investigation is to provide -- is to improve safety and not to
18 assign blame, fault, or liability. The sole mission of the NTSB
19 is to improve transportation safety and prevent accidents and as
20 such the NTSB cannot offer any guarantee of confidentiality,
21 immunity -- or immunity from any legal proceeding by any other
22 agency whether it's local, state, or federal.

23 Also, I just wanted to note to all of the participants here,
24 a transcript of this interview will be compiled and placed in the
25 public docket for this investigation which will be available

1 through the NTSB website, that being www.nts.gov.

2 Now, with the above admin items covered, let's go around the
3 virtual room here and introduce ourselves. I will ask that you
4 please spell your last name, what entity that you are represented
5 or affiliated with, and your employment title. I would like to
6 remind everybody to speak clearly for the recording and
7 transcription.

8 I'll start with myself. My name is Richard Downs, D-O-W-N-S.
9 I'm a Survival Factors Investigator with the NTSB out of
10 Washington, D.C. I am the Chair of this panel. And we will go
11 next to Ms. Lake.

12 MS. LAKE: I am Cyndi Lake. Last name is L-A-K-E and I work
13 in our Safety Division at the NTSB.

14 MR. LLOYD: Okay. Good afternoon. My name is Troy Lloyd. I
15 am a Railroad Accident Investigator with the National
16 Transportation Safety Board headquartered out of Washington, D.C.
17 The spelling of my last name is L-L-O-Y-D.

18 MR. DOUGHERTY: Good afternoon. My name is Marc Dougherty.
19 The spelling of my last name, D-O-U-G-H-E-R-T-Y, and I am a
20 Hazardous Materials Accident Investigator with the National
21 Transportation Safety Board.

22 MR. DOWNS: And Chief Carey, we've got you there. Okay.

23 CHIEF CAREY: Good morning, Mr. Brewer. My name is Paul
24 Carey. I'm a retired Boston Fire Department District Chief and
25 Hazmat Ops Chief. The spelling of my last name is C-A-R-E-Y. And

1 I am here as a party representative from the IAFF.

2 MR. DOWNS: Very good. That covers everybody. Now, Mr.
3 Brewer, we welcome your responses in your own words, of course,
4 and if any questions are unclear or if you don't understand the
5 question, please don't hesitate to ask the question -- or to
6 clarify or restate the question. And if you don't know the
7 answer, it's fully permitted to indicate that you don't know, and
8 we certainly don't want you to speculate. Okay, with that said, I
9 want to start with some of the background questions.

10 INTERVIEW OF ERIC BREWER

11 BY MR. DOWNS:

12 Q. Mr. Brewer, can you tell us about your background, please?
13 Briefly education and expertise.

14 A. Sure, I've been with the -- with Beaver County in the
15 Emergency Services for 28 years. The last seven as Director and
16 obtained a professional level of certification as Emergency
17 Manager. Recently, certified Hazardous Materials Incident
18 Commander through the Pro Board Accreditation process.

19 I was with the federal government's National Disaster Medical
20 System. I recently -- they say retired -- I recently left there
21 just because I didn't have any time -- for no other reason. I am
22 currently an instructor on -- at Pennsylvania -- Penn State
23 University in their Emergency Preparedness Program. I am a
24 certified Paramedic, Firefighter in the State of Pennsylvania.

25 Q. Very good. Thank you. And you have already covered the

1 positions that you have had as well as you said I think your
2 current position was what, seven years, was that?

3 A. I've been -- yeah, the last seven as Director.

4 Q. As Director, right. Okay. And as Director, what are your
5 duties generally?

6 A. I oversee the counties -- I'm the lead Emergency Management
7 Coordinator for Beaver County and the Chief of the Hazardous
8 Materials response team for Beaver County. We have two divisions
9 here of Emergency Management and 911.

10 So, again, I oversee the county's 911 program as well as the
11 whole Emergency Management Program which includes the Hazardous
12 Materials Program so that's the SARA facilities. We have a
13 nuclear power plant in Beaver County so the Radiological Emergency
14 Preparedness Program, I oversee that in Beaver County.

15 And then each municipality -- we have 54 municipalities, and
16 they have their own coordinator that, you know, and that I
17 oversee, and we give training to.

18 Q. Perfect. And who do you report to?

19 A. My bosses are my County Commissioners. We have three of
20 those -- three county --

21 Q. County Commissioners. Okay, great. And I should really
22 point out for the record, correct me if I'm wrong, Beaver County
23 is directly east on the Pennsylvania side of East Palestine and
24 Columbiana County.

25 A. Correct.

1 Q. And the rail line which runs through East Palestine runs
2 right into Beaver County and on down kind of to the southeast in a
3 general direction. Is that correct?

