

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: \*

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TRAIN CRASH IN CROZIER CANYON \*

NEAR KINGMAN, ARIZONA \* Accident No.: RRD18FR009

JUNE 5, 2018 \*

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\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: WILLIAM IRWIN

Holiday Inn Express  
Kingsman, Arizona

Thursday,  
June 7, 2018

## APPEARANCES:

TOMAS TORRES, Rail Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

TROY LLOYD, Rail Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

JIM McVICKER, Track Inspector  
Region 7  
Federal Railroad Administration

DAVID CARR, Operations Safety Inspector  
Federal Railroad Administration

JOHN REMINGTON, Superintendent, Operating Practices,  
Southwest Division  
BNSF Railway

AARON RATLEDGE, General Director, Operating Practices  
BNSF Railway

ROB REILLY, Vice President, South Region  
BNSF Railway

TREY ROWE  
Herzog Railroad Services, Inc.

RONALD SPRAGUE  
Safety Task Force  
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

SCOTT JONES  
National Safety Team  
International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and  
Transportation Workers (SMART)

BRIAN KOEHLER, Local Chairman  
CHARLES ASPLIN, Local Chairman  
SMART Transportation Division  
(On behalf of Mr. Irwin)

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I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. TORRES: We're going to get started.

3 This is a NTSB informal interview. My name is Tomas Torres,  
4 T-O-M-A-S, T-O-R-R-E-S. Today's date is June 7th, 2018. We're at  
5 a Holiday Inn Express in Kingsman, Arizona. We're interviewing  
6 the conductor in connection is an accident that occurred on, near  
7 Crozier Canyon, Arizona, on the date of June the 5th, 2018. The  
8 NTSB accident number is RRD18FR009.

9 The purpose of the investigation is to increase safety, not  
10 to assign fault, blame or liability. NTSB cannot offer any  
11 guaranty of confidentiality or immunity from legal or certificate  
12 actions. A transcript or summary of the interview will go in the  
13 public docket.

14 The interviewee can have one representative of the  
15 interviewee's choice. You have somebody?

16 MR. IRWIN: Yes.

17 MR. TORRES: Okay. Do you understand that this interview is  
18 being recorded?

19 MR. IRWIN: Yes.

20 MR. TORRES: Okay. Please state your name and spell it.

21 MR. IRWIN: William, W-I-L-L-I-A-M, Irwin, I-R-W-I-N.

22 MR. TORRES: And, your representative?

23 MR. KOEHLER: Brian Koehler, B-R-I-A-N, K-O-E-H-L-E-R, SMART  
24 TD, Local Chairman.

25 MR. ASPLIN: Charles Asplin, C-H-A-R-L-E-S, A-S-P-L-I-N,

1 SMART TD.

2 MR. TORRES: Okay. Troy?

3 MR. LLOYD: Troy Lloyd, that's Lloyd, L-L-O-Y-D, Track and  
4 Engineering Group, NTSB.

5 MR. ROWE: Trey Rowe, Herzog, Trey, T-R-E-Y, R-O-W-E.

6 MR. SPRAGUE: Ronald Sprague, R-O-N-A-L-D, S-P-R-A-G-U-E,  
7 Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, Safety Task Force.

8 MR. CARR: David Carr with the FRA Operating Practices, D-A-  
9 V-I-D, C-A-R-R.

10 MR. MCVICKER: Jim McVicker, J-I-M, M-C-V-I-C-K-E-R, Region  
11 7, FRA, Track.

12 MR. REMINGTON: John Remington, J-O-H-N, R-E-M-I-N-G-T-O-N,  
13 Superintendent Safety and Operating Practices, BNSF.

14 MR. RATLEDGE: Aaron Ratledge, A-A-R-O-N, R-A-T-L-E-D-G-E,  
15 General Director, Operating Practices and Rules, BNSF.

16 MR. TORRES: Okay. Tomas Torres, with the NTSB. Do you go  
17 by the name of William? Is that okay with, call you?

18 MR. IRWIN: I usually go by Will.

19 MR. TORRES: Will. Okay, we'll call you Will. Will -- oh,  
20 I'm sorry. We've got somebody else to get introduced.

21 MR. JONES: Scott Jones. S-C-O-T-T, J-O-N-E-S, state  
22 legislative director for SMART union Transportation Division, and  
23 also the representative for SMART Transportation Division's  
24 National Safety Team.

25 MR. TORRES: Okay. Will --

1 MR. REILLY: Rob Reilly, R-O-B, R-E-I-L-L-Y, Vice President,  
2 South Region, BNSF Railway, Fort Worth, Texas.

3 MR. TORRES: Thank you.

4 INTERVIEW OF WILLIAM IRWIN

5 BY MR. TORRES:

6 Q. Okay. Will, this is Tomas Torres with the NTSB. On the date  
7 of the incident, can you tell us what time you went on duty and,  
8 you know --

9 A. 0916.

10 Q. So you went on duty at 0916 -- 9 a.m.?

11 A. A.M., yes.

12 Q. Okay. And where was that at?

13 A. Needles, California.

14 Q. Okay. So, when you went on duty, explain to us what took  
15 place, you know, from time you went on duty to time you got on  
16 your train.

17 A. Went on duty at 0916. Called the dispatcher because I was a  
18 dog catch crew. Dispatcher instructed us to get one train at  
19 Franconia. Went out there, got the train at Franconia. DS11 --  
20 actually DS12, instructed us to put our train away in the yard at  
21 Needles, California.

