

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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CALTRAIN COLLISION WITH *

CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT NEAR *

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, * Accident No.: RRD22LR007

ON MARCH 10, 2022 *

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Interview of: TIM HIDALGO, Watchman

TransitAmerica Services, Incorporated

San Francisco, California

Saturday,

March 12, 2022

APPEARANCES:

DICK HIPSKIND, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

RICK BRUCE, Track Safety Specialist
Federal Railroad Administration

FELIPE AYALA, Track Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration

JAMES RIDGEWAY
California Public Utilities Commission

JIM BROWN, Safety Officer
Caltrain

DEREK BROWN, Deputy General Manager
TransitAmerica Services, Incorporated

MITCH MCCARTHY, Vice Chairman
BMWED

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Tim Hidalgo:	
By Mr. Hipskind	6
By Mr. Ayala	32
By Mr. Ridgeway	35
By Mr. Bruce	37
By Mr. Jim Brown	38

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. HIPSKIND: Good morning, everybody. My name is
3 Dick Hipskind and I am a railroad accident investigator for NTSB
4 and I am the track and engineering group chairman for NTSB for
5 this accident. We are conducting this interview on March 12th,
6 2022, with Tim Hidalgo.

7 MR. HIDALGO: Right.

8 MR. HIPSKIND: Who works for -- Tim, I'm going to have to
9 stop and ask for -- you work for?

10 MR. HIDALGO: TransitAmerica Services, Inc.

11 MR. HIPSKIND: Who works for TransitAmerica Services,
12 Incorporated, as a watchman. This interview is being conducted in
13 person at the Westin Hotel in San Francisco, California. This
14 interview is part of NTSB's effort in conducting a follow-up
15 interview with the parties to the investigation in which we are
16 conducting an ongoing investigation of Caltrain's train number
17 SB506 collision and derailment that occurred on March 10th, 2022,
18 on Caltrain's railroad on main track 2 in San Bruno, California.

19 The NTSB accident reference number is RRD22LR007. Before we
20 begin our interview and questions, let's go around the table,
21 introduce ourselves. Please spell your full name. First name and
22 last name. Please identify who you are representing and your
23 title. I would remind everybody to speak clearly and loudly
24 enough so we can get an accurate recording. I'll lead off and
25 then ask for other interviewers to identify themselves according

1 to the previous order established. Again, my name is Dick
2 Hipskind. The spelling of my full name is D-i-c-k. Last name H-
3 i-p-s-k-i-n-d. I am a railroad accident investigator for NTSB on
4 this accident.

5 MR. AYALA: Good morning. Felipe Ayala. F-e-l-i-p-e A-y-a-
6 l-a. I am a track inspector for the FRA.

7 MR. RIDGEWAY: James Ridgeway. J-a-m-e-s R-i-d-g-e-w-a-y.
8 California Public Utilities Commission, track.

9 MR. BRUCE: Rick Bruce. R-i-c-k, Bruce B-r-u-c-e. I'm a
10 Federal Railroad Administration track safety specialist.

11 MR. JIM BROWN: Jim Brown, J-i-m B-r-o-w-n. And I am a
12 safety officer for Caltrain.

13 MR. DEREK BROWN: Derek Brown, D-e-r-e-k Derek. Brown, B-r-
14 o-w-n. And I'm representing TransitAmerica. I'm the deputy
15 general manager for the maintenance of way department.

16 MR. HIPSKIND: Thank you, gentlemen. And thank you to all
17 the interviewers. Prior to recording our interview, I spoke with
18 Tim to request his permission to record our discussion today and
19 to obtain his permission to record the interview and to use first
20 names in our discussion. Jim, has there been any change to your
21 affirmation of those conditions?

22 MR. HIDALGO: No.

23 MR. HIPSKIND: Second question. Tim, do you wish to be
24 represented today?

25 MR. HIDALGO: Yes, by Mitch McCarthy, my union

1 representative.

2 MR. HIPSKIND: Mitch, would you place yourself on the record?

3 MR. MCCARTHY: My name is Mitch McCarthy. M-i-t-c-h. Last
4 name M-c-C-a-r-t-h-y.

5 MR. HIPSKIND: Tim, it's time we need to put you on the
6 record. So name, full name, spell, and who you work for and your
7 title.

8 MR. HIDALGO: Yeah. My name is Tim Hidalgo. It's T-i-m H-i-
9 d-a-l-g-o. I'm a watchman for TransitAmerica, Inc.

10 INTERVIEW OF TIM HIDALGO

11 BY MR. HIPSKIND:

12 Q. Tim, first couple of questions. Please Just give us a
13 synopsis of your work history, railroad related, and bring us up
14 to your current position and how long that you've held it.

15 A. So -- when I first -- before I first started, I was working
16 with Drill Tech. Drill Tech was doing all the foundations here
17 for the poles. And it wasn't working out for me there. I wasn't
18 getting enough hours and I jumped over. They hired me and I
19 became a watchman. And I've been here for -- it'll be four years
20 next month on April 30th. And that's how I -- that's how long
21 I've been on the railroad.

22 Q. And you said worked for them meaning you worked for Transit
23 or --

24 A. I work for TransitAmerica. Correct.

25 Q. Okay, all right.

1 A. But prior to TransitAmerica, I was with Drill Tech.

2 Q. And when you were talking about the foundations, I'm just
3 going to guess, that's the new catenary that they're putting on
4 Caltrain.

5 A. Correct. They drilled all the holes for the poles to go on.

6 Q. So please describe for us your duties and responsibilities in
7 your current position.

8 A. So I'm --

9 Q. And I take it to be a watchman. Right?

10 A. Yes. I'm a watchman. I will be with -- whoever it is,
11 whatever crew I'm with that day, I just give them safety, you
12 know, for either TAW or tracking time. Every day is different.
13 Every job is different. There's days I do provide TAW. There's
14 days I get tracking time. And sometimes I'll be in a Form B.
15 It's always -- it's changing all the time.