4 A. Yes, we have the Norfolk Southern line runs through Beaver
5 County as well as the CSX line. So, the Conway Yards resides in
6 Beaver County which is the -- used to be the largest railyard east
7 of the Mississippi. It's the largest push-button yard now in the
8 country.

9 Q. Push button meaning the switching of the rail cars, right?

10 A. For rail cars, yep, correct.

11 MR. DOWNS: Okay, great. It looks like I've got my
12 background questions covered and I think we decided earlier Mr.
13 Dougherty, are you going to start out with the questions?

14 MR. DOUGHERTY: Sure.

15 MR. DOWNS: Very good. All yours.

16 INTERVIEW OF ERIC BREWER

17 BY MR. DOUGHERTY:

18 Q. Hello, Mr. Brewer. I appreciate your time.

19 A. Thank you.

20 Q. Just to start off if we could put on the hat of the Hazmat
21 Chief and just talk about your initial call for the East Palestine
22 derailment and initial response efforts up to the vent and burn?
23 If you could just walk us through really just the full gamut from
24 the initial call until up to the vent and burn. I know it's a lot
25 and a lot of time has spanned but go ahead.

1 MR. DOWNS: And I'm going to preface that, Mr. Brewer, by
2 don't worry about precise time stamps. We always can look at the
3 CAD for that. I'm -- we're just trying to get the flavor of the
4 flow of activities here. And if you could remember rough time
5 approximations that would be great but don't fuss over timestamps.

6 MR. BREWER: Sure, sure. And I -- again, I preface by
7 everything -- everyone by saying that we were not the primary
8 responders, right? It happened in East Palestine, and I think the
9 main hazmat for Columbiana County is East Liverpool Fire
10 Department.

11 So, we were -- the relationship I have with Columbiana's
12 County Director is that she used to work for Beaver County. So,
13 she knows -- she -- her and her husband -- her husband still works
14 for Beaver County, and they used to be on our hazmat team so
15 they're familiar with our team and what we have.

16 Calls me, it was about 9:15 on that Friday night to ask if we
17 can bring -- yeah if our hazmat team can respond to assist them
18 with a train derailment. Then she calls me back probably, I don't
19 know, 10 to 15 minutes later, says they are getting reports of
20 multiple cars derailed and on fire, if we could bring our foam
21 unit.

22 We were already in route -- well, I'm sorry -- we were
23 already gathering. Again, we're not really a -- we wouldn't be
24 like a city first -- a city hazmat team. We have to gather. We
25 have -- our hazmat team is primarily volunteer. We have a couple

1 paid, not full-time fire -- not full-time hazmat people within the
2 county. So, it took us about 40 minutes or so to gather and we
3 ended up arriving there between 10:15 and 10:30.

4 Again, there was active fire, numerous cars derailed,
5 numerous on fire, and I was the leader of our team. I reported to
6 their command post at the Leake Oil property. It was a little
7 building. I'm not even sure it might have been the Leake Oil
8 Office that East Palestine I believe it was their Deputy Chief was
9 in charge of the incident and I met up with Columbiana County's
10 director of EMA as well as the East Liverpool's Hazmat Coordinator
11 at that time.

12 And in that office, again, it was a train wreck, again it was
13 a -- there was chaos. So, the command may not well have been
14 defined at that point, but it eventually got defined as far as the
15 incident command. Again, that was probably at 10:15 or 10:30.

16 I want to say around 11:00 or so the -- Norfolk Southern's
17 Hazmat Coordinator responded -- showed up to the site and I know
18 him -- Scott Deutsch is their Hazmat Coordinator because he used
19 to work in Allegany County, an adjoining county to Beaver County.
20 So, we are familiar. He has done training with us. So we weren't
21 -- it's not new. And then their -- one of their contractors --
22 SPSI showed up and I believe it -- Drew -- I can't remember Drew's
23 last name. He is owner of SPSI. Very knowledgeable in hazardous
24 materials and response. He showed up as well and I don't know a
25 time frame on that either.

1 In that period we did have a -- we did gain access to the
2 consist and that was fairly early. I'm not even sure who got it.
3 It was on a laptop in that little command post. So, we did have
4 access to that.

5 In the meantime, again, we had our foam unit there. I got a
6 couple calls about the Pittsburgh International Foam Unit that was
7 on standby. I made contact with our Shell contact -- we have a
8 new polymers -- Shell Polymers in Monaca, PA just put a plant in,
9 so I made contact with their person for Shell -- for foam also
10 because they have green foam. Our foam is PFAS-containing and I
11 really didn't want to use that unless I had to, but I made contact
12 with Shell, so they were -- had their foam on standby.

13 He made it clear -- he said, you know, it would be easier if
14 one of our cars were involved in it and I looked on the consist
15 and, you know, it said like Valvoline Shell. So, I said yes, one
16 of your cars is involved so he eventually came to the scene too.
17 So, Shell's emergency response team came to the scene eventually.

