



National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C. 20594

December 3, 2014

Anthony De Vita
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7TH

(A7)

Anthony De Vita:

Reference: NTSB Accident No. DCA-14-MP-002, East Harlem, NY.
Your Interview conducted on September 30, 2014.

Enclosed is a copy of the transcript of your interview that was conducted as a part of the on-going investigation of the above referenced accident. Please review the transcript for accuracy and make any necessary editorial changes on the attached transcripts. Please put your initials next to each suggested change. After your review, please sign the attached endorsement and return it with the marked copy of the transcript to the following address on or before by December 10, 2014:

Kalu Kelly Emeaba
National Transportation Safety Board (RPH-20)
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.
Washington, DC 20594.

Or if you desire e-mail your comments to: [REDACTED]

Please note that this transcript should be treated as confidential at this time. This transcript is for your use only, and is not for release. If you have any questions, please contact Acting Division Chief Georgetta Gregory ([REDACTED]). Thank you for your assistance and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Electronic Signature

Ravindra M. Chhatre
Investigator-in-Charge
[REDACTED]

Enclosure

National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Railroad, Pipeline, and Hazardous Materials Investigations
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20594

Reference: NTSB Accident No. DCA-14-MP-002, East Harlem, NY.
Your Interview conducted on September 30, 2014.

I have reviewed my interview transcript from the above referenced accident and:

- (A) I have no comments to make.
- (B) My comments are submitted herewith.
- ✓ ----- (C) My comments are marked on the attached copy.



Anthony De Vita

12/29/14

Date

1 frequency and the command frequency for any information I would
2 need to, you know, more effectively run the operation.

3 MR. CHHATRE: When you say establish sectors, is that
4 like a standard practice for the fire department? I mean, I'm
5 reading a lot of interviews and somebody in Sector 3 and Sector 4
6 -- I want to understand how you do that.

7 CHIEF DeVITA: Yes. It's -- we establish the sectors
8 for command and control. I don't have to speak to -- if I have
9 three engine companies and two ladder companies on the scene,
10 instead of them all trying to get information to me, I have a
11 chief who is in charge of that sector. Let's see, a geographic
12 sector in this case, in this operation would be 1642 and anything
13 on that corner, on that southwest corner of 116th and Park. I put
14 a chief in charge of that sector with his three engines and two
15 ladders and whatever else he's operating with, and he speaks to me
16 and instead of having five companies trying to speak to me. So
17 that's the benefit of sectors. I have somebody in control of it,
18 the communications become easier and more effective, and then I
19 just -- and he takes that and just reports back to me on progress
20 in his area of responsibility.

21 MR. CHHATRE: Well, on this map here, and this is really
22 Frank's map, where was the first command post established? Can
23 you just mark that for me?

24 CHIEF DeVITA: It is -- I think it's -- I think your
25 hand is on it right now.

1 MR. EMEABA: Yes.

2 CHIEF DeVITA: -- that day?

3 MR. EMEABA: No. After you arrived to site, you
4 established the incident command, correct?

5 CHIEF DeVITA: Yes.

6 MR. EMEABA: From what you mentioned earlier.

7 CHIEF DeVITA: Yes.

8 MR. EMEABA: From the time you established the incident
9 command, can you remember leaving the incident command to go to
10 the site of the incident, the actual front?

11 CHIEF DeVITA: Yes. Oh, yes. It wasn't that far away.
12 The intersection was the command post, underneath the elevated
13 line, and the buildings were within -- or the remains of the
14 buildings were in view, and it wasn't a ^{FAR}~~fair~~ walk to go from the No
15 command post to the operations area.

16 MR. EMEABA: Okay.

17 CHIEF DeVITA: Yes.

18 MR. EMEABA: Prior to your establishing the command post
19 or incident command post, the Engine 58 people and the Ladder 26
20 people that arrived before you, can you give us a little bit of
21 narrative what they were doing already before your arrival?

22 CHIEF LEONARD: Let me, let me just say what's going on,
23 Chief Leonard. It's the policy of the New York City Fire
24 Department that we operate under the incident command system. The
25 first arriving unit establishes incident command, all right, and

1 from. I don't know if it was in the ground, whether it was still
2 active leaks. I can't -- I do not know that.

