



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	
17	

Agency / Organization

East Liverpool, OH, Fire Department

Title

Interview Transcript – Fire Chief

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of:

*
*
*
*
*
*

NORFOLK SOUTHERN TRAIN DERAILMENT
IN EAST PALESTINE, OHIO
ON FEBRUARY 3, 2023

Accident No.: RRD23MR005

* * * * *

Interview of: WILLIAM JONES, Fire Chief
East Liverpool, Ohio Fire Department

Via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday,
May 3, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RICHARD DOWNS, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

CYNDI LAKE, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MARC DOUGHERTY, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

TROY LLOYD, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL CAREY, Retired Boston Fire Chief
IAFF Representative

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of William Jones:	
By Mr. Downs	6
By Mr. Lloyd	9
By Mr. Carey	17
By Ms. Lake	23
By Mr. Dougherty	27

I N T E R V I E W

(9:08 a.m.)

1
2
3 MR. DOWNS: Good morning. Today's date is May 3rd, 2023, and
4 it's about 9:08 a.m. This interview which is being implemented
5 virtually utilizing Microsoft Teams is being conducted by the
6 investigative staff of the National Transportation Safety Board in
7 connection with a Norfolk Southern Railway train derailment that
8 occurred in East Palestine, Ohio on February 3, 2023. The NTSB
9 accident number reference is RRD23MR005.

10 This is an interview of Chief William Jones who is affiliated
11 with the East Liverpool, Ohio Fire Department. Chief Jones thank
12 you for joining us today, and if you could kindly please spell
13 your last name and state your current job title for the record.

14 MR. JONES: The last name is Jones, J-O-N-E-S. I'm the Fire
15 Chief for the City of East Liverpool Fire Department.

16 MR. DOWNS: Thank you Chief. Do you understand that this
17 interview is being recorded?

18 MR. JONES: Yes sir, I do.

19 MR. DOWNS: Thank you. Now before we start this interview
20 and questions, I'd like to advise the interview participants that
21 NTSB interview procedures under 49 C.F.R. 831.7 afford persons
22 being interviewed the opportunity to be accompanied by one
23 representative of their choosing in which that participating
24 representative can be anyone. Or the interviewee can elect to
25 have no representative present. So I'll ask, Chief Jones, have

1 you elected to have a representative accompany you in this
2 interview?

3 MR. JONES: No.

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

14 Now with the admin items covered, let us go around the
15 virtual room here and introduce ourselves. I ask that you please
16 spell your last name, what entity you are representing or
17 affiliated with, and your employment title. I would like to
18 remind everybody to speak clearly for the recording and
19 transcription.

20 Now as we've already identified the interviewee, I will start
21 off with myself, then we'll go around the virtual room. My name
22 is Richard Downs, D-O-W-N-S. I'm a Survival Factors Investigator
23 for the National Transportation Safety Board out of Washington,
24 D.C. And we have next?

25 MR. DOUGHERTY: Marc Dougherty, spelling of my last name is

1 D-O-U-G-H-E-R-T-Y, and I am a Hazardous Materials Investigator for
2 the National Transportation Safety Board.

3 MR. CAREY: Good morning. My name is Paul Carey. I'm a
4 retired Boston Fire Department District Chief and HAZMAT Office
5 Chief. I'm here representing the IAFF. And the spelling of my
6 last name is C-A-R-E-Y.

7 MR. LLOYD: Good morning. My name is Troy Lloyd. I'm with
8 the National Transportation Safety Board. I'm a railroad accident
9 investigator. I sort of do the track side of the house assisting
10 with the panel here. And my last name is spelled L-L-O-Y-D.

11 MS. LAKE: Hi, this is Cyndi Lake. Last name L-A-K-E. I
12 work in our Safety Division at the National Transportation Safety
13 Board.

14 MR. DOWNS: Okay, thank you panel. Chief Jones we welcome
15 your responses in your own words, and if any question is unclear
16 or you don't understand the question, please ask the questioner to
17 clarify or restate the question. And if you don't know the answer
18 to any question of course it's fully permitted to indicate that
19 you don't know. We don't want you to speculate of course.

20 INTERVIEW OF WILLIAM JONES

21 BY MR. DOWNS:

22 Q. Okay, Chief, can you tell us please briefly your background,
23 education, expertise?

24 A. I've been a firefighter since 1990. Prior to that I was a
25 paramedic for a private ambulance service. I progressed up

1 through the ranks becoming Chief in 2010, all through promotional
2 exams. I am working on an Associates Degree at this time in Fire
3 Science. I do have numerous certifications regarding HAZMAT. I
4 am certified to Firefighter Level 2 in the State of Ohio. I'm a
5 certified fire safety inspector in the State of Ohio. Like I
6 said, I've been Chief since 2010, so April was my 13th year as the
7 Fire Chief.

8 Q. Very good Chief, thank you. And all of this experience has
9 been with the East Liverpool Fire Department or were there prior
10 fire departments?

11 A. No, strictly my fire service has been with the East Liverpool
12 Fire Department.

13 Q. Okay, and again you started as a firefighter, worked your way
14 up through the ranks you were saying?

15 A. That is correct.

16 Q. Very good. And how long at your current position?

17 A. 13 years.

18 Q. Very good. And as Chief of the department, briefly what are
19 your duties?

20 A. Just general administration of the duties. We're a small 15-
21 member department, so of course I am actively involved in fire
22 scenes, HAZMAT scenes, budgeting; just normal administrative
23 duties of the Chief.

24 Q. That would be the usual typical fire chief duties?

25 A. That is correct.

1 Q. I was looking at your background a little bit before, and you
2 have a role as a HAZMAT officer in some capacity with the county,
3 is that correct?