18 At some point, it was probably around 11:30, 12:00 after
19 everybody was doing some initial research -- let me go back a
20 little bit. My team consists of police, fire, EMS, we have an EPA
21 person on there, we have some industrial workers on there, whether
22 it be from BASF, Sherwin Williams, those types that are on our
23 team and we have somebody from HEPACO clean up on our team.

24 So, I assigned somebody to research with the East Liverpool
25 team, and then between everybody's research, it was decided to

1 move the incident command post to the East Palestine Fire
2 Department. And I want to say that was done around midnight,
3 11:30, midnight and it was also decided to shut down all
4 firefighter and suppression operations and move all firefighters
5 out of the immediate area and basically to let those cars burn.

6 Just at a quick look from what was involved, and again from
7 the researchers and from the initial Norfolk Southern Hazmat
8 Coordinator it looked or appeared to be just the petroleum cars
9 were involved in the fire at that point. So, again, that -- we
10 moved to the East Palestine Fire Department about midnight and
11 then got further into the research and further into the process if
12 you will.

13 I don't know how far -- much farther you want me to go.

14 Q. Okay. No, that's fine. I appreciate that.

15 A. Okay.

16 Q. Can we just talk about just the initial response and how the
17 initial response to the incident went as far as the coordination,
18 communications, and just responding to the hazmat once you were
19 able to gain access to the hazmat information?

20 A. So, again, we, you know, my team is -- as I just continue to
21 say we were the supporting team. We were not in suppression
22 operations.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. We were just giving information to the East Liverpool Chief
25 and to the Fire Department. Based upon our research -- again let

1 me go back. Before we did clear the scene and before we did move
2 firefighters out of the scene and before we did move the incident
3 command post, I had five -- five or seven of my guys just going
4 around with PIDs just to -- just for responder safety basically.
5 Just to see if anything was picking up and there was no
6 abnormalities on our PIDs -- using the MSA ALTAIR 5.

7 Q. How about once you did receive the hazmat information as a
8 group how you were able to identify the individual cars and what
9 hazmats were involved? I know it's a bit of a crazy scene at the
10 time and cars were piled up but were you able to identify which
11 cars were which according to the cond syst and commodities?

12 A. Somewhat. So, I'm recalling a lot. Again, the -- I want to
13 say and again I won't speculate. Cars 1 through 70-something I
14 believe were involved and they were actually able to move some of
15 those out of the area -- I'm sorry, that were not involved they
16 moved them out. A lot of those contained malt -- malt liquor.
17 So, that left them with, you know, the cars that were involved and
18 what they thought were involved.

19 Truthfully, it was -- there was so much fire at that time,
20 and it was just a dangerous scene that what they were saying was
21 just again speculation of what could be involved and that's where,
22 you know, the what could-be were -- where they thought were the
23 mainly the petroleum cars at that time.

24 Q. So, you had mentioned foam that was brought to the scene.
25 Was the foam actually used and if it was can you tell us how the

1 fire reacted to it?

2 A. So, we had three -- two totes on our -- we have a -- it's a
3 foam trailer that were not used. We had another two standing by
4 and then again Shell had some on standby and we decided just not
5 to use them. However, we found out I guess in initial operations
6 that one of the fire departments did have some foam. It wasn't on
7 a foam truck or anything. So, it was minor, but it didn't react.
8 I mean, their -- it didn't help the situation so.

9 And that was probably the -- again, after the research and
10 you know some of those who got on scene were more professional
11 with it like or more used to working with it. It was just
12 determined that it didn't matter if you used it or not, it wasn't
13 going to help. But everybody was under the understanding that if
14 we did need to use the foam it would have been, you know, the
15 green foam not -- we're not using the pee fast stuff that we had.
16 So, later that night we just took ours back and everything we had
17 on standby we just took it back.

18 Q. Okay. Thank you for that. So, let's talk about interactions
19 or communications from Norfolk Southern regarding HazCom -- the
20 consist and the information. Can you tell me -- I know that you
21 weren't the primary but were you involved in any of the
22 discussions or conversations at the incident -- at the initial
23 incident command as far as the identification of the materials and
24 how those discussions went, main communication from Norfolk
25 Southern to relay that information?

1 A. So, again, the -- initially, yeah, I don't know how we got
2 the consist but when I -- when -- at some point in that little
3 trailer or little office area it was on a laptop there. So, it
4 was there fairly quickly. We, you know, some of us did try to use
5 the AskRail app that's out there. It didn't work. It didn't work
6 until like 2:00 a.m. that evening so or I guess that morning.

7 And then the Norfolk Southern Hazmat Coordinator between him
8 and the SPSI -- their contractor did a lot of the or a lot of the
9 identification I guess you could say. So, I mean, they were
10 helpful. It, you know, I know I think I testified about
11 transparency or lack of transparency, but I think that was more on
12 the decision to do the vent and burn.