3 MR. HEYWARD: Okay. And then either one of you -- since
4 you were first arriving, Chief DeVita, maybe you can describe the
5 amount of fire upon arrival. In your opinion, was this a gas fed
6 fire or was it just burning debris secondary to the explosion?

7 CHIEF DeVITA: Well, just like I said, when I was, I was
8 probably 6 or 8 blocks away, and I could see the smoke go over the
9 horizon, which based on my experience in the fire department, that
10 amount of smoke, which was a heavy, a heavy black and brown and --
11 it indicated to me that we had a heavy fire condition and that was
12 some blocks away. On my arrival, that was confirmed. There was a
13 heavy fire condition. I didn't -- again, I was of the same
14 thought. I'm not sure what caused this or what kind of a -- was
15 it a terrorist act or -- I'm not sure. Was it just a collapse, a
16 general collapse due to, you know, a construction process that
17 wasn't proper and then it just happened to, you know, ^{SEVERED UTILITIES AND} ~~sever~~ some
18 -- ~~you know~~, caused a -- a fire ~~resulted?~~ (AD)

19 So the gas fed piece, I -- it's not something that
20 jumped out at me. It wasn't -- I didn't get hit in the face with
21 a natural gas odor. But at some point over the transmission, and
22 it could have been that Engine 58 again, and when you speak to
23 them, there was a transmission about we may have a gas fed fire
24 here. And that comes from the fact that you're putting water on
25 this fire and it's still a ^{blow} ~~low~~ torch proportion. You know, (AD)

1 normally you hit the fire and it's small pockets and the color of
2 the smoke changes. This ~~was a~~ fire would ^{NOT} go out, the fire would
3 reignite. It was not lessening in intensity based on the amount of
4 water we were putting on it. So that did come up from one of the
5 fire companies. And then later on, I did get a passing -- you
6 know, there was obviously a lot of smoke which could have masked
7 the smell of gas, but I did get a whiff of gas at some point
8 during, you know, during the operation.

9 MR. HEYWARD: I'm good, Ravi. Thank you.

10 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Lenny?

11 MR. SINGH: Good morning. Leonard Singh, Con Ed.

12 Thanks again for taking your time out today. A couple of
13 questions. I think some of it was touched upon, but I just want
14 to get my perspective on it. In terms of the fire, was there a
15 concentration -- the fire concentrated in one area of the pile or
16 the two buildings?

17 CHIEF LEONARD: Yeah, definitely. Definitely more --
18 the fire -- well, it was definitely more in 1644, definitely more
19 fire.

20 MR. SINGH: Back of the building, middle of the
21 building?

22 CHIEF LEONARD: More towards that exposure 2 wall there
23 was more fire. But there was a lot of fire, and like I said, in
24 the back of that building, I never got to the back of that
25 building for a little while so I don't know what the fire

1 MR. EMEABA: Okay.

2 CHIEF LEONARD: So if you get an overhead picture early
3 on, which I know they do exist, I've seen them, that would show
4 you the exact position.

5 MR. EMEABA: Yes, and --

6 CHIEF LEONARD: And the apparatus are well marked, so
7 you should be able to pick out the numbers.

8 CHIEF DeVITA: Right.

9 MR. EMEABA: So you were fighting the fire from 16th
10 [sic] Street?

11 CHIEF DeVITA: We were fighting the fire from 116th
12 Street. We were fighting the fire from Park Avenue. And then we
13 had ~~people~~ ^{FIREFIGHTERS} who had brought hose lines in through this corner
14 building. ^{ON 117 ST. AND PARK AVE.} There was a walkway and from here, this was a, like a
15 -- I'm going to say a park.

16 MR. EMEABA: Yes.

17 CHIEF DeVITA: But they --

18 MR. EMEABA: A playground.

19 CHIEF DeVITA: A playground. But they put ladders up
20 and they had hose lines up into the rear because that's where they
21 rescued the one lady from. The Rescue 1 accessed that -- this
22 part of the building remained standing. There was that one --
23 that corner here --

24 MR. EMEABA: Yes.

25 CHIEF DeVITA: -- but the rest of it had come down.