

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

TRAIN CRASH IN CROZIER CANYON *

NEAR KINGMAN, ARIZONA * Accident No.: RRD18FR009

JUNE 5, 2018 *

*

* * * * *

Interview of: MATT THOMPSON

Via Telephone

Tuesday,
July 17, 2018

APPEARANCES:

TOMAS TORRES, Rail Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

TROY LLOYD, Rail Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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

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

TREY ROWE, Director of Safety and Health
Herzog Services, Inc.
(On behalf of Mr. Thompson)

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Matt Thompson:		
By Mr. Torres		6
By Mr. Lloyd		14
By Mr. Carr		18
By Mr. Ratledge		19

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. TORRES: Okay, we're going to get started. This is a
3 NTSB informal interview. It's a phone interview. My name is
4 Tomas Torres, T-O-M-A-S, T-O-R-R-E-S. Today's date is July 17th,
5 2018, and again this is a phone interview. And we're interviewing
6 the employee for Herzog in connection with an accident that
7 occurred at Crozier Canyon on June 5th, 2018. The NTSB accident
8 number is RRD18FR009.

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

14 The interviewee can have one representative of the
15 interviewee's choice. Do you have a representative?

16 MR. THOMPSON: No, sir.

17 MR. TORRES: Do you wish to have one? It can be a co-worker
18 or maybe your supervisor.

19 MS. THOMPSON: I guess Trey Rowe.

20 MR. TORRES: Okay. Do you understand that this interview's
21 being recorded?

22 MR. THOMPSON: Yes, sir.

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

24 MR. THOMPSON: Matt Thompson, M-A-T-T, T-H-O-M-P-S-O-N.

25 MR. TORRES: And your representative?

1 MR. THOMPSON: Representative is Trey Rowe, T-R-E-Y, R-O-W-E.

2 MR. TORRES: Okay, and we go with the NTSB. Troy?

3 MR. LLOYD: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Troy Lloyd.
4 Last name spelled L-L-O-Y-D. I'm the track route chairman for
5 this investigation. I'm with the National Transportation Safety
6 Board.

7 MR. TORRES: Okay. Let's go with the FRA.

8 MR. CARR: My name is David Carr. Last name C-A-R-R. I'm
9 with the FRA, Operating Practices.

10 MR. TORRES: Okay, BNSF.

11 MR. RATLEDGE: Good afternoon. You've got Aaron Ratledge,
12 A-A-R-O-N, R-A-T-L-E-D-G-E, and I'm BNSF's General Director of
13 Operating Practices and Rules, based out of Fort Worth, Texas.

14 MR. TORRES: Okay, thank you. Anybody else from BNSF?

15 MR. REMINGTON: John Remington, J-O-H-N, R-E-M-I-N-G-T-O-N,
16 BNSF Railway, Superintendent of Safety and Operating Practices,
17 based out of Belen, New Mexico.

18 MR. TORRES: Okay, how about the BLET? Anybody for the
19 Locomotive Engineers? Okay. How about SMART?

20 MR. JONES: Yeah. Scott Jones, S-C-O-T-T, J-O-N-E-S, SMART
21 National Safety Team based out of Phoenix, Arizona.

22 MR. TORRES: Okay. How about the BNSF maintenance of way
23 union? Anybody from them? I guess not.

24 And for Herzog, is it only going to be you, Trey?

25 MR. ROWE: Yes, just myself and Matt.

1 MR. TORRES: Okay, thank you.

2 INTERVIEW OF MATT THOMPSON

3 BY MR. TORRES:

4 Q. Okay. Matt, this is Tomas Torres with the NTSB. Can you
5 please tell us a little bit about the day of the incident, June
6 5th, you know, how your -- time you went on duty and everything,
7 all the way up to the accident?

8 A. I don't remember the exact time we started. We were sitting
9 in the -- the train was parked in a siding. I don't remember the
10 exact name of the siding. But we had our job briefs. I want to
11 say the job brief was roughly probably 7:30, 8:00, I believe.

12 And after the job brief, we all got up on the train and we
13 had to make a reverse movement back where we were going to start
14 our unloading. And then once we got back there, we had another
15 job brief with the maintenance of way crew. And then after that
16 job brief, we had all got back up on the train and we had started
17 unloading.