16 Q. We'll come back to that and we'll kind of drill down on that
17 a little bit more. But just in general, tell us about the day on
18 March 10th. Give us an idea of when you started work, where you
19 started, and where you met up with other members of your group.

20 A. Oh, okay. Yeah. So I got to work at -- started at 6:30 in
21 the morning. Me and the two other watchmen, we got together, we
22 got (indiscernible), we did our 360 walk around, we did all that.
23 You know, and we were ready to go and we called Robins --
24 Claude Robins (ph.), and he said to meet at visitation for the
25 briefing. So we had the visitation for the briefing. That's

1 where we met the contractors. That's where they were getting like
2 -- I think they get material. Smaller material for -- to do the
3 poles. I think it's the nuts and the washers. I'm not exactly
4 sure. But they have a little yard there.

5 So we were there and we all -- we had the briefing and we
6 went over everything that we were going to do that day, how we
7 were going to do it. So for the briefing, you know, everybody
8 talked about where we're going to meet at once we leave. So
9 everybody was going to go to Center. So the contractors were
10 going to meet me and -- I had the Hi-Rail. And I had one
11 watchman. The other watchman stayed with Robins. So those two
12 didn't come with us to Center.

13 So I met the contractors at Center. We just had to wait
14 there off track, you know, on the sides of the roads to wait for
15 the tracking time. Then once I got that call, once he gave me the
16 tracking time, I gave it to all the guys. You know, everybody
17 comes around the truck, I give it to them. And we set on track.

18 And then, so what happened was, we got the tracking time. I
19 set on first. I'm the pilot. We set on first. Then the big
20 crane gets on. He got on. Before we even got on -- sorry, guys
21 -- we got tracking time on one. So he had -- Claude had to get
22 time on one for safety for (indiscernible) guys. They need the
23 safety to get on when they're setting on. So we got that. It was
24 like a six-minute window. So they had to do it pretty fast. But
25 they're good at it. They're really quick at getting their

1 machines on.

2 So once everybody was on two, everybody was set. I called
3 Claude and I let him know, hey, Claude, everybody is set on two.
4 You can release one. Because you had to release her real quick.
5 He said, okay. And I said, okay, we're headed to 11.7 to load
6 material, the poles. And once we're -- he's like, okay, you have
7 permission to go north once you're all done. But I would have
8 called him once we left but we didn't get that far.

9 Anyways, once we got to 11.7, everybody is following. We get
10 to 11.7, everybody parks. And they start getting to work. And
11 then, probably -- we had one northbound go by, a southbound go by.
12 And those guys -- we had been there like -- it was like a half
13 hour or more. I'm not exactly sure but it -- we were there for a
14 little bit. And we -- so we had -- like I said, we had --
15 everything seemed normal.

16 Everything seemed -- nothing out of the -- he was -- you
17 know, we had a northbound/southbound. And then, the next -- like
18 and me -- me and Padilla, the watchman that was with me, we were
19 out of the truck. We were standing on the platform, you know,
20 watching the guys work and just keeping our eyes out. And the --
21 I went to go like -- I was right there. I think I went either
22 like behind the truck or -- I like to make sure the guys aren't
23 fouling because if they are, we're not in the Form B.

24 So I'm just making sure they're not fouling, whatever. I'm
25 always checking out everything. And then that's when I heard

1 Padilla say, Tim, Tim. When I looked, I see -- I couldn't believe
2 it. Like it's coming around. And it's on our track. And then
3 I'm -- I was like -- I grabbed my radio and I just started doing
4 the -- what I was taught. And I was screaming and yelling. And
5 Padilla was like yelling and screaming and then the guys are
6 jumping. And --

7 Q. A matter of seconds?

8 A. In a matter of seconds. So I was running this way. The
9 train is coming this way. And I'm -- I think you guys can hear
10 me. I think I was running. And I was screaming. It was like,
11 bring everybody -- like I was just -- I thought I was cussing but
12 they said I didn't. And I was just so scared. I was frightened.
13 Then you hear the boom. When I looked back it was -- I just -- I
14 seen the fire and I -- to be honest, I thought everybody was dead.
15 And I was scared to death. And I was just like -- couldn't
16 believe it. I just -- then the passengers were getting out of the
17 train.

18 And then I'm trying to like help the passengers and -- but
19 before all that, you know, I was like -- made sure the contractors
20 were okay. And then -- sorry. And then, the passengers were
21 running all over the tracks and they're just running up to the San
22 Bruno Station. They couldn't get out. All the gates were locked.
23 So I ran over there to unlock this gate but that's BART. We don't
24 have keys to BART. But I knew there was another opening for like
25 our trucks to come in.

1 So I ran down there. I seen the cops coming and everything.
2 And they're trying -- they couldn't open it either. And I opened
3 it and I got all the passengers. They all swarmed that way. And
4 then it was just -- I couldn't even look at the flames anymore.
5 And I just -- we -- people were just scattered. The contractors
6 were coming up to me and I was just making sure they were okay.
7 And yeah, it was frightening.

8 Q. Talk to us a little bit about the timing from when you
9 initially asked for time to set on at Center. Center is a road
10 crossing.

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. And talk to us a little bit about what time of day that was.
13 And talk to us about -- I know you got foul time and I know why
14 you did but put on the record what the thought is there with the
15 equipment and choosing that crossing, et cetera.

16 A. Oh, okay. So the reason why we went to Center is because
17 they're -- all the material that they need for the -- the poles
18 are set at San Bruno yard, the old San Bruno yard. So they're at
19 11.7. So the Form B starts at 9.8 to 8.3. That's further north.
20 So we weren't in the Form B yet. So we needed to get on Center to
21 go up north to the San Bruno -- to stop at 11.7 for them to get
22 their trailers on rail and to load the poles on their trailer.
23 But that's -- Center is where -- the closest.