4 A. Yes. Our fire department is the Type II HAZMAT team and we
5 do provide coverage to Columbiana County. And also East Liverpool
6 is located at the tri-state area of West Virginia, Pennsylvania,
7 and Ohio, and our duties do cover Hancock County, West Virginia
8 for HAZMAT response.

9 Q. Very good, thank you. And your fire department there is
10 voluntary or partially paid or what's the setup?

11 A. No, we are a small career department. We've been in
12 existence since 1896. Actually one of the charter members of the
13 IAFF and, like I said there are 15 members.

14 Q. Fifteen firefighters, does that include EMS as well or is
15 that a separate organization?

16 A. No, that includes us as the ALS/EMS provider for the --

17 Q. ALS and EMS.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Very good. And are your firefighters EMTs as well or
20 paramedics or?

21 A. Both. We have a mixture of both. It's minimum to be on our
22 department, you have to be an EMT.

23 Q. I see. Okay, very good. And who do you report to?

24 A. I report to a Safety Service Director. He is my boss and
25 he's one step below the Mayor.

1 Q. And is it the City of East Liverpool, Village of, or what's
2 the political jurisdiction?

3 A. It's the City of.

4 Q. City of. Okay, very good. All right, very good. And your
5 role in the response to the incident, I don't want to get ahead of
6 myself here, but East Liverpool was called out as mutual aid, is
7 that correct?

8 A. That is correct.

9 Q. And was that fire suppression response or HAZMAT response?

10 A. HAZMAT response.

11 Q. HAZMAT response, okay, very good.

12 MR. DOWNS: All right. We're going to go around the room and
13 start with the questioning. Mr. Lloyd, I think we'll start out
14 with you first if you would please go with your questions. I'm
15 guessing, I don't want to get ahead of ourselves, I'm guessing you
16 might want to ask the Chief about his response to the scene. Is
17 that correct?

18 MR. LLOYD: Yes, that's fine. If you want to start with me,
19 that's great.

20 BY MR. LLOYD:

21 Q. Good morning Chief. Again, my name is Troy Lloyd. I was
22 actually one of the guys that had the boots on the ground up at
23 East Palestine. I was one of the first NTSB reps that was there
24 when they had the original command post set up at the small
25 firehouse. It was maybe a mile or two from the scene. So

1 actually were you on site, did you actually respond to the East
2 Palestine incident?

3 A. Yes sir, I did. I was -- usually when we get a HAZMAT
4 response we send two HAZMAT techs, whatever, in a rapid response
5 vehicle just to find out exactly what we need, and I was in that
6 rapid response vehicle.

7 Q. Okay. So what would be the travel distance from the City of
8 East Liverpool or Liverpool to the East Palestine incident?

9 A. It's roughly 30 minutes. We're about 14 miles from there,
10 but it's all back two-lane roads.

11 Q. Yes. So pretty good ride to get there, eh?

12 A. Luckily I was in a pickup truck so it wasn't too bad for me,
13 but the other responders were in their HAZMAT response vehicle.

14 Q. So when you guys got there I guess it was -- were you guys on
15 the initial response or was it more of a later in the incident
16 that they figured they had some type of HAZMAT stuff going on so
17 they called you guys, mutual aid, or?

18 A. Yes. They called us mutual aid. I'm not exactly sure what
19 time they received the initial call, but our initial call was at
20 2124 was our first notification.

21 Q. So not too far from probably the first calls when the
22 incident first happened, I guess the first calls that would go in
23 East Palestine I guess.

24 A. Yes, I'm not exactly sure what time they started receiving
25 their calls. I've seen times in the media but I've not seen the

1 actual CAD times.

2 Q. Gotcha. So big fire, big incident, you know you put your
3 thumb up and get back as far as you can. But when you first got
4 there what was the overall impression of what was taking place?
5 Just describe the incident when you got there.

6 A. Well you could actually see it. Our community is a river
7 town so we're down low. So by the time you get out there you have
8 to go up a hill, and at the top of the hill probably seven miles,
9 probably about halfway, you could see the incident from that hill.
10 So right then there you knew, you know, we're going to be there a
11 while.

12 Q. So when you got there, what was your first initial actions as
13 I guess being the first HAZMAT Chief that would have been on
14 scene?

15 A. Just what's involved. That's my concern, what's involved,
16 where did the derailment start, and where did it end? We used the
17 AskRail app, and prior to reaching the site we were able to get,
18 pull the train up on because we crossed the -- the main road comes
19 up and ends there at the tracks, there at that gas station.
20 That's where we turned right. So you can actually see the trains
21 still on the track, and we're able to use our AskRail app to see
22 what was involved, excuse me, to see what was on the train. We
23 didn't really know what was involved until we got up to the
24 command center and was actually able to speak to either the
25 conductor or the engineer of that train. I'm not sure which he

1 was at this point.

2 Q. So the AskRail app, do you have, I guess all that stuff is
3 equipped on your MDTs and all that stuff, or was that more of a
4 phone kind of?

5 A. Yes. Well we used the phone, the tech that rode up with me,
6 I was driving so it was my vehicle. We do have computer access in
7 it, but it was quicker for him just to use the app on his phone.

8 Q. Gotcha, understood, understood. So you get there and you see
9 this big ball of fire in the sky, train derailment and stuff, so
10 you're looking on your AskRail app, you're trying to figure out
11 what's even burning in this train consist.

12 A. Exactly.

13 Q. What do you think that the timeline was when you received the
14 call -- I'll even make it easier -- the time you got on scene and
15 figured out, you know, what the situation was, that you figured
16 out actually what was burning?

17 MR. DOWNS: Again, we don't want to split hairs on the
18 timestamp so much as just to get your general impression if I may
19 there, Troy. We can always go back and look at the CAD if we need
20 to split the timeline in a more refined delineations. Thank you.