22 After we put our train away in the yard, went back to the  
23 depot, called DS -- yeah, DS11. Instructed us to go back out for  
24 a second train, which was the stack MEMSCO1, call Hackberry for a  
25 further update. So we drove to Berry, which is in Kingman. We

1 asked the dispatcher, called him, he said -- instruct to go get it  
2 at Peach Springs. So then we proceeded to Peach Springs.

3 Q. Do you know that milepost location?

4 A. I do not, no.

5 Q. No, okay. So once you got on it, what took place?

6 A. Got on what?

7 Q. You know, once you got on your train, then -- once you took  
8 charge of the train, what took -- what happened after that?

9 A. We relieved the crew. We got on board. The engineer  
10 activated PTC. Once PTC was activated, we started to proceed  
11 west.

12 Q. And how did you get authority to go west?

13 A. Signal indication.

14 Q. So you were at a control point?

15 A. Yes. East Peach Springs.

16 Q. Okay. Did you talk to a train dispatcher there?

17 A. Yes. I toned up the dispatcher, let him know that the dog  
18 catch crew was on board and pulling. And the dispatcher  
19 responded, we have eight dog catch crews out there, which one is  
20 this? I responded, we're the 0916 dog catch crew on the BNSF  
21 4283. And he responded, "Okay. I understand the 0916 dog catch  
22 crew's on the BNSF 4283. Thank you." And that was it.

23 Q. And then you proceeded west?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And then how long did you travel, or what --

1 A. We proceeded on clear blocks until we started receiving the  
2 approach medium, the approach, into a stop. So maybe -- I don't  
3 know the exact time.

4 Q. Yeah. Well, where did you stop?

5 A. At the entrance to Crozier Canyon.

6 Q. Do you know a milepost location, or --

7 A. I do not know it off the top of my head.

8 Q. So you don't have like a log or something?

9 A. Oh, I did. There's a signal awareness form. But once -- it  
10 got lost in the impact.

11 Q. So would it be on the engine locomotive?

12 A. It should still be on there.

13 Q. Okay. And what was the conversation between you and the  
14 engineer from the time you boarded the train till the time you  
15 stopped? You know, what took place, what interaction was between  
16 you two guys?

17 A. When we climbed on board, the engineer always activates the  
18 PTC and then we check the bulletins with our bulletins, the hard  
19 paperwork versus the PTC, versus what's on the PTC. So we checked  
20 them. They all matched, and then we proceeded.

21 Once we started hitting color, we called the signals out and  
22 then proceeded. Then we stopped at the entrance to Crozier Canyon  
23 and we discussed -- the engineer goes, do you want to keep going?  
24 I said, no, it's a bad -- it's a bad signal to flag. And he goes,  
25 I understand. And then we waited.



1 Q. And how long did you wait?

2 A. Approximately 1 hour.

3 Q. Okay. And did you communicate with anybody, or did you call  
4 anybody --

5 A. No.

6 Q. -- over the radio or -- so you sat there for about how long?

7 A. An hour.

8 Q. An hour? And then when did you guys decide that you wanted  
9 to go, to continue west?

10 A. We proceeded to continue west when two trains on main track  
11 2, westbound, ran around us. And we thought, that's kind of  
12 unusual. So we discussed it. Maybe, we thought, well, we have a  
13 red because there's possibly broken rail or the connection's come  
14 undone, and it happens. So then we proceeded to then flag the  
15 block.

16 Q. Then you didn't hear other radio communication out there  
17 while you were sitting there?

18 A. No. What kind of radio?

19 Q. Anything. I mean, did you hear any --

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. -- did you hear anybody else, you know, talking or  
22 communicate?

23 A. Yes, dispatchers talking. We did hear the work train. The  
24 last communication that we heard from the work train was  
25 dispatcher asking them how long. We assumed he was asking them

1 how long they would need to clear up at Hackberry, which is west  
2 of Valentine.

3 Q. And do you recall what was said?

4 A. I do not.

5 Q. You don't?

6 A. Not -- it's just kind of background noise.

7 Q. Yeah. I mean, you just heard it. So your decision to  
8 continue west was based on that you got runned around?

9 A. Yes. Because the train in front of our train was a Z-train,  
10 so we assumed that those trains were stopped at Valentine and  
11 that's why we were receiving the red signal. But then the trains  
12 that ran around us were a manifest train and a vehicle train, and  
13 there's no way that those trains are going to be clearing Z-  
14 trains, which is how it works up here. So then we were like,  
15 something -- we probably got, I assumed, broken rail track,  
16 something's wrong with the track. So we proceeded to see if that  
17 next signal was, you know, a clear block or whatever. So --

18 Q. Okay. Yeah. So you didn't make an attempt to call a train  
19 dispatcher, find out if he had any indications or what was ahead  
20 of you or anything like that?

21 A. No, because if there was a track indication, they'll call you  
22 and let you know something's up. So we just assumed maybe --

23 Q. Were you aware that there was a work train out there?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. But you weren't aware that they were in front of you or --

1 A. Since the last transmission we heard, we assumed that they  
2 were tying up west at Valentine at Hackberry. Or not tying up,  
3 putting their train away, getting it cleared.