24 Q. And is -- in your description earlier, you said, well, we got
25 foul time on main track 1. So is the reason that you got that

1 temporary foul time or tracking time on one is because the
2 maneuvering to put the (indiscernible) --

3 A. Correct. They're so big, they're fouling. And it's just a
4 safety thing for (indiscernible) that they require.

5 Q. And let's jump back to the job briefing for a minute.

6 A. Okay.

7 Q. Is -- how many people were there?

8 A. Four contractors. Claude, Wilber, myself, and Padilla.

9 Q. Is one of the people that you mentioned kind of out there as
10 a trainee?

11 A. Two of them. Wilber and Gilbert are trainees.

12 Q. Who was the one that was with you?

13 A. Gilbert.

14 Q. So when you held the job briefing, was everybody that was on
15 the group, were they physically present?

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. Who conducted the job briefing?

18 A. It was Gilbert that did the initial job briefing. But we had
19 two. Because he wanted -- Claude Robins wanted to see how he did.
20 And then Claude did a whole other one his way.

21 Q. But Claude was there?

22 A. Oh, yes, yes.

23 Q. How did the job briefing go?

24 A. So we talked about everything. We talked about being safe.
25 We talked about the Form B limits. We talked about when we get

1 tracking time, when we get it and what the limits were going to
2 be. And then, our work zone. And then, we talked about going to
3 Center to -- because you had to wait. You couldn't get tracking
4 time until 9:30. That's just when they allow it. And he said,
5 like, I'm going to go there, we're going to meet them. We're
6 going to meet the contractors there. They park. We come, we
7 park. And we wait until we get the phone call from Claude with
8 the tracking time.

9 Q. Tim, I don't know, but I want you to help paint the picture.
10 I'm guessing that the whole meeting where you guys meet, the job
11 briefing, going down to Center, setting stuff on, getting foul
12 time over on one, and then releasing it because you --

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. You did release it --

15 A. I didn't release it. That's Claude -- Claude's job was to
16 release it. He was getting it.

17 Q. So by releasing it, he would call the dispatcher.

18 A. Correct.

19 Q. But here's my point. This isn't the first time you guys have
20 done this.

21 A. No.

22 Q. You've been doing this for how long this general --

23 A. For this particular job was just this week. So I did -- I
24 started Tuesday. I was with George. George Duarte (ph.). He was
25 on that Form B that day. And then the next day, Wednesday is when

1 Claude took over. For whatever reason, every day is different.
2 Everybody jumps around different jobs just because of whoever is
3 available for that position. You know what I mean? And it just
4 happened to be that Claude was taking over that day and --

5 Q. But let me broaden the scope here. As I understand it, this
6 whole building the catenary from one end of the railroad to the
7 other, that's been an ongoing thing.

8 A. Correct.

9 Q. How many months or years have you guys been in --

10 A. Since I started in 2018, it was even started before then. So
11 it was like '17, I think they started.

12 Q. So -- all right. So you've been doing this process, this
13 procedure, maybe not at setting on at Center Street.

14 A. Oh, but all over the place.

15 Q. But all over the place.

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. So if not at Center Street, it may have been a different
18 location.

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. At a different place on the railroad. But a similar start
21 up. A similar --

22 A. Yeah, they're all the same.

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. I mean, they're all similar.

25 Q. Job brief.

- 1 A. You always job brief.
- 2 Q. You have to get the equipment on.
- 3 A. You get the equipment on.
- 4 Q. And tell me about -- let's drill down a little bit more.
- 5 When you reached out and you do this part of the process where
- 6 you're going to set the equipment on, it -- you set all the
- 7 equipment, three pieces of equipment or is there more?
- 8 A. It was my truck, the Hi-Rail, the crane, and then the --
- 9 there was a flat-bed truck that had a crane on it.
- 10 Q. So those are the three pieces of equipment.
- 11 A. Correct.
- 12 Q. And no matter where you're at on the system, in the past,
- 13 it's always kind of the same drill. Same three pieces of
- 14 equipment, get on just one of the mains. The other main is open.
- 15 After you --
- 16 A. Yeah.
- 17 Q. -- release it, after you set the equipment on. Right?
- 18 A. Correct. But like sometimes it's not always just those --
- 19 you could have more (indiscernible) than three -- two pieces of
- 20 equipment behind you. It all depends on what job you're doing and
- 21 what it takes to do that job.
- 22 Q. But for this day --
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Q. -- and throughout the week, it was just as you described --
- 25 A. Correct.

- 1 Q. -- each of the previous days.
- 2 A. Yes.
- 3 Q. Who called for and what type of protection did you have on
4 main track 2 to get from the crossing to wherever you went next?
- 5 A. We had tracking time -- the north limits of center to CP
6 Scott (ph.) on two.
- 7 Q. And was that --
- 8 A. To get to 11.7.
- 9 Q. Do you recall the time limits or who was in charge of that
10 initial setting the equipment and you occupied main track 2?
- 11 A. So Claude got the time. Yeah.
- 12 Q. Do you know what kind of protection you had? Was it tracking
13 time or --
- 14 A. Tracking time.
- 15 Q. Tracking time. And at the job briefing, did anybody say you
16 were to do this, then we're going to go do this, and then we're
17 going to -- I take it -- and I don't want to put words in your
18 mouth. But I take it the overall plan was to get up into that --
19 was it a Form B or --
- 20 A. Yes, the Form B. Yes. That's where the job work was going
21 to be.
- 22 Q. And the limits --
- 23 A. Job site.
- 24 Q. -- of that were -- tell me again.
- 25 A. 8.3 to 9.8.

1 Q. But where this accident happened, you were kind of --

2 A. Not --

3 Q. -- a ways south of that?

4 A. Yeah, yes. We were not in the Form B. We were in the
5 tracking time limits.

6 Q. At the job briefing, did anybody say anything about stopping
7 on the way up to the Form B?

8 A. Yes. Yes, that's always talked about like what the plan is,
9 what we're going to do. So you always -- you know, like we talked
10 about like once we get to Center, we're going to set on, and we're
11 going to stop at 11.7 or 6. It's right -- they're close together.