21 MR. JONES: Sorry, can you repeat your question please?

22 BY MR. LLOYD:

23 Q. Yes. So important to me, the time you get on scene you see
24 everything's going, a big fire ball in the sky, what do you think
25 just a guesstimate was the time to get there until you figured out

1 what the product was that was actually burning?

2 A. Roughly 30 minutes.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Yes, I mean that's -- it was roughly 30 minutes. Because
5 once we made it to the command center, our EMA Director had
6 already emailed me the train consist. So we had the consist
7 emailed roughly 40 minutes by the time we were on there, and
8 that's right about the time I was able to talk to the conductor to
9 see what cars were still left on the track. Because they had
10 already separated and pulled the train east away from the incident
11 site. So I was able to ascertain from him he thought it was car
12 26 and back, which would have been right about the start of the
13 vinyl chloride car. But later on we found that it was actually
14 car 23 was the first car to derail.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. So we were able to, from that point, you know, we were able
17 to get a, you know, thoughts as to what chemicals and products
18 could be involved at that point. Just the way the train was
19 laying because it was pretty much directly behind the first
20 incident command post, so we were able to get a guesstimate as to
21 what cars could have been involved at that point.

22 Q. Yes, I guess that was somewhere around Pleasant Drive or
23 there's that road crossing or something --

24 A. My recollection Pleasant Drive was further west, further back
25 towards town. This was more -- to me, the bulk of the incident

1 was behind the Leake Oil building there. Because we drove from
2 west to east to get to the site, and the further you go east the
3 worse it became. And it appeared the bulk of everything was
4 behind Leake Oil.

5 Q. So you get this acknowledgment from NS or from the train
6 consist that this is a vinyl chloride fire-type incident.
7 Something that you never really see every day on a vinyl chloride
8 train. It's just something that you really don't look for. So
9 what was your first impression when you sort of found out that it
10 was a vinyl chloride product that was burning?

11 A. At that point we relied on the ERG and we used Wisser, and
12 after looking at conscript and discussing it with my two techs
13 that were doing research, we assumed vinyl chloride was the worst
14 product involved. So we advised our EMA Director what the ERG
15 called for, what AskRail required, you know, for a fire of that
16 incident. And we weren't sure that those cars were actually on
17 fire or just being impinged by fire. But our suggestion to her
18 was it's calling for a one-mile evacuation isolation zone, so
19 that's what they went with. But that was their call, you know,
20 not mine.

21 Q. So pretty much the same comparison between the ERG and what
22 Wisser was recommending?

23 A. We didn't really use Wisser that night. We just used AskRail.
24 Those two just kind of gave us, you know, the quick information.

25 Q. So talk to me about the incident command. How's -- trying to

1 figure out, so Liverpool where you're at, the City of Liverpool
2 has their own ECC center and NEOC operations different from East
3 Palestine different from other surrounding jurisdictions, right?

4 A. That is correct, yes.

5 Q. So interoperability with -- when you get there, do you have
6 interoperability communications with the East Palestine command or
7 something like that?

8 A. We did not. My tech that went with me, he was an Assistant
9 Chief, he has HAZMAT branch, HAZMAT safety officer training. So I
10 left him in the command center because he was my only
11 communication while I was out doing my own research
12 reconnaissance, so I left him there to keep me informed, and I
13 could inform him as to what I see. That was our only
14 communication with the command center.

15 Q. Did you feel that made things difficult --

16 A. I think not. I do not because we had radio communications.
17 We have our own channel that's digital frequency and we had cell
18 phones. So him and I had no problems with communication that
19 night.

20 Q. Okay. And your guys records would be separate I guess if you
21 used Firehouse software or ESO, your guys stuff would be separate
22 from East Palestine. Everybody does it different response type of
23 firehouse software stuff?

24 A. Yes, I'm not sure what they use but you're correct, we do use
25 ESO Firehouse software for our reporting.

1 Q. Okay. So that wouldn't be, just to get the records or
2 something, you'd be able to supply those? I'm just trying to come
3 up with some type of timeline, whatever.

4 A. Absolutely. And I have my 214s and 211s too.

5 Q. Oh yes. So my last question, and I'll probably just go
6 around the room on some backup stuff, I'm just going to get into
7 the training or post-accident stuff later on, but the time you
8 figured out what was going on, did you guys really have to do any
9 actions there with everything that was taking place or was more of
10 mitigation, booming, waterways, things of that nature?

11 A. Yes, that's what we were looking for was the waterways, to
12 start with those, but we couldn't find good maps. And some of the
13 people we were talking to, they told us the water was going the
14 opposite way to a, it was heading east to a, I think they call it
15 the Stateline Lake. I can't --

16 Q. That's towards Pennsylvania.

17 A. Yes, but it's a lake and that's where we thought the water
18 was flowing from the information that we were given that night.

19 MR. LLOYD: That's all I have Chief. Thank you very much.
20 If you have any questions for me, you can shoot them at me, but
21 I'll wait for a second go-round, Mr. Downs.

22 MR. DOWNS: Thank you Troy. I have a quick question follow-
23 up and then we'll move around the room here.

24 BY MR. DOWNS:

25 Q. Back to our topic areas we're looking at, the evacuation, at

1 least the first evacuation that was initiated, was that a
2 mandatory or a voluntary evacuation, do you recall?

3 A. It was not my call, and I don't recall. No sir.

4 MR. DOWNS: Very good, okay. All right, very good. That's
5 my quick follow-up. Who wants to be next? How about you Chief
6 Carey, do you have a few questions?