18 When we got -- everything was going smooth, everybody, you
19 know, was on the same page, when we got to where we had dropped
20 our last stick of rail, at approximately probably 2:30, 3:00, I
21 believe. And then once that last stick of rail had hit the
22 ground, we had the track supervisor was on the train car that our
23 machine was mounted to, and we had to make a reverse movement back
24 to drop him off at his truck because he had to park back where --
25 a ways away from where the rail had to be unloaded due to he

1 couldn't drive in there. He had to help untie or break loose a
2 fish plate.

3 So we were driving, traveling backwards to drop him off and,
4 from what I can remember, I was sitting in the operator desk while
5 -- and I was facing west as the train was making a reverse
6 movement going east. And, you know, I was sitting there and all
7 the sudden I hear "Stop. Work train. Stop, stop. Plug it."
8 Well, when I heard "Plug it," I knew something was wrong because
9 I've never heard them say, you know, plug the air.

10 And when I heard that, I turned around and my feet -- and
11 that's when I seen the other train on our track. And by that time
12 it was, you know, it was done too late. I -- when it hit that
13 other train and I had glass coming in my face. Then we had just
14 -- the trailer had just fell over on its side and slipped down the
15 embankment, and I -- that's pretty much what I can remember as far
16 as the accident happening.

17 Q. Okay. You say, when you had your shop -- your first job
18 briefing, right, it was at a siding?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Do you recall --

21 A. We had briefed with the, we had briefed with the train crew.

22 Q. And do you recall what was said during that job briefing?

23 A. I'm sorry?

24 Q. Yeah. Do you recall what was -- the content of the job
25 briefing? Can you tell us, you know, what was said during the job

1 briefing?

2 A. With the train crew, we basically just go over the speeds
3 with them, with our machine on the train. You know, like we tell
4 them as we're going ahead, the train's at 15 ahead, and your
5 reverse moves will be handed over to the brakeman; he will protect
6 the shove, and we're only allowed to travel at 10 mph in a reverse
7 move. And then while we're unloading rail, it's going to be
8 between walking speed and 4 mph. So that was the brief with the
9 train crew. And we told them, you know, once we get traveled back
10 to -- I want to -- pretty sure we had to travel back to Peach
11 Springs and then we had our second job brief with the maintenance
12 of way crew.

13 Q. Okay. And you said you were laying rail. Was there specific
14 locations where you were laying rail?

15 A. Yeah. We have -- on our paperwork we have mileposts that we
16 have to go off of. And between Peach Springs and where the
17 accident happened, I believe we had to unload about 10 to 12
18 pieces of rail. I couldn't tell you the exact milepost that we
19 had to unload at, but most of the time it's at curves.

20 Q. Okay. When you said when you backed up from the siding, you
21 know, you were going to the location, to the first location you
22 were going to drop rail, do you know what track you were in or did
23 you hear any conversations with a train dispatcher?

24 A. I know we were on main 1. The main 1, I believe -- I believe
25 it was main 1. Whatever track that the train was still sitting

1 on, I don't believe that was main 1. We were -- we traveled that
2 one all the way back --

3 Q. And --

4 A. -- and then at -- go ahead.

5 Q. Yeah. When you mean back, you mean like eastward direction?

6 A. Reverse. Yes, traveling east.

7 Q. Traveling east, okay. And then --

8 A. We had the brakeman on the rear of the train.

9 Q. So at that time the brakeman was protecting the shove or he
10 was in control of the movement?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Okay. So when you arrived at your location, what took place
13 there?

14 A. Once we got to where we dropped the -- the first drop
15 location, we had another job brief with the maintenance of way
16 crew. Basically we had a new tie-down crew, so we had to tell
17 them -- we go through our whole job brief, as in the train will be
18 15 ahead, 10 on the shove, unload between walking speed and 4.
19 And once we get to each drop location, we'll get an in-between
20 from the work train, and then once we get the in-between, we'll
21 tell tie down which rail to untie it. Once they get that rail
22 untied, they'll say rail's untied, we're in the clear.

23 Once they tell us that they're in the clear, we come back on
24 the radio and say: "You're in the clear. Herzog's pulling rail,"
25 which just means we're present up on the scene, getting it loaded

1 up and ready to unload. Once we get it ready to unload, we come
2 back on the radio and say: "Herzog to the work train, everybody's
3 still in the clear, take her ahead at 4 mph." And the train will
4 take it right up to 4 mph, and then that's when we start
5 unloading. That's how our job briefs go.