12 Q. And the communication between Claude and the dispatcher was
13 via radio or via cell phone?

14 A. The work phone. Correct.

15 Q. Work phone?

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. So not a radio?

18 A. No, radio -- we communicate radio for -- like when you're in
19 the Form B and then he's telling us there's a train calling, we
20 make sure the guys are in the clear and we inform him, men and
21 equipment are in the clear.

22 Q. So when you set on, were you aware that after you set on,
23 they had released the tracking time on main track 1?

24 A. Yeah. I had told him -- I had called Claude and I explained
25 to him, Claude, everybody is on track. We are ready to head

1 north. You can release one. I don't know exactly when he
2 released it. Because I don't -- I'm not in his truck.

3 Q. So -- and you've got tracking time before and --

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. -- done the work that Claude did that day?

6 A. I don't run -- I'm not a flagman foreman. I don't call
7 trains.

8 Q. And you don't talk to dispatchers?

9 A. I do talk to the dispatcher when I get tracking time.

10 Q. So you have got tracking time.

11 A. In the past. Yeah, yeah. Of course.

12 Q. So how does everybody else on the work group, so operators of
13 the machinery and the ground personnel, all the other six or seven
14 people that are out there, how do they become aware of when Claude
15 releases -- like tracking time on track 1 -- and how do they know
16 and understand that they're protected on track 2?

17 A. Oh, because I tell them. So I -- like when we get on track
18 2, and we're ready to go north, I let them know, hey, Claude is
19 going to be releasing one. Everybody is in the clear.

20 Q. And I'm going to guess again. The importance of what you
21 just said is you do that via your radio?

22 A. They have a radio. The contractors have a radio.

23 Q. Everybody is on the same channel.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And when Claude tells you stuff, you get on your radio and

1 you tell the rest of them.

2 A. Say that again. I'm sorry.

3 Q. Okay. That's all right. I'm just trying to understand the
4 process. I get it. My term of art for Claude is he's the
5 employee in charge. He's the guy who is talking to the dispatcher
6 or somebody else. But you talk to Claude on the radio. Right?
7 Does he -- let me put it in the form of a question. Does he
8 update you when things change?

9 A. Correct, yes.

10 Q. And to follow through with that communication process, when
11 he talks to you, do you then inform the rest of the people in the
12 group?

13 A. Yeah, if they need -- if that's something that they needed to
14 know. You know.

15 Q. And you generally do that via radio?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. So everybody is on the same page?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. So after you guys set on at Center Street or Center Road and
20 you've given up your time on main track 1, you've got the three
21 pieces of equipment and they're heading north on main track 2.

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. And you leave Center, the road crossing. How far did you
24 travel up before you got stopped?

25 A. So Center is like 12.6. It's just about a mile. Then you go

1 to -- 12.6 to 11.6 it's about a mile. It's not far.

2 Q. Tell me, what was the purpose of stopping where you stopped?

3 Where --

4 A. (Indiscernible) --

5 Q. Essentially, where the accident happened.

6 A. Yeah, okay. Yeah. So we stopped right there. They have the
7 poles for the catenary -- I guess that's what you call them.

8 That's where they're on the ground. And they're long. They're
9 super long. They're right there on the main track 2 --

10 Q. More than 20 feet long?

11 A. Oh, yeah, yeah. They're super long. They're sitting there,
12 some guy -- other contractors, whatever, built them the way they
13 needed to be built and they're staged there at 11.7.

14 Q. So before you go up into the Form B zone to work and to place
15 poles there, you got to stop and get the poles to be placed.

16 Right?

17 A. No, no. That's what we're doing at 11.7.

18 Q. Oh, you're placing poles there. That's the work area?

19 A. Am I saying it right? Like --

20 Q. Well, it doesn't sound like you're saying it right. So I
21 just want to slow down.

22 A. Okay.

23 Q. Let me start again. You sat on at Center Street.

24 A. Correct.

25 Q. You gave back the foul time on one because everything is now

1 on two. All three pieces of equipment.

2 A. Correct.

3 Q. And you're -- the goal is to go up into the Form B.

4 A. Well, you go to 11.7 first --

5 Q. To?

6 A. -- to pick up all the poles.

7 Q. I just want -- here's what we need to clear up.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. The intention wasn't to work where you were picking up the
10 poles. The intention was to pick up the poles, load them up on
11 the trailer, and then continue to go north.

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. Okay, so --

14 A. Sorry for the confusion.

15 Q. No, that's okay. Give us -- Tim, give us an estimate. When
16 -- how long do you think you guys stopped where the accident
17 happened?

18 A. We were there for about like a half hour, maybe a little
19 longer. It could have been a little less, a little more. But it
20 was -- it felt like a half hour.

21 Q. Was there -- while you were there, was there ever any
22 communication to you that Claude had released tracking time,
23 essentially your protection, on that stretch of track that is
24 south of the Form B that went down and included Center Street?

25 A. No, never. I don't know why that would happen.

1 Q. Well, but, you know, definitely -- I guess I'm saying the
2 obvious. What happened on the day of the accident was unlike
3 anything you guys had ever done before. And it seems to me like
4 there was a pattern, you know, you job brief, you go down to
5 Center Street, you got to put the equipment on the track, you give
6 back the foul time on main track 2, you go from Center Street, you
7 go up there. You always have to stop at 11.7. Right?

8 A. For this particular job because they were grabbing the poles,
9 that's where they were placing them, for them to pick up.

10 Q. So stopping and picking up the poles, that was discussed at
11 the job briefing.

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. Was the --

14 A. Every day.

15 Q. And was the type of protection for that portion of main track
16 2 -- was that discussed in the job briefing?

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. It was?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. There was no ambiguity about it?