7 MR. CAREY: Sure, thank you.

8 BY MR. CAREY:

9 Q. Good morning, Chief. How you doing?

10 A. Good morning sir, how are you?

11 Q. Good. So my understanding is that you went on mutual aid to
12 provide technical assistance pretty much, right?

13 A. Yes. We're the dedicated HAZMAT team for the county, that is
14 correct.

15 Q. All right. So you went with how many techs?

16 A. I went with -- we started with seven because Beaver County,
17 Pennsylvania had a team there also. So with me arriving pretty
18 much 20 minutes ahead of my department, I advised them to keep the
19 rest of the guys there because I assumed this was going to be an
20 extended incident. So I wanted to keep the rest of my guys back
21 here so I could rotate them out.

22 Q. Right.

23 A. So we worked with Beaver County HAZMAT out of Pennsylvania.
24 We worked together to increase our forces without depleting our
25 reserves.

1 Q. Right, sounds good. So tell me a little bit about the
2 training level for these technicians including yourself. What
3 kind of certification and by who?

4 A. All of my techs are NFPA, you know, 472 Certified HAZMAT
5 techs. We have received extra training by attending SERTC out in
6 Colorado. We've had the crude by rail. I had six of my members
7 out there, including myself, so we had a total of seven members
8 have been to SERTC. I have two members that have been to SERTC,
9 their specialist course in the highly emergency response. We've
10 had the LSU Railcar Incident response for crude, ethanol, and
11 other flammable liquids. They've had that. We've had anhydrous
12 ammonia training on the tank car and cargo tank familiarization.
13 That was through Transcare. They're all confined-space rescue,
14 confined-space entry trained.

15 Q. What's the correct term for the HAZMAT tech, and who provides
16 that certification? Is it Pro-Board or?

17 A. Ohio does not have anything like that. It's just taught
18 through different -- through the State Fire Academy, through
19 different, like Findley University or Cleveland State University,
20 and our members were taught through Cleveland State University.

21 Q. Okay. And how many hours is that curriculum for?

22 A. It's initially 40 hours just for the tech class, and then
23 eight hours every year refresher.

24 Q. So how many hours initially for tech?

25 A. Forty, and that's not including the awareness or Ops.

1 They're broken down separate here in Ohio.

2 Q. That's interesting.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. So anyways, my understanding from what you just told us was
5 -- in fact you're the first person we've spoken to, and I'm on one
6 of the other technical committees, the HAZMAT, that actually used
7 the AskRail app. Did you guys go to that training with the
8 tabletop scenario with the railroad a few weeks before this event?

9 A. If you're referring to the one in October, it was October
10 20th of 2022 was the -- yes, I had all my officers including
11 myself were at that tabletop incident.

12 Q. Is that where you were first introduced to AskRail or were
13 you using it prior?

14 A. We were using it prior. We were introduced to it at SERTC
15 out in Pueblo.

16 Q. Good, excellent. Like I said, you're the first person I've
17 spoken to that's actually used it for this event. That's very
18 good. So my understanding is you used the AskRail on the way
19 there by phone, and then you got to the command post and you said
20 within about 30 minutes you had the consist emailed to you by
21 somebody from Emergency Management, correct?

22 A. Yes. Our director. I had it at 10:23, 2223 to be exact.

23 Q. Okay, good. And I like what you said about your assessment
24 of the scene, that you knew there was vinyl chloride cars, but you
25 weren't sure if they were involved but there was a lot of pool

1 fires, right?

2 A. That is correct.

3 Q. Were you ever able to determine what was in the pool fires?

4 We found out that there was a lot of the hydrocarbon fuel.

5 A. No, we couldn't tell. We had aerial drone footage that was
6 able to view in real time, but we couldn't tell exactly where it
7 was coming from. It did not appear to be venting from what we
8 would assume were the vinyl chloride cars. They weren't venting
9 at that point.

10 Q. So the PRDs were not operating at that time?

11 A. Not that we could tell from the drone footage. And one of my
12 techs did a walkaround with one of Norfolk Southern's employees to
13 get a better view, but they couldn't ascertain either what was
14 actually burning. It didn't appear that the vinyl chloride cars
15 were burning at that time, but it did appear the pool fires were
16 impinging on them.

17 Q. I get that. You consulted the ERG for the evacuation
18 distances and made a recommendation?

19 A. That is correct.

20 Q. That recommendation made to the incident commander?

21 A. That is correct.

22 Q. To the Deputy Chief?

23 A. Well it was actually made to the EMA Director because they
24 were all kind of congregated in the office of this Leake Oil, so
25 everybody was kind of in there. And, so yes, it was more directed

1 to her because she asked the question.

2 Q. Okay good. And as far as the interoperability, I think that
3 was a good move where you couldn't speak on the radio with one
4 another, but you left a member there that you could communicate
5 with, correct?

6 A. That is correct.

7 Q. And so were you folks plugged into the unified command?

8 A. It would be a fractured unified command would be about the
9 best term I could use for that.

10 Q. Well there was a lot going on.

11 A. There was a lot going on, and that's not throwing a dig at
12 anybody.

13 Q. I get it.

14 A. I'm not, you know, it's not to, you know, throw stones at
15 someone, but that's just the way it was that night.

16 Q. Yes, no I get it. I've been involved in some pretty chaotic
17 things.

18 A. Oh yes.

19 Q. What we talk about in the classroom and training programs
20 versus what happens out in the field in the middle of chaos can be
21 different.

22 A. Yes, you're absolutely correct.

23 MR. CAREY: All right, good. Well I don't have any more
24 questions for you Chief, and I thank you for your service and I
25 thank you for giving us your time today.

1 MR. JONES: You're welcome sir. Thank you for your service.

2 MR. DOWNS: Chief Carey, thank you so much. I have a quick
3 follow-up question before we move on.

4 BY MR. DOWNS:

5 Q. Again, I'm not trying to split hairs on the timeline, but
6 when you arrived, which was what a half-hour or so into the event?