13 However, I, you know, on the response side of it, we all
14 worked together. You know, communication, again the cond syst was
15 there fairly early. I don't know how it got there on a laptop,
16 but it was there fairly early.

17 Q. Appreciate that. And then with that once the -- and I know
18 there were issues with communications because there were so many
19 agencies and states that had responded, can you kind of -- can you
20 tell us about how the dissemination of the hazmat information or
21 the hazmat commodities once they were identified was communicated
22 with the rest of the agencies or the firefighters that were on
23 scene? Because I know it's -- it was a pretty large span and
24 there were some train issues, some routing issues to get to
25 certain points of the derailment. So, do you know how that

1 information was disseminated to the other agencies?

2 A. Well, and just like you said there was -- there were three
3 states there, Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and then once a
4 decision was made I don't know how it got to the Ohio, but I made
5 sure my departments from my county and there were 18 fire
6 departments from Beaver County that responded. Some for
7 suppression but mainly for water supply. But I made it a point to
8 get the information out to my departments just because I knew of
9 the radio situation -- communication situation that it wouldn't --
10 that there would be an issue with that.

11 So, I don't know how it got out to any other ones. I imagine
12 East Palestine -- we went through East Palestine's Chief or Deputy
13 Chief, I can't -- I don't know his title at that point. I know it
14 wasn't the Chief because I know the Chief personally and he was --
15 he didn't get there until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning because he
16 was out of town. But yeah, we went through the Fire Chief but
17 again after that was done I made sure to get it out to my county's
18 responders.

19 Q. And then so have you or your agency -- have you ever
20 responded to a train derailment in the past or anything like it?

21 A. Yes, so I just did a presentation yesterday on it. In 2006
22 we had an 84-car ethanol train go through New Brighton -- October,
23 I can't remember 2006 it derailed in New Brighton, Pennsylvania
24 which is in Beaver County. Twenty-four of those cars derailed, 16
25 I believe were on fire. It took a couple days to put that out.

1 Actually, we let them burn and I want to say we called maybe like
2 a boots and coots or something out of Houston to do that. But
3 yes, the answer is yes I have -- I was involved with it but if you
4 want to say it was just ethanol, that's what it was. It wasn't
5 other hazmats on that train. So --

6 Q. A little difference.

7 A. -- and then we have the -- we had a 14-car derailment here
8 probably last year in Big Beaver Borough, PA which is in our
9 county. It was just general commodity stuff but I'm not an expert
10 in any derailments or anything like that but yeah, I will say the
11 difference is between this one and the 2006 one is this one had
12 more stuff on it.

13 Q. Yep. More mixed commodities.

14 A. Yes.

15 MR. DOUGHERTY: All right. Well, thanks, Mr. Brewer I
16 appreciate the information. I would like to open it up for some
17 other questions.

18 MR. DOWNS: Okay. I'll start by a quick question.

19 INTERVIEW OF ERIC BREWER

20 BY MR. DOWNS:

21 Q. Would you say that the incident command was kind of
22 functional when you arrived, or did it have to settle down a
23 little bit over the course of time before it was actually
24 relocated to the police station -- the open base as they are
25 calling it?

1 A. At the fire department.

2 Q. At the scene.

3 A. Yeah, so yeah, I mean, it was, again, it was a chaotic scene
4 in the beginning and then as another agency came, you know, it
5 just added to the unified command or to the command structure.
6 So, yeah, it's not -- I'm not in and again I talked to this before
7 to others. I am not downplaying it but it's what you could expect
8 with a train -- major train derailment or a major incident in
9 general. So, I don't think it's nothing of the -- it's not
10 abnormal for this situation.

11 Q. The fact that you had the scene spread out close to what
12 2,000 feet or something along the railroad, you had three distinct
13 fire zones --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- that was being dealt with not knowing initially what the
16 product was that you're dealing with -- all of those things, would
17 you say they were contributory to the lack of full organization up
18 front?

19 A. Yeah, again it could be and I'm not -- my focus was on more
20 of the hazmat identification and not putting out the fire. We
21 wanted to know how bad this stuff was and air monitoring, you
22 know, those were the two objectives that my team wanted to do.

23 Q. Right, and as I recall all of the results -- testing results
24 by the various agencies air particularly there were no negative
25 below the threshold numbers. Is that a fair appraisal?

1 A. Correct.

2 MR. DOWNS: Perfect. Okay. Very good. I will then pass it
3 on to whoever wants to go on next. Who did we decide earlier?