21 A. Yeah. We always talk about our protection.

22 Q. You're the watchman. Claude is -- my term of art -- employee
23 in charge. And he's the guy insuring the tracking time, the track
24 protection --

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. -- for the work in whatever section that it's being done.

2 A. Correct. So he'll talk about the tracking time and then
3 he'll tell us when we -- when he gets it, he's going to call me,
4 and then I write it down. And then, I give it to the guys.

5 Q. Do you think it was a good job briefing?

6 A. Yeah, it was a job briefing like every other one.

7 Q. Do members of the group, do they typically participate? And
8 let me describe that. Do they typically ask Claude, you, or
9 whoever is doing it, do they ask him questions?

10 A. Oh, yeah. They'll always ask questions. I don't know
11 particularly that day what they were asking. You know, I don't
12 remember. But they're -- almost all the time at job briefings,
13 everybody participates. They always want to ask, you know, what
14 was that, what was that.

15 Q. Let's make believe the incident didn't happen and the
16 storyline is job brief, go down to Center Street, get on one track
17 or main --

18 A. Two.

19 Q. Two.

20 A. We were getting on two.

21 Q. You guys were always working off of two --

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. -- because that's the structure and support track or outside
24 main track 2 for the catenary?

25 A. Yeah, they're putting up the poles. They're setting them on

1 the main track 2 side.

2 Q. Field side of main track 2.

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. All this description. Not that you couldn't ever have gotten
5 on main track 1, but the work was always over on main track 2?

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. So let's just think outside the box here for a minute. Let's
8 add this description: if this incident didn't happen and we know
9 that you guys stopped for about 30 minutes -- according to you,
10 you stopped for about 30 minutes and load up stuff. Tell me what
11 the other days were like. After you loaded up, you would have
12 done what?

13 A. So if we were done loading, ready to go north, I would have
14 called the RWIC. I would call up. I would call him up and say,
15 we are -- we're all done loading, we're ready to proceed north to
16 the job site. He would say, you got permission to come north.

17 Q. So well, first of all, you're introducing a new acronym.
18 RWIC stands for --

19 A. Railroad worker in charge.

20 Q. -- railway worker in charge.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. And who is that person?

23 A. Claude Robins.

24 Q. See, I -- forgive me.

25 A. Sorry.

1 Q. I'm a little confused. Because I thought Claude was with you
2 on scene. Yes? No?

3 A. Was he there when the accident happened?

4 Q. No. Was he there at the job briefing physically?

5 A. Correct, correct. Yes, he was.

6 Q. Then did he leave the work group?

7 A. So when -- yes, so when we went to Center, it was just me and
8 Gilbert in the Hi-Rail because we also had to do the flags. So
9 before those guys get on track, we had to set the flags on the
10 south end.

11 Q. How long does all that take typically?

12 A. That takes like -- you got to -- they're two miles apart so
13 you got to go through all the stop lights. Probably sometimes
14 like 45 minutes.

15 Q. Just to put the equipment on?

16 A. No, no, no. I'm talking about the -- you talking about --
17 before I got to -- so we had the job briefing at visitation.
18 That's like 6.5. And so Claude and his watchmen did the north
19 flags. And then me and Gilbert, we did the south flags.

20 Q. And the flags were set up for occupying main track 2?

21 A. Yeah, it gives the trains -- they can see them. They're on -
22 - one is on the two and the one. So you have flags so the trains
23 -- like so when the northbound is coming, they can see the yellow
24 reds and that gives them time to call Claude, hey, you know,
25 giving him permission to go through the reds.

1 Q. And I don't want to assume so you'll tell me. The flags are
2 main track specific. You set up flags for two track or one track
3 or both tracks?

4 A. Most of the time, it means -- you're in the Form B, it's
5 always -- I've always been -- it's two tracks that you put it on
6 one -- you put a flag on this track and a flag on this track so
7 they can see it.

8 Q. For the Form B?

9 A. Correct.

10 Q. If a train were to enter a Form B --

11 A. (Indiscernible) --

12 Q. -- who do they talk to?

13 A. Claude. They call Claude. They know -- he's -- on that
14 particular day, he was MW200, if I'm correct. And that's what
15 they would call and ask for MW200, do we have your permission
16 to --

17 Q. Enter the Form B.

18 A. -- enter the Form B. And then he goes through this process
19 of setting -- letting them through.

20 Q. But I want to be clear about this.

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. After you guys set the three pieces of equipment on at
23 Center, you gave back your time on main track 1. And is Claude
24 now with -- physically with the group or is he at some other
25 location?

1 A. He's at like South San Francisco Station where he can hear
2 the trains. He has to be able to hear the trains calling.

3 Q. So he's -- he conducted the job brief with you guys.

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. At your starting location.

6 A. Um-hum.

7 Q. He got the tracking time for you guys to set on main track 2.

8 A. Correct.

9 Q. I mean, you were going to occupy two and you gave back main
10 track 1.

11 A. After we were already set on two.

12 Q. And the other thing I need to understand is, Claude is
13 working with your group on your task, main track 2, set on, go up
14 to the fabrication yard, pick up material. But the goal was get
15 up into the -- and this is the new thing I'm going to introduce --
16 get up into Claude's authority on the limits of the Form B.

17 A. Correct, correct.

18 Q. So he did depart the group and he was some other location but
19 you could talk to him on the radio.

20 A. The radio and the phone.

21 Q. Before the accident happened, the incident happened, had you
22 talked with Claude on the radio or the cell phone?

23 A. Both.

24 Q. Well, take us through a little bit of that conversation.

25 A. So once you set on, and you're on the rail, you do a radio

1 check with him to make sure that he can hear you with that radio.

2 Q. That's standard operating procedure?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Every day that you're out there?

5 A. So it's -- I go MW Hidalgo to MW200 or Robins. I think I
6 said MW200 radio check over. And then he'll just say right back,
7 radio check on the clear.