6 And then we cover radio channels. Like since that was such a
7 busy subdivision, we worked off of a maintenance of way channel to
8 kind of keep the chatter down so we're not disrupting the dispatch
9 talking to the other trains. So we'll work off a maintenance
10 channel, and then we tell the head end to monitor the main line
11 channel and the channel that we're working off of, because they
12 have two radios up there. As well as the brakeman, he'll monitor
13 the main line channel and the work channel. So that way, you
14 know, it just kind of keeps everybody -- keeps all the chatter
15 down so that way we're not getting interrupted and no incidents
16 occur with the train taking off before they're supposed to.

17 Q. Okay. So was the type of protection that you and the train
18 crew were going to have, was that discussed or how'd that thing go
19 about?

20 A. Yes. We tell them that we are -- we're part of your train,
21 you know. We operate off of train coordination. Whatever the
22 train crew gets from the dispatch, that's what we do, because
23 we're -- we are now part of the train. So therefore we operate
24 off of train coordination, signal indications, track and time,
25 whatever the train crew's got to do in that area, we tell them

1 that's how we operate off of.

2 Q. So the train crew will establish some type of working limits
3 or establish protection, whatever is needed?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Okay. So after you finish your first load, do you know what
6 track that was in, do you know what --

7 A. We stayed on main 1 the whole day.

8 Q. The whole day?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. So on the last move, can you explain that to us again, you
11 know, as you were going back east?

12 A. Well, there, we got into a location to where the track
13 supervisor, he had to be with us because there was some fish-
14 plated rail, and we needed help to break them two pieces of rail
15 loose, because one piece went at one milepost and then the rest of
16 it went further up the track. So we had to have help to break the
17 nuts and bolts loose.

18 So he parked his truck as far as he could along the tracks
19 and then he got up on the train, on the catwalk on the last car;
20 he got up there. We unloaded the first piece that we needed to
21 unload, and then he traveled it out with us to finish unloading
22 the rest, which was like a mile and a half further up, I believe,
23 2 miles. And then once we got back, unloaded, we stopped the
24 train and we told the train crew what we had to do. We had to
25 make the reverse movement to drop the track supervisor off back at

1 his truck because it was going to be a long walk back to the -- a
2 long walk back to get his truck.

3 So we told the train crew, you know, we're going to hand the
4 reverse movement over to the brakeman, so that way we can drop him
5 off. And I -- we told the brakeman everybody's still in the
6 clear, we need to travel back to drop the track supervisor off at
7 his truck. That's when the brakeman started to talk to the train
8 crew and tell them what he's got to tell them as far as car counts
9 as far as he can see what was clear.

10 Q. And were you able to hear those radio conversations between
11 the brakeman and the engineer?

12 A. Yeah. We -- at that time we were still working off the
13 maintenance of way channel and the train crew was still monitoring
14 the main line channel, so I could still hear them two talking back
15 and forth to each other.

16 Q. Do you recall, as they were going east making that shoving
17 move, do you recall what those conversations were on the radio?

18 A. Most of the time he would just give out like car counts, as
19 in, "Brakeman to the head end, 30 cars, good for 30 cars," as in,
20 you know, he could see for 30 cars and it was clear. So the train
21 crew head end would come back and tell him, "good for 30 cars," so
22 that he, you know, he would still keep traveling. And then once
23 he -- once the brakeman got to where he had to give another car
24 count, he would tell them more cars.

25 Now it wasn't very far after we dropped our last piece of

1 rail, it was not very far until we met with that other train. It
2 was, I want to say it was probably within a quarter mile, we had
3 already made contact with that other train.

4 Q. So from a stop to the time of collision, it was about a
5 quarter of a mile?

6 A. As -- from what I can remember, yes.

7 Q. Okay. So you didn't travel very far.

8 A. No.

9 Q. But you don't recall like the last transmissions between the
10 brakeman and the engineer?

11 A. That I don't remember.

12 Q. Okay. Thank you.

13 A. I don't remember if it was -- the last thing I heard was:
14 "Plug it, work train. Stop. Plug it, plug it." And I don't
15 remember if that was the brakeman saying plug it, or if that was
16 the track supervisor that was on the train car saying plug it.