7 A. Yes. Our time -- I arrived at 2150.

8 Q. 2150, and incident command was established at that point, do
9 you happen to know?

10 A. Yes. That's when -- the communication we received was East
11 Palestine had a train derailment and incident command was at Leake
12 Oil, so yes, that's --

13 Q. So there was a radio call that you best recall to the effect
14 identifying where incident command was?

15 A. That is correct.

16 Q. And that was at Leake Oil, L-E-A-K-E Oil, okay, and that was
17 a radio call. And what was the timestamp on that by chance?

18 A. That was our initial call at 2124 when they requested the
19 HAZMAT team. That was the information we were given.

20 Q. At 2124 and the incident command was at Leake Oil?

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. Perfect, okay, 2124. And when you got to the scene, was the
23 Deputy Chief there in that general area, do you happen to recall?

24 A. Yes. I actually -- everybody was outside when we first
25 arrived, and then -- I'm lost for time -- but then at some point

1 we migrated into the inside of the building.

2 Q. Very good. Okay, yes, I just wanted to get my mind straight
3 the sequence and rough-timing of the incident command. But it was
4 established when you arrived there. And your characterization,
5 fractured, was it a little bit disorganized when you got there and
6 remained disorganized, or did it get more organized as things got
7 along?

8 A. People attempted to organize it a little better, but it
9 remained disorganized throughout my time on scene.

10 Q. Okay, and it had not evolved to a unified command until
11 roughly when? Best guess, top of your head.

12 A. We departed around 0420 and there was really no unified
13 command at that point.

14 Q. Okay. So at some point after that, but it had not resolved
15 until prior to your departure?

16 A. Correct.

17 MR. DOWNS: Very good. All right, that's my quick follow-up.
18 We'll move on next to, who would like to be next? Would that like
19 to be Ms. Lake or, yes, Ms. Lake, you have the floor.

20 MS. LAKE: Sure, thank you.

21 BY MS. LAKE:

22 Q. Hi Chief Jones.

23 A. Good morning.

24 Q. Just a few clarification points. So the EMA Director that
25 you refer to, is that Peggy Clark?

1 A. That is correct.

2 Q. Okay. Do you, like is there a threshold for when EMA becomes
3 involved and engaged in an incident and is on scene? Do you know?

4 A. I would imagine each incident command would decide that.
5 From my training and my experience, Emergency Management Agency
6 would be working from their building rather than from the site.

7 Q. Okay, sure. Like possibly establishing an emergency
8 operation center if necessary?

9 A. That would be my thoughts, yes.

10 Q. Okay. And what was EMA's role from your vantage point on
11 scene that night?

12 A. She was providing us assistance. She was able to retrieve a
13 lot of information that we requested, like weather reports. We
14 requested a weather report. The Beaver County HAZMAT team
15 actually has a member of the Pennsylvania EPA on their team, so he
16 was able to access an IMAC for us. Because with the flames, we
17 could not use MARPLOT because, you know, the fire, so it wasn't
18 going to give us anything on the plume of the smoke. So we
19 actually were able to use the National Weather Service and they
20 provided us a photo of the plume from their radar.

21 Q. Okay, great. So you mentioned that when you got to the
22 incident command post in terms of finding out what was on the
23 train, you mentioned talking to a conductor. Was it a conductor
24 or was it a Norfolk Southern employee, do you remember?

25 A. He was either a conductor or an engineer of the train that

1 was involved in the derailment.

2 Q. Okay. So where did that conversation occur?

3 A. That occurred in the parking lot outside of Leake Oil
4 incident command center.

5 Q. Okay. So they were not in the locomotive at the time you
6 talked with them?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Okay. And were they able -- they were able to provide that,
9 like confirm that information, because I know you said that Peggy
10 had emailed you the consist, but did they provide -- sorry go
11 ahead.

12 A. I'm sorry. He provided us with the last train that was still
13 upright on the track that they had pulled away from the site.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. So, you know, and I could be mistaken whether it was a
16 conductor or engineer, I'm not sure. I mean it was a lot of noise
17 from the different fire apparatus there so it was kind of
18 difficult to hear, but we did clarify the car that he thought was
19 the last one on.

20 Q. Okay. And then, so in general and based on the training that
21 you took in Pueblo, is part of your process to find the conductor
22 and engineer and obtain that information?

23 A. That is part of our process, but he actually sought someone
24 out and they brought him to me.

25 Q. Okay, Norfolk Southern did?

1 A. I don't know, no it wasn't Norfolk Southern. It was someone
2 in emergency services. I don't know if he reported to them, and
3 then he came to us, I'm not sure how we came to meet.

4 Q. Okay, okay, great. And then I guess my last question. So
5 East Liverpool is part of Columbiana County, correct?

6 A. That is correct.

7 Q. And so is East Palestine, right?

8 A. Correct.

9 Q. But do you have a mutual aid agreement through fire with East
10 Palestine Fire Department?

11 A. We have a mutual aid agreement through the Columbiana County
12 EMA, and through the Columbiana County Fire Chiefs Association.
13 We don't specifically have a mutual aid agreement with East
14 Palestine.

15 Q. Okay, gotcha. But through the County, that covers all of the
16 fire jurisdictions in the county it sounds like?

17 A. That is correct.

18 MS. LAKE: Okay, great. I think that's all I have for now.

19 MR. DOWNS: Thank you Ms. Lake, thank you very much. I have
20 a quick follow-up question before we move on to our next.

21 BY MR. DOWNS:

22 Q. Chief, you mentioned the weather report was obtained. Best
23 guess, best recollection of when the weather report was obtained?
24 Approximation is fine.