4 Q. So you assumed that they were already getting the train out  
5 of the main track?

6 A. Well, once we realized that there wasn't a train in front of  
7 us, we're like, that's why we're stopped, because there's a work  
8 train on the other side of the control point and we have a red  
9 block to protect us.

10 Q. Okay. And so, did you have any speed restrictions? You  
11 know, what's the speed of the track or can you describe the  
12 terrain, you know, what's it's like in there?

13 A. The entrance to Crozier Canyon is a 25. And it's in a  
14 canyon, there's -- it goes down and then it curves right, left,  
15 right, and it's one like giant right curve, and then goes back up  
16 to --

17 Q. And when did you guys became aware that there was something  
18 in front of you?

19 A. On the second -- what do you mean?

20 Q. Yeah, before the impact, you know, when did you guys become  
21 aware that there was somebody else out there?

22 A. When that -- when we realized that train was on our track.  
23 So main 2, on the second curve. Oh, I'm sorry, scratch. We were  
24 on main 1. We realized it was on our track we were on the second  
25 curve.

1 Q. On the second curve?

2 A. Yes, I believe going westward into Crozier Canyon.

3 Q. And so, once you saw there was somebody out there, what took  
4 place in the cab? You did what?

5 A. Engineer plugged it. I called out emergency. And then --  
6 that, that's what we done.

7 MR. TORRES: Okay. At this time I'll pass it to Troy.

8 BY MR. LLOYD:

9 Q. Yeah, I just had a couple questions for you. So when you  
10 arrived at the signal there, what did you call that intermediate  
11 signal where you stopped for an hour? What did you call -- what  
12 was the name of that signal?

13 A. You could say it's the entrance to Crozier Canyon.

14 Q. Okay. Okay. Then correct me if I'm wrong, you said when you  
15 pulled up, you saw the signal and you seen that it was some type  
16 of questioning signal, that something wasn't right --

17 A. Well --

18 Q. -- with it or something like that? Was I hearing you --

19 A. You can have a red anywhere, so I mean that's normal.

20 Q. Okay. I thought earlier you said that you, when you rolled  
21 up, you was like, eh, something's not right here, so we waited for  
22 an hour. Was I hearing you right through your interview process?

23 A. Yeah, I see what you're saying. So we stopped at the signal,  
24 which is we assumed there was trains in front of us and that's why  
25 we were receiving the red signal.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Westward facers on -- westward-bound trains on main track 1,  
3 so we assumed that's why we had the red block, which is normal.

4 Q. I got you, got you. So once you get that restrictive signal  
5 that's questionable, whatever, if you don't know if anything's in  
6 front of you or not, could be broken rail, it could be another  
7 train in the same block or something, what's the authority? Who  
8 would -- what would you have to do to to set there and go, look,  
9 I'm setting at signal 1-2-3, we got a red, what do I need to do to  
10 move westward through from point A to point B? Is there some kind  
11 of authority that you would need or --

12 A. No.

13 Q. -- request from the dispatcher, or something like that?

14 A. No. No, because it was a red intermediate signal.

15 Q. And a red intermediate signal is what? What does that mean  
16 to me?

17 A. You can proceed at restricted speed on a red block.

18 Q. Okay. Okay. Was there any type of notices or authority that  
19 you were given, or that a work crew would be in your route of  
20 travel, that they might have been working eastward from this  
21 signal, that maybe that's why that red was up there?

22 A. No. There was no official documentation.

23 Q. So, no official documentation. No notices. Did you know  
24 that, did you know that this crew was out there before? Have you  
25 worked this line recently? And when's the last time you worked

1 this --

2 A. I have not caught the work -- I work Needles extra board. I  
3 have not caught the work train. So I only knew it was out there  
4 just from (indiscernible) verbal, you know, communication.

5 Q. Okay. So, no notices, no bulletins that the work crew was  
6 working in your direction of travel?

7 A. No.

8 MR. LLOYD: Okay. That's all I have. Thank you.

9 BY MR. SPRAGUE:

10 Q. Ron Sprague, BLET Safety Task Force. So you were operating  
11 on signal indication with the authority CTC at the control points  
12 in a westward direction, and you thought that -- you had stopped  
13 because there might be a train stopped ahead that was going to go  
14 in a westward direction when you stopped. Is that correct?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. So after an hour, you guys decided that you would proceed  
17 down through the canyon, which is a terrible curvature --

18 A. Correct.

19 Q. -- location and a downhill grade. When did you realize that  
20 that work train was coming at you?

21 A. Like on that, on that other curve. I can't give you a  
22 distance or -- but, at first, I honestly 100 percent truly  
23 believed that that train was on main track 2 coming at us.

24 Q. Was it -- when you realized it was there, did you see that it  
25 was coming at you, coming east?

1 A. Yes.

2 MR. SPRAGUE: I don't have any more questions.

3 MR. TORRES: Okay.

4 BY MR. CARR:

5 Q. How you doing? David Carr, with the FRA. Just to give me an  
6 idea, have you run this territory before? How comfortable do you  
7 feel, you know, running the trains through the canyon? You seem  
8 pretty knowledgeable on the, you know, the curves to anticipate  
9 there.

10 A. Yes. I've worked the Seligman subdivision. I work the  
11 Needles extra board, so I've worked at -- I probably catch at  
12 least one or two trips on the Seligman subdivision a week.