4 MR. LLOYD: I'll go Dick, or I'll go Rick if you don't mind.

5 MR. DOWNS: Absolutely.

6 MR. LLOYD: Good to go.

7 MR. DOWNS: Carry on.

8 INTERVIEW OF ERIC BREWER

9 BY MR. LLOYD:

10 Q. So, Chief Brewer, how are you doing this afternoon? Again,
11 my name is Troy. I work for the NTSB. I'm a Railroad Accident
12 Investigator and I was actually one of the first NTSBers on site
13 up there. But just a couple of questions and Marc answered or
14 asked the majority of the stuff that was on my brain -- but just
15 picking yours.

16 So, talk to me about training that you've had with like tank
17 car response. I mean, I know we've all taken the highway stuff,
18 the little 6,000, 8,000-gallon stuff, but when you're talking
19 about a, you know, 150,000 gallons of catastrophic cylinders on
20 fire it's definitely different. So, talk to me about that, you
21 know, what training you have had dealing with train consist and
22 all that stuff. And I know you mentioned the New Brighton, that
23 was a derailling on the rail bridge. That's a very familiar
24 accident so.

25 A. Yeah, so since my -- I've been -- I got on the team about

1 1999 or 2000. And we frequently send people to Pueblo for
2 training. Norfolk Southern does their -- every other year or so
3 brings in a tank car. I think -- I can't remember what they call
4 that -- their program. It's basically for familiarity.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. We partnered with BASF in the past and they are in -- we go -
7 - we sent people down to Holton, Louisiana. There is a neat
8 training ground down in Holden that it's live training and they
9 have tanker cars down there that you're actually working with.
10 And we -- so many other industrial facilities in Beaver County,
11 again I'll refer to BASF because we have a good relationship with
12 them that we'll go down and just familiarize our team with their
13 tank cars and such.

14 Q. Okay. It's --

15 A. As far as the, you know, and again I'll go back to well you
16 talked about consist. We have hazmat training every month with
17 our team and, you know, we're looking -- we're always looking at
18 something -- or old cond syst of something just to get familiar
19 with them. And then I mentioned in this case a tool that we use
20 AskRail did not work that night for whatever reason, I don't know.

21 Q. Right, understood. So, I'm familiar with mutual aid
22 emergency response agencies and stuff so any jurisdictional cross-
23 training with you guys and I guess the Liverpool Hazmat Response
24 team where when you guys get together does the equipment interact?
25 Does it match? You know, same level of detection stuff, you know,

1 things of that nature.

2 A. No, not with East Liverpool. Again, that's -- and I guess in
3 hindsight that's my problem, but we do with our, you know, city of
4 Pittsburgh or in Allegheny, which is a big, you know, a county
5 right next to us which is -- city of Pittsburg lies in. But, no,
6 we don't go out of -- we never went out of -- I shouldn't say we
7 never did but we haven't for a while went out of state for
8 training or anything like that.

9 Q. So, you have mentioned some initial actions, I guess some on-
10 scene actions to put the fire out. You mentioned foam -- the use
11 of water. Give me your feelings on, would anybody, would any of
12 the firefighting forces even be close enough to even apply water.
13 I mean, I know it's hard enough getting -- having enough foam to
14 either go through an unmanned monitor or some type of ladder pipe
15 operation. But would you even be able to get close enough to even
16 perform those actions?

17 A. I don't believe so. Again, I wasn't in command at that time.
18 So, but I will say the other area that they used water on was just
19 protecting structures that were so --

20 Q. Incident exposures?

21 A. -- in that case -- yeah, in that case, the exposures they
22 protected. But again in my past seeing how rail cars are I'm not
23 sure what an aerial is going to do.

24 Q. All right.

25 A. So, that's just my opinion.

1 Q. Right. So, when you got there I guess one of their big three
2 which has to do with the life safety incident stabilization and
3 property conservation thing, the life safety was already being
4 implemented whether through, you know, backing up the
5 firefighters, let's figure out what we have here, an evacuation is
6 taking place at least streets blocking off, you witnessed at least
7 one of the big three taking place, right?

8 A. Oh, yeah. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. Very good. So, I know you, but you talked about
10 AskRail, give me your -- talk to me, give me your true feelings
11 about the AskRail app and how often do you use it?

12 A. I guess it's a good concept. We've used it in the past, but
13 I mean if it works it's good. I -- we train on it, you know, we
14 do the testing and training on it. Actually, we just had training
15 on it yesterday from the state and they seem to be pushing it a
16 lot but again it's a good tool. Yeah.

17 Q. User friendly for the emergency responder?

18 A. Yeah. So, yes, again, you get -- you have to train on it and
19 then know to know what it does -- its capabilities.

20 Q. So, how was it used on scene at the derailment? I know you
21 said it was down for a couple of hours but once it came back up,
22 what did you guys use -- utilize the AskRail app for?