25 A. It was later in the -- maybe 11 o'clock, somewhere around

1 there.

2 Q. 11:00 p.m. or so?

3 A. Yes, roughly in that timeframe.

4 Q. Okay, good enough. The fact that it was obtained is very
5 significant, thank you very much.

6 MR. DOWNS: Okay, last but not least, Mr. Dougherty, you have
7 the floor sir.

8 BY MR. DOUGHERTY:

9 Q. Thank you. Good morning Chief, how are you?

10 A. Good morning sir.

11 Q. Just a couple of follow-up questions. I think everyone else
12 answered my questions for me here. So regarding the interagency
13 communication and the hazardous materials communication, once the
14 HAZMAT was determined within the train and at the initial incident
15 command, do you know how or if that information was conveyed to
16 the crews throughout the scene at opposite ends of the derailment?

17 A. No sir, I have no knowledge of that.

18 Q. Okay. And so can you tell us what your biggest challenges
19 were with the response to this incident?

20 A. Probably the vast area involved. You know, trying to get on
21 both sides of the tracks, you know, everything had to be done by
22 foot or you had to drive clear down to the other end of town,
23 cross the bridge, come back and drive back. So the vast area that
24 was involved and the terrain made it a little harder to do a
25 reconnaissance. The drone really helped to get a top-down view

1 and better picture of the site rather than doing a walkaround
2 reconnaissance of it.

3 Q. Thank you for that. And then again, with the interagency
4 communication my understanding is there is a potential solution or
5 a solution for the State of Ohio to help rectify and better unify
6 the communication between the agencies in Ohio, is that correct?

7 A. Yes. There's a system called the MARCS radio system and it
8 is a state-wide communications portable. But a lot of our
9 departments don't have them. We have two portables because being
10 the HAZMAT team that's on our required equipment list. But the
11 majority of the people in this county do not have MARCS because of
12 the cost of the radios and the cost to maintain them with, you
13 know, service fees.

14 Q. Is that something that's going to become mandatory or is that
15 something that is going to be, I guess, a fix for the future for
16 all the agencies in the area?

17 A. Yes, I don't -- I don't know it becoming mandatory, I've not
18 heard that scuttlebutt around the state. But they would like for
19 you to get on it, but it's just the cost. I mean you have a lot
20 of departments just here in Columbiana County. It's tough for
21 them to even afford gear.

22 Columbiana County is not a rich county, and you have a lot of
23 departments that it's tough for them to keep their gear upgraded.
24 So that's a cost I don't think they could entertain at this point,
25 especially if you're going to get a radio to each of their

1 members, you know, which is how a lot of these departments
2 operate. It's just unfeasible economically for a lot of
3 departments.

4 Q. Do you think that if a radio system like that was available
5 and in use by all of the agencies in the area that it would have
6 improved the response communication efforts for this derailment?

7 A. Initially I don't think so I think because there were just
8 too many agencies involved. It didn't appear from my point of
9 view that there was a lot of coordination going on. And you had
10 entities coming from West Virginia, you know, they would not be
11 involved in the MARCS program. We had entities from Mahoning
12 County, which is just north of Columbiana County in Ohio. So they
13 could've, if it's mandatory, and if probably somebody provides
14 some funding. But I still don't think even to that magnitude in
15 the first eight hours it would've worked.

16 MR. DOUGHERTY: Okay. I think that's all the questions I
17 have. Thanks Chief. Appreciate your time.

18 MR. JONES: You're welcome. Thank you.

19 MR. DOWNS: Very good. Thank you, thank you Marc. I have
20 one quick follow-up question and then we'll give one final go-
21 around here.

22 BY MR. DOWNS:

23 Q. Chief, you indicated roughly 4:20 a.m. you departed the
24 scene. Was the scene stabilized pretty much by the time you
25 departed? In other words, yes, there were fires still burning but

1 it was pretty much contained or stabilized, not spreading?

2 A. There was fires still burning. As to contained with the
3 products involved, I would say no. I don't believe that they
4 could have classified it contained with the products that were
5 involved that evening.

6 Q. Does the burn, the controlled burn that occurred much later
7 on had not even been initiated up to that point, is that correct?

8 A. No sir. There was no discussion at that point.

9 MR. DOWNS: Okay, all right. Does anybody else have any
10 final go-around questions here before I start to wrap this up?

11 MR. LLOYD: I do Mr. Downs.

12 MR. DOWNS: Proceed there Mr. Lloyd.

13 BY MR. LLOYD:

14 Q. Just to follow-up, again this is Troy from the NTSB. Chief,
15 I just got a couple follow-up questions. Like we were talking,
16 you get there, big incident, fireball in the sky, you know,
17 everybody's scratching their head trying to figure out what's
18 going on here for probably the first half-hour, 45 minutes. So
19 it's more of a life safety incident, stabilization kind of
20 incident.

21 So how can departments like yourself or even smaller
22 departments like East Palestine, you know, and even Chief Carey
23 can chime in on this. How can the departments better prepare
24 themselves for this big, large, multi-response, I've got a train
25 derailment vinyl chloride type of fire, how can these departments

1 better prepare themselves?

2 A. Basically, smaller departments like that that are volunteer,
3 it's going to be impossible to prepare themselves for it. I don't
4 believe there's any way anybody could be prepared. You can be
5 better prepared. Excuse me, you can be prepared but, you know, to
6 what degree.

7 There's a ton of training out there which it makes it easier
8 for me as a career department to send my guys because that's their
9 job. But it's getting these guys to the training to get a better
10 knowledge of what's on the rail. We started clear back in the
11 early days when they first started transporting crude, because we
12 have a major rail that goes through our town. It passes right by
13 houses similar to East Palestine. So we started back then to
14 start preparing the best we can for a department our size.