13 Q. Okay. And so you mentioned, as a crew, you guys had the job  
14 briefing that, no, let's just wait here; this is, you know, not a  
15 good signal to flag, I think I heard you state there. So you guys  
16 are sitting there waiting an hour, and then were run around by two  
17 trains?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And then I guess there was a discussion, let's go ahead and  
20 proceed. I'm just trying to kind of understand. So you make that  
21 decision. What do you -- what were you anticipating on seeing?  
22 Did you guys -- you know, I heard you mention maybe broken rail,  
23 or did you think you were going to come up on a stopped train?

24 A. So if that block there was causing an indication for that red  
25 signal, then the next signal will be an upgrade from that

1 previous.

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. So that's what I was -- in my mind, I was prepping that --  
4 tell the dispatcher, hey, that signal was red; we've come through,  
5 there's no other train. We didn't find anything unusual. You  
6 might need a maintainer. So in -- through my mind, I was  
7 prepping, fully expecting to see --

8 Q. A clear signal.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. But there was no conversation with the dispatcher while you  
11 guys were sitting there waiting or when the other trains rode by,  
12 that kind of, hey, we're sitting here, red -- have been sitting  
13 here at a red? No conversations?

14 A. The dispatcher did not -- it's -- some dispatchers will  
15 notify you, hey, you're going to be waiting for two; you're going  
16 to be waiting for three, that said, and some don't. So no, we  
17 didn't -- we did not hear any communication from the dispatcher as  
18 to what was going on.

19 Q. And then you mentioned you guys were aware there was a work  
20 train out there working through hearing conversations or radio  
21 traffic --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. -- just kind of heard them out there talking. Where did you  
24 anticipate that work train was?

25 A. We anticipating them being on the west side of Valentine



1 putting their train away at Hackberry. There is a spur track down  
2 there, and we assumed they were putting their train away in the  
3 spur track.

4 MR. CARR: No more questions from me.

5 BY MR. RATLEDGE:

6 Q. Aaron Ratledge, BNSF. Thanks again for being here. You've  
7 worked for the railroad how long?

8 A. Five years in September.

9 Q. So, just -- and again you're probably going to repeat some  
10 stuff you've already said, so I'm going to apologize up front.  
11 But if you can just kind of walk us through the conversations you  
12 heard the dispatcher talking with the work train, to kind of help  
13 us. Was it about the time you --

14 A. We did not hear -- we did not hear the dispatcher. We heard  
15 them say, 45 minutes Hackberry.

16 Q. Okay. So you actually heard the crew on the work train tell  
17 the dispatcher they had about 45 minutes left?

18 A. I assume. I don't know the exact specifics of the  
19 conversation, but that's what we heard.

20 Q. That's fair. But could you distinguish if it was the  
21 dispatcher or was it your perception it was the train crew?

22 A. It was the train crew.

23 Q. Okay. So from your location where you're at, whether it be  
24 Cherokee or if you were already stopped at the intermediate, you  
25 couldn't discern or ascertain, or couldn't tell -- you couldn't

1 hear the dispatcher?

2 A. No.

3 Q. From your location at all?

4 A. No.

5 Q. So typically, obviously, you know, you can operate by a  
6 restrictive signal at restricted speed and -- but you mentioned  
7 that signal, the entrance to Crozier Canyon, is one we typically  
8 stop back for and we want a better signal, more capable signal to  
9 operate. Is that right?

10 A. Wait. Can you repeat that again?

11 Q. Yeah. I apologize. So you typically wait on a better signal  
12 to go through Crozier Canyon? You mentioned it was --

13 A. Increased discretion.

14 Q. Yeah. So what was the discussion in the cab with you and the  
15 engineer before you guys took off?

16 A. Well, we knew there was a Z-train in front of us.

17 Q. Um-hum.

18 A. I believe two. So we were waiting -- we assumed that they're  
19 waiting at Valentine, that the work train was on the other side  
20 and they had stopped both Z-trains and then us. That's why we  
21 have the red, for the work train to clear.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. But then -- that's it.

24 Q. Okay. So in your ride from Needles back out to Peach Springs  
25 in the crew van, you didn't hear any radio conversation at all

1 with the work train or the dispatcher or anything else?

2 A. No.

3 Q. No radio communication? Okay. So when you guys took off  
4 from the restrictive signal, you started down into the canyon, did  
5 you have any issues with how the engineer was operating the train?  
6 Did you mention anything to him about, you know -- were you  
7 comfortable with the way he was handling his train through the  
8 canyon?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. So take ---

11 A. Yes, I was comfortable with the way that he was operating.

12 Q. Okay. Very good. So whenever you first saw the Herzog, or  
13 the work train coming, you mentioned that you knew he was coming  
14 at the direction towards you, you just couldn't tell if he was on  
15 the main 2 or main 1. Correct?

16 A. Correct. Due to the curve, the angle of the track, and then  
17 there was multiple rails being laid down.

18 Q. That's fair. So obviously you mentioned that the engineer  
19 plugged the train. Did you plug the train also?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. So kind of take us through what happened when the  
22 collision occurred, what were your actions thereafter, if you can  
23 recall?