23 A. We didn't. I mean, yeah, I know it -- we just, and then
24 again we just talked about it today. It came up at 2:00 but by
25 that time we had a consist. So, I don't really -- we didn't

1 really need it.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And then, like, emergency response wise I should say, and
4 I'll speak for my team again, we were -- we left probably about
5 3:00 a.m., 3:00 or 4:00 a.m. that morning because the decision was
6 made to pretty much let it burn so.

7 Q. Understood.

8 A. My team -- I went from a hazmat component and then, you know,
9 transformed to my emergency management hat probably about 4:00 or
10 5:00 a.m. that morning to worry about people that were in my
11 county.

12 Q. Got ya. Understood. So, you know, my familiarization with
13 the AskRail app is it's good with the train consist if it's, you
14 know, sitting on the rails, you are watching something going by,
15 but your feelings are you think it would work once you get that
16 30, 40 car train pile-up, car 33 becomes car 27, you know.

17 A. No, and no, and not unless you, you know, using the function
18 that has -- that lists the whole cars in there and you know you
19 are -- what you just said, you know, we didn't know car 74, where
20 car 74 was --

21 Q. Exactly.

22 A. -- or we could not identify it because --

23 Q. Right.

24 A. -- of the fire itself so.

25 Q. Yeah. So, with your knowledge, you have been in the business

1 for a while, you have mentioned the New Brighton derailment, what
2 would you -- if they would come up with some kind of software or
3 something like that, what -- would you feel that would work? It's
4 a hard one.

5 A. It's -- you know, I -- so, I'll go -- because of AskRail if
6 it worked that night basically my whole team -- so I had the
7 luxury of being next to the laptop that had the consist on it,
8 right? Meanwhile, the rest of my other 20 guys are waiting for
9 instructions or trying to do some research outside of that. Mind
10 you, it was like 6 degrees out too.

11 Q. Yes.

12 A. So, we're on phones trying to do this with freezing hands or
13 gloves but it's not working. But, you know, it could have been --
14 if it worked that night it could have been good just to see hey,
15 you know, the first how many cars that were standing on the tracks
16 are -- or weren't involved and maybe, you know, seeing that this
17 gap in the track or this gap in the train was involved.

18 Q. Yeah, good thought. So, what's your thoughts on, you know,
19 there are trains going through, authority having jurisdictions
20 everyday carrying mixed hazardous commodities, what could help out
21 that Director of Fire and Rescue or that Fire Chief in that county
22 that doesn't have someone at your level, you know, the so-called
23 little Mayberry RFD fire department or notifications, early
24 notifications? I mean, what do you -- how do you feel about that?

25 A. Well, you're the thousandth person that's asked me that.

1 Q. It is --

2 A. And I don't know. So, you know, again, what you said, so in
3 my county we have 47 fire departments, three of those are paid.
4 To tell maybe me because it's my jobs or you know, this is full-
5 time to say hey, a train is coming through with bad stuff and, you
6 know, don't tell me that it's got -- don't tell me it's gasoline
7 or whatever --

8 Q. Right.

9 A. -- tell me it's -- tell me the bad stuff.

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. But for a little fire department or a volunteer fire
12 department to get that information, I'm not sure how good it's
13 going to do because they're not going to be -- it's not like they
14 are going to gather and stand by for it, right? So --

15 Q. Yeah, and you have taken the words right out of my mouth.
16 I'm that same individual, you know, living in the small railroad
17 community and 40 or 50 trains and I just don't have the time to
18 take those calls or that notification. And then what do I do? Do
19 I call my guys and say, you know, stand ready, stand tall? It's,
20 you know, it's --

21 A. Yeah, again, I'll say my opinion, but we don't do that with
22 every truck that goes over the road.

23 Q. There you go.

24 A. Look in your rearview mirror, there is probably something
25 worse back there.

1 Q. Yeah, I just dealt with one in Fredrick with a Sheets truck
2 so. But that's all I have Chief, thank you very much.

3 A. Thanks. Thank you.

4 MR. DOWNS: Very well. I've got a quick follow-up there on
5 this.

6 INTERVIEW OF ERIC BREWER

7 BY MR. DOWNS:

8 Q. From a theoretical perspective of hazmat, is it better to let
9 an unknown commodity burn off if it's not imperiling any immediate
10 areas? In other words, rather than put water or foam on it.

11 A. I would be giving you my opinion.

12 Q. Okay. Well, no -- well, let's factually no answer, but
13 opinion is welcomed.

14 A. Yeah, and again just based on my history and -- yes, I think
15 it's -- it would -- if it's an unknown and in this situation
16 whenever -- what -- the amount of fire that we had we could not
17 have put this out.

18 Q. All right. So, it sounds like it just would have been better
19 to -- rather than surround and drown as in many cases with
20 ordinary combustibles --

21 A. Yep.

22 Q. -- because it's an unknown and rather than put firefighters
23 or the community in peril or the prospect of oblivy or whatever,
24 back off, protect your exposures. Would that be a reasonable
25 tactical response?