15 MR. DOWNS: You're muted there Troy.

16 BY MR. LLOYD:

17 Q. So it's definitely overwhelming for any fire chief, emergency
18 responder when you pull up on those moments that it's the unknown,
19 it's big. You know just looking at some suggestions because, you
20 know, I'm in the same boat as an incident commander myself, you
21 know, trying to keep the fire department personnel up-to-date.
22 It's a big thing, that's why I was asking the questions. I know
23 you've been thinking about the after-action situation if anything
24 new came to mind or if anything that could be better or something
25 like that, you know.

1 A. Yes, I mean we -- there's always things we, as a HAZMAT team,
2 could've done better. I mean, and I'm not using this as an
3 excuse, but with the multiple times with the incident command
4 center, we have a portable weather station we set up to get the,
5 you know, wind direction, temperature, and all that stuff. By the
6 time my guys started setting up, then it was time to move the
7 incident command site. So we just said we're just going to rely
8 on the National Weather Service. That's something that we
9 probably should have went through and taken care of maybe. So
10 we'll set it up -- our policy now is just to set it up so we can
11 get some on-ground, immediate information.

12 MR. LLOYD: Mr. Downs, do you mind if I ask Chief Carey a
13 question?

14 MR. DOWNS: Proceed, well predominantly it's Chief Jones
15 here, but if it's relative to the overall topic area, ask away.

16 BY MR. LLOYD TO CHIEF CAREY:

17 Q. Chief Carey, it's Troy Lloyd from the National Transportation
18 Safety Board, so Rescue II Veteran, right?

19 A. That's correct.

20 Q. Oh yes, oh yes, took some classes up in Boston with some guys
21 up there. But same question I want to give to you, and this could
22 have been carried out a lot differently and in a different
23 situation when you're talking the village of East Palestine versus
24 a major metropolitan such as Boston, but Boston has a lot of
25 freight railroad, a lot of hazardous commodities that go through

1 there. But with your knowledge, skills, and abilities being a
2 Special Ops Chief, the District Chief, and all that stuff, what
3 can you throw out there, how does the Boston Fire Department
4 prepare for something major like the vinyl chloride fire in the
5 middle of a city?

6 A. I think the Chief just did a good job answering that question
7 when he said that for a lot of these small, volunteer departments
8 it's impossible to really be prepared for this. This is like a
9 once-in-a-career event. It's a low-frequency, very high-risk
10 event.

11 And I think the best we can do is training and more training;
12 training specifically with the railroad. And I understand that
13 there was some training provided by the railroad previous to this
14 incident and they introduced the AskRail app, but unfortunately it
15 was never followed through. They showed them what it was, what
16 its capabilities were, but they never really got to the point
17 where they used the app, and I think that's critical.

18 I think more importantly for the first responders, any fire
19 department that doesn't have Special Ops capability, it's
20 important for them right away when they go to one of these to
21 recognize that they are in over their head and to start calling in
22 resources of a technical variety to get in there and help such as
23 East Liverpool. And I think they played a huge role in that as
24 far as researching the science and looking at the consist and
25 using AskRail and things like that. It's a critical component.

1 And I think that firefighters and fire chiefs need to be aware of
2 that that they're in over their head right away and they need to
3 start calling in additional resources.

4 MR. DOWNS: Very good. Thank you so much for your
5 observation there Chief Carey. And by the nod of your head Chief
6 Jones, it sounds like you're in full agreement there, yes?

7 MR. JONES: Yes sir, I'm in full agreement with what he had
8 to say.

9 MR. DOWNS: Very good. Thank you very much, and thanks to
10 you Mr. Lloyd. Anybody else with a final follow-up question?
11 Upon hearing none, I have one final query for the Chief here.

12 BY MR. DOWNS:

13 Q. After-action report, is your agency going to be putting one
14 together?

15 A. I don't know about a formal one, but we always after every
16 incident, everybody involved, we just sit down and just have like
17 a round-robin what went wrong, what went right. I don't know
18 whether I'll do an official after-action.

19 Q. When it's mutual aid it's really not required to do a NFIRS
20 report, is that correct?

21 A. We do do a NFIRS report, yes sir, because --

22 Q. That's kind of an after-action document for lack of a better
23 description. Okay, we might query you later on. I realize it's a
24 complex form, many pages, takes a while sometimes to put together.
25 We may query you on that to get a copy later on. Thank you.

1 All right. I always like to wrap up my interviews, a couple
2 of finalizing questions, and you actually touched on one of them.
3 Again, relative to your role in the accident event in retrospect,
4 knowing what you know now might you be able to offer any thoughts
5 or observations on lessons learned? You already mentioned one
6 there, or is there anything that you might have done differently,
7 sort out how to circumvent challenges, pitfalls, and the like?

8 A. The biggest pitfall was right off the bat was when they had
9 the tanker shuttle, their water system set up right in front of
10 the incident command. I think that is a lesson learned to be
11 careful where you select your incident command and where you
12 select to put your water supply.

13 It's at night, picture it, it's at night, cold, people's
14 adrenaline is rushing, and then it's, you know, you're trying to
15 cross the road to get to the incident command center and these
16 guys are hurrying to get another load of water back just to keep
17 the water flowing.

18 My first thought that evening was someone's going to get
19 killed here on this road in front of these trucks, because a lot
20 of these tankers you're sitting up high, you can't see down on the
21 road directly in front of you, and that would be a lesson learned
22 in my opinion, just be careful.

23 Q. Do you happen to know who selected that tanker shuttle drop-
24 site?

25 A. I do not sir. That was there when we arrived; it was already

1 established.

2 Q. Okay. It was established upon your arrival, okay. And you
3 were there roughly a half-hour or so prior to, subsequent to the
4 callout?