8 Q. That was the only radio conversation you had with him.

9 A. I can't remember but I do communicate to him sometimes. If
10 he calls me and says something on the radio, then I'll communicate
11 back on the radio. But like with tracking time, he always calls
12 you. He'll always call and let us know about the tracking time.

13 Q. When he's got it, when he's changed it --

14 A. Of course.

15 Q. -- or when he's released something.

16 A. When he released -- so when he released one, he never -- like
17 I told him -- I said, we're on main track 2. And we're all clear
18 of one. You can release one. (Indiscernible).

19 Q. And you did that over the radio or --

20 A. The phone.

21 Q. Cell phone.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. What did he say about that? Did he say he understood it?

24 A. Yeah. So he said, okay. And then I said, we are headed to
25 11.7 to load the poles. Once we are done, I will call you and we

1 will proceed north. During that conversation, he was like, you
2 have permission to go north when you're done. So -- but I would
3 have called him once we were done. We never got done.

4 Q. So there was no surprise about departing Center, going up to
5 the fabrication yard, stopping and --

6 A. No.

7 Q. -- loading. That's almost like standard operating procedure.

8 A. Yeah. For this particular job. Correct.

9 Q. Not that you'd have to stop there each and every day, but
10 this particular day, it was all discussed. It was just one of the
11 many tasks that was to be executed that day.

12 A. Correct, yes.

13 Q. Set on, go up to the fabrication yard, stop there for
14 probably 30 minutes.

15 A. Well, that's how long we were there. But it takes them a
16 good like hour to get everything loaded. That's what I was
17 noticing the last couple days. It took them a good hour to get it
18 all loaded. You know, you got to do it properly and secure it.
19 They have to put their trailers together. So they have to like
20 get them, put them on rail, put the other one on rail, and then
21 they put a pole in between it. I forget what you call it. And it
22 holds this trailer to that -- because they're pretty long. And
23 then they have the hitch that goes onto the other trailer.

24 Q. And I appreciate that. I get it. You're -- it takes time to
25 set up --

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. -- before you go up into the Form B.

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. And when you got up into the Form B, I mean, had things -- on
5 other days --

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. -- you stop and load and then you go up into whatever Form B
8 and wherever it's at. But that is the work zone for the
9 installation of the poles.

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. So I know this is going to sound dumb to ask you this. But I
12 think we kind of need to fill this in. Can you tell me what your
13 specific protection was on main track 2 for the three pieces of
14 equipment for the time that you were -- we went down to Center, we
15 set on, we're not up in the protection of the Form B. So wherever
16 that south end of that Form B, back to Center, describe that for
17 me just one more time.

18 A. North limits of Center to CP Scott, main track 2.

19 Q. Does that overlap into the Form B?

20 A. No.

21 Q. And you would say your exclusive track occupancy was tracking
22 time. In other words, you owned main track 2.

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. Where you were going to set on. Where you were going to tram
25 up a mile, stop, dwell at the fabrication yard for an hour, and

1 then what would -- when you normally get done on other days, when
2 you get done with the loading, what do you do? Do you call
3 anybody?

4 A. I call the RW -- I call -- whoever the RWIC is, I call --
5 we're ready to proceed north, we're all loaded and we're -- he'll
6 say, come on down. And --

7 Q. On the day of the incident, did you ever have that
8 discussion?

9 A. Correct. No. Well, we didn't because we never left. Sorry.

10 Q. I was kind of --

11 A. We had that discussion when we were leaving, like I said
12 prior, I said, once we set on two and everybody was clear, during
13 that talk, I had told him we were going to 11.7 to load. But we
14 never left. We just went there to load. So he knew we were
15 there.

16 Q. But normally --

17 A. When we leave, I call him.

18 Q. And let him know, hey -- well, you have to call him because
19 you have to get his permission to come into his --

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. -- Form B. Right?

22 A. Yes. I mean, of course. I call him every time I'm --
23 whenever I leave, I always call him.

24 Q. So you're updating him on the completion of a task.

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And your transit into another area?

2 A. Correct.

3 Q. So you may or may not know this but I'm going to ask you
4 anyhow. Claude RWIC is his duty, that's his function, getting
5 tracking time protection. Does Claude -- is he the RWIC for other
6 groups, other tasks, other locations?

7 A. Other days for other jobs? Sure.

8 Q. And that's normal?

9 A. Normal.

10 Q. Still feel good?

11 A. Yes.

12 MR. HIPSKIND: All right, great. Listen, I think you and I
13 have covered basically a lot of the story. So let's invite some
14 of the other interviewers.

15 MR. HIDALGO: Okay.

16 MR. HIPSKIND: And see what's on their mind. Felipe, if you
17 want to --

18 BY MR. AYALA:

19 Q. Yeah. I just have a couple of questions. The first one --
20 how long had you been working with this group of contractors, this
21 specific group?

22 A. Just since Tuesday.

23 Q. Since that week, Tuesday.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. And when you set on Center, would you tell me the order of

1 the vehicles and which direction each vehicle was facing and
2 traveling?

3 A. So I was set on first north.

4 Q. And what --

5 A. I would be facing north.

6 Q. Which vehicle were you in?

7 A. The Hi-Rail. The TASI Hi-Rail, Caltrain Hi-Rail. Then the
8 big crane comes in. The big crane comes in. He sets on and he's
9 north. He's just like me. North. And then the other guy is
10 pointed south. So he backs in.

11 Q. Got you.

12 A. So when we go back to the place, I mean to get off, I get in
13 there and I pilot them. And the other guy drives our truck back.
14 For safety reasons in case, you know, when I have my radio.

15 Q. Yeah, absolutely. So when you contact the -- when you called
16 Claude to tell him that it was okay for him to release track
17 number one, did -- once Claude released track number one, did he
18 contact you to tell you that it was released, to confirm that
19 track number one was live?