1 A. Correct, yep.

2 Q. Very good. Okay. And you say you departed the scene, or
3 your crew departed the scene roughly 3:00 a.m. to --

4 A. Yes, so --

5 Q. -- go back to --

6 A. I'm sorry. Yes, I let my hazmat guys go about 3:00 and then
7 myself and my deputy we were there probably until about -- I think
8 I got home at 6:00 a.m. or so.

9 Q. 6:00 -- you departed about 6:00. Okay. Because you wanted
10 to go to your side of the state line and keep an eye out as to
11 what's occurring there. Would that be a fair appraisal?

12 A. Yeah, again wearing a different -- now, I'm wearing my EMA
13 hat. Right, the hazmat situation that we're going to deal with is
14 over. East Liverpool or Columbiana is still dealing with it, but
15 I can -- I am no longer of assistance to them. So and I know that
16 we have things going on in our county just across the line. So,
17 yes.

18 MR. DOWNS: Okay, very good. Okay. That's good for my
19 questions at this point. Who do we have for next? We have Ms.
20 Lake or Chief Carey.

21 MS. LAKE: I don't have any at this time. Everything has
22 been answered.

23 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Very good. Thank you. And Chief Carey,
24 you have the floor.

25 INTERVIEW OF ERIC BREWER

1 BY CHIEF CAREY:

2 Q. How are you doing Eric?

3 A. Good.

4 Q. Yeah, I understand that was pretty chaotic out there. It was
5 kind of like trying to herd cats, right?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. I get it. Yeah, I get it. So, let me just ask you, your
8 hazmat team, what's their certification level and like how many
9 hours of training and who is the certifying agency on that?

10 A. So, under Pennsylvania -- so, to be a hazmat team in
11 Pennsylvania you have to be certified under PEMA, Pennsylvania
12 Emergency Management, and there are different levels. And where
13 most of our guys are at technician level and there are different
14 requirements.

15 So, I'm the -- I'm certified at the hazardous materials
16 incident commander under Pro Board, and we have to have at least
17 one of those. And we have to have a hazardous materials safety
18 person certified under Pro Board. We have those. And then we
19 have several -- without looking -- probably 90 percent of our
20 people are certified as hazardous materials technicians and the
21 other one would be operations.

22 Because we do have a nuclear power plant in our county we
23 have everybody -- our radiological officers also certified through
24 Department of Energy. So, we have numerous certifications on
25 there but, you know, I'll say probably the best people we have are

1 those who are in the industrial setting on there because they deal
2 with this stuff every day.

3 Q. And how many hours typically for a technician training?

4 A. Well, under Pennsylvania they only require 16. We do -- I'm
5 sorry, 16 continuing every year, right? So, our initial training
6 to be -- initial training for technicians are 80 hours.

7 Q. 80 hours, technician.

8 A. And 80 hours technician. So, the way it goes is you have to
9 be hazardous materials awareness first, operations, and then
10 technician. So, by the time they get it, it's about 120 hours
11 already. And then we have to do a minimum of 16 hours continuing
12 training every year and really we do that in the first month.

13 So, between the State Fire Academy and the EPA, I'll just use
14 -- just January for example, we -- the one weekend we did our 16-
15 hour update. However we meet monthly -- we train monthly, so I'll
16 say -- Chief, I don't even know, over 100 hours of training per
17 person. And that's more of my requirement not the State's so
18 we're over -- we go over the State certified or the State
19 requirements.

20 Q. Okay. Good, good. And most of the people on the hazmat team
21 are volunteers?

22 A. Yes, most are volunteers, however, they may get paid if they
23 go somewhere. So, like, we have people from BASF that are on it
24 but if there is a hazmat call, BASF may pay them.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. I have like five of my guys from here from the Emergency
2 Management on it so I'm able to pay them from the county if they
3 go out so.

4 Q. Good, good. And I hate to beat a dead horse, but the issue
5 of the foam, did that Shell unit show up at the scene? And were
6 they put on standby?

7 A. They were put on standby. So, they -- Shell Polymers is new
8 to us, actually, the plant just started operations in October of
9 last year. It is -- it's the largest -- it was the largest
10 construction project in the world at the time. So, this is new to
11 us as far as them being an asset to us.

12 So, their responder got -- or their Chief got to the scene
13 that night and he put their unit on standby. So, they have a very
14 large unit at the site and then he had a trailer -- a tractor-
15 trailer full of totes that could be brought to the scene. None of
16 them ever made it to the scene because it was determined that we
17 weren't going to use it anyway.