24 A. After impact, the train then started to lean. I was on top  
25 of the engineer. Kind of separated. Fuel started coming in, like

1 just trickling on the back of my neck, and I told him to get the  
2 fuck off of this thing now. We opened the back door. It was  
3 covered in diesel fuel. We slid right off the platform and we  
4 landed on the ground, and we started heading down the hill looking  
5 for the -- we -- the man that jumped --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- on the Herzog. We immediately went and looked for him.  
8 We found him. He was okay. And then another Herzog employee was  
9 up there on the tracks and started looking for us. And then we  
10 kind of -- we climbed back up and then someone said we have two  
11 guys trapped on the south side, on the other side of the train.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And then we climbed over, and then I ended up pulling the  
14 Herzog guy out of the --

15 Q. Okay. All right. The gentleman you found after you slid off  
16 the locomotive, did you identify who he was?

17 A. Yes. He was the brakeman on the work train.

18 Q. Okay. Did you notice anybody actually exiting the vehicle  
19 before the impact?

20 A. Yes. Just orange vests, blurs.

21 MR. RATLEDGE: Okay. All right. Thanks.

22 BY MR. JONES:

23 Q. Scott Jones, SMART National Safety Team. William, thanks  
24 again for talking with us and clarifying a lot of these questions  
25 we've got trying to paint that big picture, and of course the

1 biggest outcome, we never want this to happened again --

2 A. Absolutely.

3 Q. -- so all your input is critical. I'm -- I was confused -- I  
4 don't think you stated the time that you actually got on the stack  
5 train, when you dog-caught it?

6 A. I don't know what time I got on the stack train.

7 Q. Okay. Not even a guesstimate? Was you 6 hours on duty, 7  
8 hours at that time? Five hours?

9 A. Maybe 2, 2:00?

10 Q. Okay. And then, leading up to that, being on that extra  
11 board I know can be pretty grueling. Did you have exactly 10  
12 hours off? What was your time off prior to being called on duty  
13 at 9:16 that morning?

14 A. I believe I was coming off SMART rest.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. So I had 24 hours, then I believe I had 25 or 26 hours off  
17 prior, before coming on duty.

18 Q. Great. And then last, the toughest part to discuss about,  
19 which was what Aaron questioned you on, and we got to know a lot  
20 of the stuff that's going on and, that is, when you -- I just want  
21 to clarify, at the impact, you stated both the engineer and  
22 yourself placed the train in emergency. Were you knocked over on  
23 the engineer or did you, you know, just try to take cover to that  
24 side? It looked like there was pretty extensive damage to your  
25 end of the cab there, your side of the cab.

1 A. Honestly, when -- I didn't -- it was such disbelief that that  
2 train was on our track, I was like half in and out of my seat  
3 until it hit, and then glass hit me in the face, in my mouth, and  
4 then I just jumped on my engineer.

5 MR. RATLEDGE: I understand. Great. Thanks again. That's  
6 all I have.

7 BY MR. TORRES:

8 Q. Okay, Tomas Torres with NTSB. So they -- do they operate a  
9 lot of work trains? Have they been operating a lot of work trains  
10 out in that territory recently?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And so what's their form of operating out there when they  
13 have a work train? How do they usually do it?

14 A. I believe that the dispatchers provide protection from the  
15 work trains between two control points. They block it out.

16 Q. So they have like track and time?

17 A. I have not worked that work train, so I do not know if they  
18 issue track and time or if maybe --

19 Q. No, no, but -- but on previous trips, have you been out there  
20 like on another, on a freight train, and you encounter a work  
21 train out there?

22 A. I wouldn't know if it had track and time or not if I was on  
23 another train, unless, I mean, I -- you can look it up on the  
24 restrictions, but --

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. -- I would -- I wouldn't bother.

2 Q. I guess what I'm trying to find out, do they operate work  
3 trains out there without protection? Is that like normal or --

4 A. Obviously yes.

5 Q. -- or is it unusual?

6 A. Yes, they do operate work trains without protection.

7 Q. So they don't have track and time or Form B, anything like  
8 that type?

9 A. Yes, they do operate work trains without protection.

10 Q. Is that frequently or is it every once in a while?

11 A. Once is enough. So, yes, frequently.

12 MR. TORRES: Okay. I'll pass it on to Mr. Troy.

13 MR. LLOYD: I have no questions.

14 BY MR. SPRAGUE:

15 Q. Ron Sprague with the BLET. So, further with Tomas's  
16 question, when's the last time that you were issued track and  
17 time?

18 A. I have never been issued track and time.

19 MR. SPRAGUE: Okay. I have no further questions.

20 MR. TORRES: Identify yourself.

21 MR. CARR: What's that? Oh, Dave Carr, FRA.

22 BY MR. CARR:

23 Q. Just kind of going back to just prior, or coming up on that  
24 red signal at the intermediate, now you stated it's not unlikely  
25 to get a red signal in there, or where you're following another

1 train and you assume they're in the block ahead of you. I don't  
2 want to, you know, beat this down, but I'm just -- are you  
3 required to notify the dispatcher you're stopped at a red?

4 A. If -- yes. If -- but we did not notify the dispatcher  
5 because we believed there was two westbound trains in front of us.

6 MR. CARR: All right. I don't -- no more questions. Thank  
7 you.

8 BY MR. RATLEDGE:

9 Q. Yeah, I've got a couple of follow-ups. Aaron Ratledge, BNSF.  
10 So some of the questioning just a second ago was talking about  
11 work trains out there working without protection. Now there's  
12 various forms of protection on the railroad, as you and I both  
13 know. But a work train typically is working under signal  
14 protection; is that correct, in CTC? Would that be a form of  
15 protection?