20 A. No.

21 Q. He never called you back?

22 A. No. I just told him, I said, we are clear of main track 1.
23 We're all on main track 2. You can -- you have permission to
24 release it. That's -- they give you a small window. It was like
25 six minutes. It wasn't very big. Those guys are really good at

1 getting on safely and quickly with their machines to do it in that
2 amount of time.

3 Q. You mentioned that you contacted the contractors via the
4 radio to notify them that you were notifying -- or that you were
5 going to release track number one. Right?

6 A. I either did it on the radio or I'm walking back to the truck
7 and I'm telling them in the window. So it was either/or. It
8 might have been me walking. So when they're getting on, I'm
9 standing making sure they're not going to foul the signals with
10 their truck. Because north CP Center is really close by the
11 crossing.

12 Q. By the crossing area.

13 A. So we've always been trained just to watch them. They don't
14 get too close but you just want to make sure. You know?

15 Q. I got you.

16 A. So that's -- when I'm walking, I'm letting them know, hey,
17 he's releasing one.

18 Q. And then, you mentioned that when you arrived at 11.7, while
19 the contractors were loading, can you tell me where exactly you
20 and -- is it Gilbert?

21 A. Gilbert.

22 Q. Where you guys were standing.

23 A. About the -- just like at the end of the platform north.

24 Q. And that platform is located on which side of which main
25 track?

1 A. Main track 2.

2 Q. Main track 2. So you and Gilbert were on the main track 2
3 side on the platform.

4 A. Same side as the contractors.

5 Q. Okay, thank you. Is it -- and this is just a general
6 question. Is it typical when -- for Caltrain when you have two
7 work groups like this to only have one person getting the track
8 authority for all the --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. -- work going on? Is that pretty normal?

11 A. Yeah.

12 MR. HIPSKIND: You got to speak up a little bit.

13 MR. HIDALGO: Yes, sorry.

14 MR. AYALA: That's all the questions I had at the moment.

15 Thank you.

16 MR. HIPSKIND: Thanks, Felipe.

17 MR. RIDGEWAY: Jim.

18 MR. HIPSKIND: Jim.

19 BY MR. RIDGEWAY:

20 Q. Yeah. So you said that you communicate sometimes with the
21 contractors with radios. Is that their radios or --

22 A. Yes, correct.

23 Q. So no other TASI employees or --

24 A. No. I'll let them know, hey, we have -- we got a train
25 calling, let me know when you're in the clear, you know. And I'm

1 always making sure they're in the clear. You know, it's just
2 another safety that we're using.

3 Q. Little pac-sets.

4 A. Little pac-set.

5 Q. Shunting with this equipment. Does it ever shunt?

6 A. I don't think so.

7 Q. You guys --

8 A. I'm not really familiar with it shunting ever.

9 Q. And you guys were setting the flags for the Form B as you
10 were moving to San Bruno to get your material --

11 A. Correct, so --

12 Q. -- for Robins.

13 A. So when they were on their way to Center from visitation, we
14 were on our way to do the flags. So --

15 Q. Each group gets flags on (indiscernible).

16 A. Yeah. And they're two miles apart so --

17 Q. Yes.

18 A. -- I mean, you got to go through all the -- the streets and
19 the lights and --

20 Q. You don't set them from the Hi-Rail?

21 A. No.

22 Q. You guys did that before you ever set on the track?

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. Okay, I understand now.

25 A. And that's all -- yeah, sorry I didn't clarify that.

1 MR. RIDGEWAY: That's all I got. Thank you.

2 MR. HIPSKIND: Thanks, Jim. Rick?

3 MR. BRUCE: Just one question.

4 MR. HIPSKIND: You might want to move down here.

5 BY MR. BRUCE:

6 Q. Just one question.

7 A. I can hear him.

8 Q. What I need to know is phone conversation during the time --
9 once you had time on two, was there any communication that during
10 the loading process via phone that you held with Robinson [sic]
11 while loading.

12 A. While loading.

13 Q. While loading.

14 A. I don't think so. Not at all, I think. We -- the only
15 communication I had with Robins was when I left -- when we were
16 leaving. You know, we set on at Center. And I had called him and
17 said we are on -- we are all -- that's when I had cleared -- told
18 him to clear one. We're all on two. That's the communication I
19 had with Claude about going to 11.7, you know, stopping. And then
20 once I leave, we will call you before we leave. Once we're done
21 and we're ready to go, I would call him. But it was no other
22 communication.

23 MR. BRUCE: That's all I have.

24 MR. HIPSKIND: We got two Jims [sic] so Jim Brown, do you
25 have any questions?

1 MR. JIM BROWN: Jim Brown, yes, I do.

2 BY MR. JIM BROWN:

3 Q. Hi, Tim.

4 A. How is it going?

5 Q. A couple. Just so -- on the job briefing at visitation, so
6 the only protection that was issued was the Form B information.

7 Right?

8 A. Correct, yes. Well, I mean, we -- the Form B -- I mean, we
9 talked about the tracking time. But once we get the tracking
10 time, we talk about it more.

11 Q. Right. So you talked about what was needed to be issued.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. And --

14 A. And then -- correct.

15 Q. And when you were on site, when -- how far was your Hi-Rail
16 vehicle from the next contractor unit?

17 A. Probably like more -- it was more than 50 feet.

18 Q. Fifty feet?

19 A. It was more than 50 feet.

20 Q. And when we're talking about the radio communication with the
21 contractor, that is not on a taped --

22 A. I'm not sure. I think that's something that they -- those
23 radios you guys give out, I'm not sure it's recorded. I know ours
24 are.

25 Q. Okay. The communication with Robins -- so when you were

1 clear of M track 1, you had all the equipment on M track 2, ready
2 to head north to the site to load the poles, you called him and
3 told him that you were clear of M track -- could you just --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. I just want to -- you phrased it a couple of different ways.
6 I just --

7 A. No problem.

8 Q. -- want to know what you said.

9 A. So as soon as we're -- once we're all on track, and we're
10 ready to go, and we're clear of one, I call him and let him know,
11 everybody is on two, we're clear of one. You can release that
12 now. Because it's a six-minute -- six minutes.