18 Q. Okay. Yeah, who made the decision not to use the foam? I'm
19 just curious because I know early on from all of the interviews we
20 have done it was determined that the vinyl chloride cars weren't
21 leaking but there were other flammable liquid cars that were
22 leaking, and all of those fires were essentially pool fires that
23 were impinging on the rail cars. And so essentially it was a
24 large flammable liquid fire. Who made the decision to not
25 initiate a foam operation? Do you know?

1 A. I would believe that was between the Norfolk Southern Hazmat
2 Coordinator, their contractor, and the Shell person. I believe
3 that's who it was again but.

4 Q. All right. Good. It sounds like you had your hands full out
5 there and thank you for your service. I don't have any other
6 questions.

7 A. Thank you.

8 MR. DOWNS: Very good. Thank you, Chief. One final
9 opportunity for everybody around the room here to ask Mr. Brewer
10 any wrap-up questions. Okay and hearing none. I always like to
11 conclude my interviews with a couple of general type of questions.

12 INTERVIEW OF ERIC BREWER

13 BY MR. DOWNS:

14 Q. Relative to your role in the accident event in retrospect
15 knowing what you know now, might you be able to offer any thoughts
16 or observations on lessons learned? Meaning -- or is there
17 anything that you might have done differently so to help
18 circumvent challenges, pitfalls, and the like as they sprang up?
19 Again, knowing what you know now, lessons learned would you like
20 to share with the professional community if anybody has a similar
21 catastrophe unfolding?

22 A. There is like -- there is maybe an air monitoring, you know,
23 as a hazmat team -- I'm wearing my hazmat team now, air
24 monitoring, just putting up some different air monitors or
25 different types of monitors. And we went through this again with

1 our team too of what we could have done better. But, as far as
2 suppression, again, it wasn't my call, you know, we looked at
3 things as if this did happen in Beaver County or if this did
4 happen locally what would we have done different? You know, we
5 may have been more aggressive on suppression. That's in hindsight
6 and maybe my opinion.

7 Q. Yep. No, that's a perfectly acceptable response. Speaking
8 of after-action, did you folks do an after-action by chance?

9 A. We did not, no. Unofficial talk between, yes. I'm still --

10 Q. Kind of a hot wash type of thing?

11 A. Yep, correct.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Yeah. So, we just talked with the State and with PEMA, with
14 Pennsylvania Emergency Management, and the Pennsylvania DEP
15 yesterday that we are going to set something up here to do a more
16 official hot wash, a more official AAR.

17 Q. Are you going to put together a NEFROS report, you know,
18 that's where the money comes from sometimes?

19 A. I imagine at some point, yes. When -- we are in meetings
20 three times a day. Actually, there is a 3:00 meeting. We are
21 meeting -- three different meetings, three times a day so. This
22 is -- it's still an ongoing process too.

23 Q. Yeah, right. Okay. All right. Last question. We have
24 asked a number of questions today so to close, is there anything
25 we haven't asked you or might there be any information or

1 knowledge that you have relative to the accident which you believe
2 might be important to the investigation which you would like to
3 share or care to share with the investigation? In other words,
4 have we not covered something that you would like to add a thought
5 to?

6 A. Yeah, nothing that sticks out. I just like to remind
7 everybody that we were not the primary agency. We were not the
8 primary hazmat. You know, we kind of took orders from either East
9 Palestine Fire or East Liverpool Hazmat or Columbiana County. So,
10 I, you know, because I had some of my guys saying, hey, you know,
11 do this -- we need to do this and I just kind of set them back
12 saying this is not our call to do that to. So, we --

13 Q. Mutual aid support.

14 A. We were an assisting agency, correct.

15 MR. DOWNS: Very good. Okay. All right. Thanks. I think
16 we have covered everything, but if you do happen to think of
17 something or something comes up by all means kindly please contact
18 us through -- and who should we have on our team, would that be
19 Ms. Lake?

20 MS. LAKE: Yes, that can be me.

21 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Just give her a jingle, an email, or
22 whatever and you know something I just thought of something kind
23 of thing, sometimes these things dawn upon you later on that you
24 didn't -- weren't thinking about necessarily today, we would
25 welcome that of course. And thanks so much Mr. Brewer for your

1 time and your responses to our questions today. This will
2 conclude our interview. The time is 2:03 p.m. and we can conclude
3 the recording.

4 (Whereupon, at 2:03 p.m., the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: NORFOLK SOUTHERN TRAIN DERAILMENT
 IN EAST PALESTINE, OHIO
 ON FEBRUARY 3, 2023
 Interview of Eric Brewer

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD23MR005

PLACE: Via Microsoft Teams

DATE: May 4, 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.

Julie Brumbarger

Julie Brumbarger
Transcriber



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

Date: May 19, 2023
Interviewee: Eric Brewer / Beaver County, PA, Emergency Management Services
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 4, 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  Date May 26, 2023

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



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