16 A. It would be a form of protection, but it clearly is not.

17 Q. Okay. It -- okay. So how -- so, in your mind, how would  
18 they not be protected?

19 A. They were not protected because they let us past a control  
20 point.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Because when you see a red signal at a control point,  
23 absolute block, you have to be flagged by a dispatcher. We went  
24 past the last protection point for that work train. We received a  
25 red. It was due to the work train in that block, but we're fully



1 allowed to proceed on that red indication.

2 Q. Okay. So, but when you're following other trains, for  
3 example, you thought you were following a Z-train and you're  
4 essentially let by a control point. So are you saying essentially  
5 that the rear end of the Z-train could have been unprotected, or  
6 are you just talking specifically about the work train?

7 A. Wait. Repeat that again.

8 Q. So whenever you're following trains, I mean, you're let by  
9 control points, right --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. -- on signal indications?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. So whenever -- what -- whenever you pass the red intermediate  
14 signal, what is -- what's the requirement?

15 A. Yes. Restricted speed.

16 Q. Right. Okay. Okay. Thanks.

17 MR. RATLEDGE: That's all I had, Tomas.

18 MR. TORRES: Okay.

19 BY MR. JONES:

20 Q. Scott Jones, SMART National Safety Team. Just one quick  
21 question. Your certification is as a conductor. Do you also hold  
22 a engineer's certification?

23 A. I do not.

24 MR. JONES: Okay. That's all.

25 BY MR. TORRES:

1 Q. Okay. I've got some questions. Tomas Torres with the NTSB.  
2 What's your -- what was your train identification, your ID?

3 A. The train identification was SMEMSCO102L.

4 Q. Okay. And your work history, it was asked earlier, like on  
5 the prior days, 3 or 4 days prior to the day of the incident, you  
6 know, what was your work schedule like?

7 A. Where would you like to start, 3 days from the end to working  
8 towards?

9 Q. Yeah, to towards, yeah.

10 A. Friday, 6/1/18, I worked home as a brakeman on the  
11 QSCOCHI01L. Saturday, 6/2/18, I worked the H-Kick-Bar 331 to  
12 Barstow. I went to the hotel to get some sleep, and I got up to  
13 eat food and then went back to sleep. Sunday, 6/3/18, I worked  
14 the XBARBNG803 home out of Barstow, California. I got home  
15 between 2 and 3 in the morning, and then I SMART-rested Monday  
16 morning, 6/4/18. And then I'm off, coming off the SMART rest was  
17 Tuesday, 6/5, I went to work at 0916 in the morning.

18 Q. So you got at least 24 hours --

19 A. I had --

20 Q. -- of undisturbed rest?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. And leading up to that, those days, were you working nights  
23 most of the time or --

24 A. I do not. I did not.

25 Q. Oh, okay.

1 A. I happened to have 12-hour trips, so --

2 Q. All were 12-hour trips?

3 A. Pretty --

4 Q. Pretty close.

5 A. Pretty close.

6 Q. Okay. Now do you take any prescription or non-prescription  
7 drugs?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Nothing over the counter?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Okay. All right. Give us your hired date and brief history  
12 of -- with the railroad.

13 A. Hired out September 30th, '13, in Trinidad, Colorado. I  
14 stayed work there for 5 to 6 months, and then I came to Needles,  
15 California, and I've been here ever since.

16 Q. Okay. And all on the main track, or the yard operations?

17 A. Yes. Needles extra board, all main line, road work.

18 Q. Okay. What -- when was your last certification date as a  
19 conductor?

20 A. I believe I just did it this year, my year -- talking about  
21 year-end review?

22 Q. Did you just get recertified?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Certification card.

24 MR. IRWIN: Oh, I have it. I don't --

25 BY MR. TORRES:

1 Q. I mean --

2 A. I don't -- I'm not -- I don't know what the exact date is.

3 Q. But it's current, I mean?

4 A. Yes. It's current and -- yes, sir. It's current and up-to-  
5 date, and I believe it's in my wallet.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, it is. BNSF will have training  
7 every year, calling it an A or B, and when your triennial comes  
8 up, you know, you're considered certified after you've taken your  
9 rules test and met all the requirements.

10 MR. IRWIN: The last time it was issued, on 01-10-2017.

11 BY MR. TORRES:

12 Q. Okay. Thank you. Well, when's the last time a supervisor  
13 rode, or tested you, like (indiscernible) test?

14 A. Probably less than 2 weeks.

15 Q. Do you know what kind of test that was?

16 A. I believe it was maybe getting in the clear on and off  
17 equipment properly, and in-between.

18 Q. Do you get tested for restricted speed?

19 A. They do have restricted speed tests, yes.

20 Q. When's the last time you got tested for that?

21 A. I do not recall.

22 Q. You don't recall. Did your training prepare you for the  
23 requirements of your job?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. While you were on duty, did you ever use your cell phone?