13 Q. And that was your last conversation with him?

14 A. During -- yes, during that one is the one -- like I said
15 before, I explained, you know, we're going to be heading to 11.7,
16 we're going to be stopping, loading material. Once we -- once
17 we're ready to leave, we will call you.

18 MR. JIM BROWN: I don't have anything else, sir.

19 MR. HIPSKIND: Thanks, Jim. Derek?

20 MR. DEREK BROWN: No questions. (Indiscernible) asked about
21 the same questions that I would. The only thing I'd like to do is
22 to -- for clarification regarding the radios, the communications.

23 MR. HIPSKIND: Please do.

24 MR. DEREK BROWN: There's a cell phone that is issued to the
25 RWICs, watchmens, and pilots, and a railroad radio. The

1 contractors have a set of radios that they share with each
2 individual; based on where they are at the time communicating with
3 them.

4 MR. HIPSKIND: I'm going to take a minute here. And I'm
5 going to ask your representative -- Mitch, is there anything that
6 you want to add in terms of clarification on anything that you
7 heard? Did we get off on the wrong path on any of this or --

8 MR. MCCARTHY: One thing I would like to clarify is -- I'm
9 with the BMWED and I am a vice chairman for the Brotherhood. I
10 didn't mention that when I said my name earlier for -- my name is
11 Mitch McCarthy. The questions were thorough. Everything does
12 seem to be very accurate. Just to touch on Mr. Derek Brown's
13 statement as -- if I understand this correctly is there was three
14 forms of communication. One is a work cell phone, one is a work
15 radio, and the other one is a contractor work radio. Is that
16 correct?

17 MR. HIDALGO: Yeah, correct.

18 MR. MCCARTHY: I don't think there's anymore (indiscernible)
19 clarification. Thank you.

20 MR. HIPSKIND: Let me just poll the group. Do you have
21 additional questions? Do we need to do a second round or have we
22 just about got the story and your questions satisfied? So I'll
23 just look at everybody. We're good to go.

24 MR. HIDALGO: Can I just say something at the end?

25 MR. HIPSKIND: Well --

1 MR. HIDALGO: Okay. Yeah, no problem.

2 MR. HIPSKIND: Tim, you have the floor. Talk to us about
3 whatever is on your mind.

4 MR. HIDALGO: I just want to say that I'm glad everybody is
5 okay, nobody died, and I did everything that I -- I was trained to
6 do and I just -- I hope I did it to your guys' satisfaction. I'm
7 just happy that everybody is alive. And those people that got
8 hurt, I hope they get better. I'm just glad nobody died. You
9 know, it could have been a lot worse. I just --

10 MR. HIPSKIND: Speaking --

11 MR. HIDALGO: Thank God --

12 MR. HIPSKIND: Go ahead. I'm sorry to interrupt.

13 MR. HIDALGO: No, that's okay. I just -- you know, I just --
14 I'm -- I was scared. I was frightened. And it was the worst
15 experience of my life. But I'm going to get through it. And I
16 just thank God they're all alive. And I think I hugged everybody
17 that day. You know, I was hugging everybody. People I didn't
18 know. And I just want to say, you know, yeah, I just -- I'm glad
19 everybody is alive. And I hope he's -- he gets better. Just let
20 him know (indiscernible). That's all I have.

21 MR. HIPSKIND: Well said, Tim. Let me do the close-out
22 questions. Is there anything else that you would like to add or
23 change about our -- just description in general?

24 MR. HIDALGO: No.

25 MR. HIPSKIND: Are there any questions that we should have

1 asked but that we did not?

2 MR. HIDALGO: No, you guys did good.

3 MR. HIPSKIND: And do you have any suggestions for preventing
4 a reoccurrence?

5 MR. HIDALGO: You know, that is something I've been thinking
6 about. And I don't know if that's bad or whatever but I just --
7 maybe like when you're in a big group like this and like, you know
8 like that -- we didn't know that train was coming so maybe we have
9 somebody at that switch, you know, watching just in case. I don't
10 know like -- that costs more money, I don't know. Maybe shunting.
11 Shunting the vehicles. I think shunting the vehicles is going to
12 be the best thing. So that's -- one of those. Either you have
13 somebody at each switch or every vehicle shunts. I mean --

14 MR. HIPSKIND: Explain what -- how shunting would have added
15 to safety that day. Because a lot of people -- you and I know
16 what you're talking about.

17 MR. HIDALGO: From what I know about shunting is that if it's
18 shunting, they know that there's something there on the track.
19 So --

20 MR. HIPSKIND: You're just like a train.

21 MR. HIDALGO: Yeah.

22 MR. HIPSKIND: And a dispatcher is not --

23 MR. HIDALGO: And the dispatchers knows. They know. They
24 can see it. That's what's I know. I don't know the whole process
25 of how they see it. They see it on a screen, I guess. But that's

1 shunt.

2 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. I hear you loud and clear. Is there
3 anyone else that we should interview? And you're already aware
4 that there's several other members of the group so anybody else
5 besides that?

6 MR. HIDALGO: No, sir.

7 MR. HIPSKIND: Well, I will stop and ask the group is there
8 any other additional comment or question?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, sir.

10 MR. HIPSKIND: And hearing none, I would just thank you, Tim,
11 for --

12 MR. HIDALGO: Thank you. I appreciate it.

13 MR. HIPSKIND: -- helping us out with the investigation and
14 railroad safety in general. And with that, gentlemen, we will
15 adjourn.

16 (Whereupon, 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: CALTRAIN COLLISION WITH
CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT NEAR
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
ON MARCH 10, 2022
Interview of Tim Hidalgo

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD22LR007

PLACE: San Francisco, California

DATE: March 12, 2022

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.



Katie Leach
Transcriber