5 A. I arrived at 2150, so our initial call was 2124. I departed
6 from home, came to the station, got another tech, and then we left
7 and went out there.

8 Q. So 2150, and Ms. Lake, correct me if I'm wrong, we're looking
9 at roughly 2050 was the accident? I don't have it in front of me.

10 MS. LAKE: You mean the initial notification for the event?
11 I believe it was in the neighborhood of 2056 timeframe.

12 BY MR. DOWNS:

13 Q. 2056, okay, so we're talking roughly an hour by the time you
14 actually got yourself and your crew member on scene?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. Okay, very good. All right, next question. We asked a
17 number of questions today, so to close, is there anything we
18 haven't asked you, or might there be information or knowledge that
19 you have relative to the accident that you believe might be
20 important to the investigation which you would care to share with
21 the investigation?

22 A. No, I think that your interview covered quite a bit. None
23 that I can think of right now any concerns.

24 MR. DOWNS: Very good, okay. Again, thank you Chief for your
25 time and responses to our questions today. But if you do think of

1 anything, obviously kindly please contact us through, who shall be
2 our contact, Ms. Lake, would you be a good contact person on that?

3 MS. LAKE: Sure, that works.

4 MR. DOWNS: Yes, contact Cyndi and such, and we'll follow-up
5 on that if anything should happen to come up. So that concludes
6 our interview. The time now is 10:08 a.m. Thanks again to all
7 and we can conclude our recording.

8 (Whereupon, at 10:08 a.m., the interview was concluded.)
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

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 William Jones

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD23MR005

PLACE: Via Microsoft Teams

DATE: May 3, 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.



Jennifer Allen
Transcriber

Downs Richard

From: Downs Richard
Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2023 8:50 AM
To: Lloyd Troy
Cc: Lake Cyndi; Dougherty Marc
Subject: FW: NTSB / East Palestine, OH (RRD23MR005) - Interview Transcript transmittal [for review] + Errata Sheet

May 30, 2023

Mr Troy Lloyd / Panel 1 Chair – further to this, this to document that the Interview Transcript and the corresponding Errata Sheet transmittal, as described in the message below, had been sent to the identified Interviewee [recipient of the message below], to afford an opportunity to provide transcript corrections / comments, in which no reply had been, as yet, forthcoming in response to this transmittal inquiry.

Accordingly, given the approaching due-date for the required submission of Exhibits into the public docket for the Public Hearing, which would include the Interview Transcript and corresponding Errata Sheet, this to document that the Interview Transcript [as received from the agency transcription contractor], and the corresponding Errata Sheet [as sent to the interviewee], will be placed into the public docket for the Public Hearing, which will include a copy of this message, as documentation of the transmittal non-response.

Further, if an Errata Sheet [with, or without, described transcript corrections / comments] for this transmittal non-response is subsequently received by the Panel 1 investigation, that responded documentation will be correspondingly placed into the public docket for the Public Hearing, as a follow-up docket-placement item, such to reflect that an Errata Sheet for the subject Interview Transcript had been conveyed to the investigation. -- Richard Downs, Jr., P.E. / Panel 1 [investigative support]

From: Downs Richard
Sent: Friday, May 19, 2023 11:24 PM
To: Bill (William) Jones <w.jones@eastliverpool.com>
Cc: Lloyd Troy <Troy.Lloyd@ntsb.gov>; Lake Cyndi <Cyndi.Lake@ntsb.gov>; Dougherty Marc <Marc.Dougherty@ntsb.gov>
Subject: NTSB / East Palestine, OH (RRD23MR005) - Interview Transcript transmittal [for review] + Errata Sheet

May 19, 2023

Chief William Jones / East Liverpool, OH, Fire Department –

First off, I want to thank you for your support to the NTSB Investigation, and for your participation in the interview as conducted in the investigation. The interview resulted in an official transcript that will be very useful to our investigative process and provide valuable insight to support the NTSB's Public Hearing, that is being scheduled to address the above referenced accident investigation.

As mentioned during the interview activity, you (as the interviewee) are afforded the opportunity to review the transcript that's generated from the interview recording, such to provide prospective transcript content corrections feedback to the investigation, which you would like to propose for consideration by the investigation.

Accordingly, to that end, attached please find a .pdf copy of your interview transcript (as received from the transcription contractor), which is hereby provided for your review / corrections response opportunity, along with an Errata Sheet (transmittal form).

Correspondingly, given the above, to execute this transcript review / feedback process, kindly please printout the attached transcript document and Errata Sheet, which will enable your review of the full transcript, in which the Errata

Sheet is used in your reply transmittal. Completion of the data in the Errata Sheet is self-explanatory (... simply check the appropriate response box, affix a signature, and date, and if needed, attach any identified transcript changes -- per the Errata Sheet).

Kindly please return to me, via reply email, the completed Errata Sheet, along with any transcript changes, in which it's requested that you kindly submit your response, even if there are no transcript changes identified, by **not later than May 24, 2023**.

Lastly, please note, [1] that investigation transcripts must be maintained as confidential at this time, in which the transcript is for your use only, and not for release outside of the investigation, and [2] I welcome you to contact me, or any of my Tech Panel 1 colleagues (cc'd here, for your convenience), should there be any thoughts or questions regarding this transcript review / Errata Sheet response process.

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



Richard M. Downs, Jr., P.E.
Mechanical Engineer (Crashworthiness)
Sr. Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Washington, DC 20594
Mobile - 202.320.6315
downsr@ntsb.gov



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

Date: May 19, 2023

Interviewee: William Jones / East Liverpool, OH, Fire Department

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 3, 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 _____

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.
Mechanical Engineer (Crashworthiness)
Sr. Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Washington, DC 20594
Mobile - 202.320.6315
downsr@ntsb.gov