1 A. You have to be more specific.

2 Q. Did you use your cell phone while you were on duty, or during  
3 that -- this trip, particular trip?

4 A. On the train?

5 Q. Yes.

6 A. No.

7 Q. Okay. I boarded the locomotive yesterday and I found this  
8 ear buds. Do you know whose they belong to?

9 A. I do not.

10 Q. Was the engineer ever on the phone?

11 A. I don't know.

12 Q. I mean, he was right next to you. I mean, yes or he was not?  
13 Was he on the phone?

14 A. I don't know. No. No. Not when we're moving.

15 Q. Okay. Is this a safe place to work?

16 A. BNSF?

17 Q. Yes.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. Is there anything that you would like to add?

20 A. No.

21 MR. TORRES: Troy, any questions?

22 BY MR. LLOYD:

23 Q. I've just got a few more follow-ups when you caught on.

24 It's Troy Lloyd, L-L-O-Y-D, from the NTSB. So the question came  
25 up that once you come up to an intermediate signal, you make

1 discretion to go or not to go, right, to go a restricted speed.  
2 So the question was the protection of work (indiscernible),  
3 whether they're protected or not protected, okay? So it was  
4 talked about when you follow the freight trains, you follow those  
5 at restricted speed. Well, the thing is that freight train is  
6 probably going in the same direction as you're going, right? Is  
7 that freight train allowed to stop and move back the other way  
8 before they call a dispatcher if you're following them?

9 A. Do they ever?

10 Q. Is that freight train allowed to stop -- if you're following  
11 another freight train, is that freight train allowed to stop  
12 within the same block that you're in, allowed to reverse back the  
13 other way, without calling someone and saying, look, we're  
14 stopped, we need to back up eastward, when you're following them  
15 at restricted speed? You're following the rear of their train at  
16 restricted speed.

17 A. The only --

18 Q. Do they have to get any type of permission?

19 A. The only way that they could do that, if there was a man on  
20 the point. If there is no man on the point, they have to get a  
21 6.6 and they need signal protection from control points to get a  
22 6.6.

23 Q. So the rule is -- what I'm hearing, and correct me if I'm  
24 wrong. So the rule is if you're following another freight train  
25 down through this snaky territory at a 1.5 percent grade, you're

1 following another freight train at restricted speed, that freight  
2 train is allowed to stop if he has another man at the rear, he can  
3 sit and go, we're backing up, without talking to you or talking to  
4 the train dispatcher? Is that allowed at the curve?

5 A. Yes, with a man on the point.

6 Q. So how does that man on the point know that you're not 75-  
7 feet from around the corner within stopping distance?

8 A. He --

9 Q. If he sees I'm going to work under, what, 15 mile an hour?  
10 Is that the correct --

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's 21.

12 MR. LLOYD: 21?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It'll stop the train at 21 miles per  
14 hour.

15 BY MR. LLOYD:

16 Q. Yeah, under that -- so what I'm saying, so how does that --  
17 when that freight train backs up, how does that guy know that  
18 you're not 100 feet around a blind curve, a 4-, 5-, 6-degree  
19 curve?

20 A. It would -- he would have to visually look to see if there's  
21 another train, and not block.

22 Q. How would he do that, if he -- if I can't see around this?

23 A. He gives short car counts --

24 Q. And I'm just getting clarity on this. It's --

25 A. He would give short car counts to where he could see around.

1 He wouldn't say, you're good for 50 if he cannot -- if he can only  
2 see 5. So he would bring him back at small increments.

3 Q. But still, he'd come at restricted speed -- he'd be coming at  
4 restricted speed with 200 feet of sight distance, and that's  
5 allowed to happen under these current rules in --

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. -- sight distance of -- that's not a safe braking distance.  
8 Am I safe to say that?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are you asking me?

10 MR. LLOYD: No, I'm asking him.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Okay.

12 MR. LLOYD: No. I'm asking --

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'll answer if you're asking me.

14 Yeah.

15 BY MR. LLOYD:

16 Q. I mean, but under the current rules, I'm allowed to back this  
17 train up without a safe braking distance when you're coming toward  
18 me and I'm coming toward you in opposing moves. Is that allowed  
19 to occur in this area that has no sight distance?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Is that safe to you? Is that a good rule?

22 A. No.

23 Q. And then does work trains usually work under some kind of  
24 track authority? I'm the track foreman, I got this track out  
25 between Troy.A and Troy.B, you're not allowed to move into my



1 territory unless you call the foreman so I can let you know if I  
2 got work equipment stationed at 480.2, restricted speed, be  
3 prepared to stop at half the range of distance, looking out for a  
4 roadway worker, workers on about -- near equipment. Does BNSF  
5 work equipment work under some type of track authority? Do they  
6 ever work under track authority? So it's under signal authority  
7 where I can move back and forth all I want and you can come at me  
8 at restricted speed?

9 A. They do issue out track and time. I'm not in maintenance, so  
10 I'm not -- I do not know why or they do or do not issue track and  
11 time, but they do do it. But this work train was not issue track  
12 and time.

13 Q. So are we calling, so -- I'm new at this. Are we calling  
14 track and time as the track authority I would get if I was the  
15 track foreman and --

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. -- I was in charge of that track from Point A to Point B? Is  
18 there certain cases that I wouldn't get authority and certain  
19 cases that I would get authority? Maybe it's possibly if I have a  
20 shunting unit versus not having shunting equipment; is that the  
21 case?

22 A. I don't know anything about that. I don't know anything  
23 about that.

24 MR. LLOYD: I'm okay.

25 MR. TORRES: I don't have any questions.

1 BY MR. CARR:

2 Q. Dave Carr with the FRA. Just since we've been discussing  
3 restricted speed, so do -- your crew was obviously at restricted  
4 speed when you guys passed the red, correct? Were you comfortable  
5 with the speed and --

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That was a question, right?

7 MR. CARR: Oh, yeah --

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think he gave a head nod, and we  
9 need -- since we're recording this, we need --

10 MR. IRWIN: Oh, no, I was just --

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- audible answer.

12 MR. IRWIN: Continue the question please. I wasn't  
13 acknowledging anything.

14 BY MR. CARR:

15 Q. Earlier you stated you guys passed the intermediate signal,  
16 you entered the block at restricted speed. Correct?

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. Were you comfortable with the speed you guys were traveling  
19 based on your sight distance?

20 A. Yes. If that train was stopped, we could have stopped our  
21 train within -- before impacting, if that train was stopped.

22 Q. But did you know that there was a train stopped ahead?

23 A. There was no train stopped ahead.

24 Q. Did you guys consider the possibility that -- I'm sorry --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Lloyd.

1 BY MR. CARR:

2 Q. Lloyd stated that if there's a train and they're allowed to  
3 make a reverse move within their block, was there any  
4 consideration that a train could have been moving towards you?

5 A. Moving towards us? That did not -- we did not think about  
6 that.

7 Q. Can you tell me in your words what restricted speed means to  
8 you?

9 A. Stopping with a half -- within half the distance of TERMSD,  
10 and that's -- oh my gosh, I can't exactly remember the acronym --  
11 trains, engines, railroad mechanical equipment, switches and  
12 derails.

13 Q. So, stopping within --

14 A. Half the range of vision.

15 Q. Half the range of vision. So you guys were comfortable you  
16 could have stopped within the half the range of vision of seeing  
17 some obstacle or TERMSD in front of you?

18 A. Yes.

19 MR. CARR: Okay. No further questions.

20 BY MR. RATLEDGE:

21 Q. So since we're talking about restricted speed, just a couple  
22 more questions. So Mr. Carr with the FRA -- this is Aaron  
23 Ratledge, for the record, BNSF.

24 Restricted speed, you just gave the definition of stopping  
25 within half the range of vision, short of the TERMSD that you

1 recalled. So I think Mr. Carr's question was, if you saw -- you  
2 made the comment that if the train was not moving in front of you  
3 or your direction, you gentlemen were traveling at a speed that  
4 would allow you to stop before striking the equipment; is that  
5 correct?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And do you also feel that the speed you were traveling would  
8 have allowed you to stop within half the range of vision short of?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. So, in other words, you would have stopped half the distance  
11 short of when you first became visible to the machine? I totally  
12 could have confused you on that question, so do you want me to  
13 repeat it?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. I'll certainly do it.

16 A. Repeat it please.

17 Q. Okay. So, so you said that if -- had the train not been  
18 moving in front of you to your direction, you felt confident you  
19 would have been able to stop short before striking it. Correct?

20 A. Yes. Stop short before striking it, yes.

21 Q. Okay. Do you also feel that you were traveling at a speed  
22 that would have allowed you to stop within the half the range of  
23 vision short of that equipment?

24 A. Stop short before striking it, yes.

25 Q. But not half the distance short of?

1 A. Yes. I believe we could have.

2 MR. RATLEDGE: Thank you. No further questions.

3 MR. TORRES: Any more questions? Any follow-ups? Troy?

4 MR. LLOYD: Yes. Yes.

5 BY MR. LLOYD:

6 Q. Troy Lloyd again, from the NTSB. If you would have had  
7 prior knowledge of that work equipment being out there west of the  
8 intermediate signal, if you would've had prior knowledge, a  
9 division notice, a train dispatcher telling you, hey, I got a work  
10 crew out there and you know the work crew could move both  
11 directions within the zone, would you have made that move knowing  
12 that they were out there?

13 A. No, absolutely not. We wouldn't -- I -- why would we even --  
14 yeah. No, we would not --

15 Q. Let me ask the question --

16 A. No, we would not have made that move.

17 MR. LLOYD: Thanks. That's all I have.

18 MR. CARR: One last question that was brought up earlier.

19 MR. TORRES: Identify yourself.

20 MR. CARR: Oh, Dave Carr with the FRA.

21 BY MR. CARR:

22 Q. Cell phones and, you know, I heard there was some discussion.  
23 I just wanted to be clear. At any time one of you guys were on  
24 the train, were, you know, your duties suspended and anybody using  
25 the phone?

1 A. I was not.

2 Q. So at no time there was -- there is a crew briefing  
3 suspending operations to use the cell phone?

4 A. No. I -- no.

5 MR. CARR: Okay. No further questions.

6 MR. TORRES: No more questions? Okay. Tomas Torres, with  
7 the NTSB. No more questions. This will conclude the interview.  
8 Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

9 MR. IRWIN: Thank you.

10 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

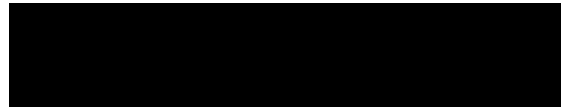
IN THE MATTER OF:            TRAIN CRASH IN CROZIER CANYON  
                                      NEAR KINGMAN, ARIZONA  
                                      JUNE 5, 2018  
                                      Interview of William Irwin

ACCIDENT NO.:                RRD18FR009

PLACE:                         Kingsman, Arizona

DATE:                         June 7, 2018

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.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Deborah Dowling Sweigart  
Transcriber