17 Q. Okay. Your duties as a Herzog employee, what were you
18 supposed to be doing with a machine -- the Herzog machine, or can
19 you explain what those duties are?

20 A. With the Herzog machine, it is a rail unloading machine. We
21 just -- we are part of a train. Once we get our truck set on the
22 tracks, we go into the train, and I'm an operator to where I
23 unload new rail, ribbon rail, for locations that need rail
24 replaced. So I operate the piece of machinery. Me and one other
25 guy operate it. So it takes two operators most of the time to

1 operate the machine.

2 MR. TORRES: Okay. Thank you. At this time I'm going to
3 pass it on to NTSB Investigator Troy.

4 MR. LLOYD: Yeah, good morning. Can you hear me, Tomas?

5 MR. TORRES: Yes, I can hear you.

6 MR. LLOYD: Okay. Yeah, there was just -- we're just having
7 trouble -- I'm having trouble hearing some conversation over the
8 phone.

9 BY MR. LLOYD:

10 Q. So I just want to get -- I want to get back to the day the
11 accident occurred. I want to talk about the type of protection
12 that you was working under. Did you receive -- I remember you
13 mentioned a job safety briefing. Tell me about the type of job
14 safety briefings, and please go into detail that you received that
15 day.

16 A. The foreman that I work with, he gives a job brief every day,
17 but when we get to our job, jobsite, it'll be the Herzog guys,
18 it'll be the train crew, which consists of an engineer, a brakeman
19 and a conductor, and then it'll also consist of the maintenance of
20 way crew, which consists of the employee in charge, then they'll
21 have two guys that the operate tie-down car. And once we get --
22 once we all get there, we talk to the train crew and we give them
23 our speeds with the machine connected to the train, which is 15
24 mile an hour ahead and on the shove, and we unload between walking
25 speed and 4.

1 Once we -- then we tell them, once we get to our job
2 location, we get an in-between. The tie-down will climb up on the
3 train, and then we -- once they get up there, they'll get all
4 their hoses hooked up and the impact gun to untie the rail. Once
5 they get everything hooked up, they'll tell us: "Herzog, tie
6 down, we're up on the train. What rail would like untied?"

7 Then we tell them which pocket to untie. But they'll climb
8 down, they'll untie that rail. Once they get it untied, they'll
9 climb back up and say: "Herzog, tie-down to Herzog, rails are
10 cut, we're in the clear."

11 At this time, no body is allowed to get near the trains. So
12 therefore, we come back on the radio and say, "You're in the
13 clear; Herzog's pulling rail."

14 Once we start pulling the rail, we get it headed up. Once we
15 get the rail to where we need it, we come back on the radio and
16 tell the work train: "Herzog to the work train, everybody's still
17 in the clear; take it ahead at 4 mph." They'll take the train
18 right up to 4.

19 Once it -- once we get to -- we tell tie-down let us know
20 once the end of the rail gets through tie-down. And then once we
21 get to the -- once we can start seeing the end of the rail, we
22 give the work train 2 mph and 2 to stop; one car easy stop, once
23 the rail hits the ground. And then we repeat that over if there's
24 multiple rail going in that location.

25 And we also tell them in the job brief that the brakeman will

1 ride in the rear of the truck, and then we tell him that any
2 reverse moves will be handed over to him.

3 Now, before everybody gets up on the train, we give the
4 brakeman himself a brief of the cab of the truck so that he is
5 familiar with what he needs to do as far as the air gauge that's
6 back there, the air horn. For any reverse moves he's got an air
7 horn to blow over the crossings, and then he's also got a red
8 button back there that he can push if for some reason he needs to
9 dynamite the train air.

10 And then we give that brief to him so that way, he can see
11 it, see it hands on and he'll ride, ride back there in that cab by
12 himself to protect any shoves. And then, once we -- once that
13 rail hits the ground, we'll brief, or we'll tell them, you know,
14 if there's another piece of rail going near, we'll repeat the
15 exact same steps over the radio.

16 We also go over as far as in what channel we're going to
17 operate off of. And now that, that always depends on it's the
18 BNSF EIC, if he wants to work off of the main line channel or if
19 he wants to work off of the maintenance of way channel. We
20 discuss that. Most of the time we operate off of the maintenance
21 of way channel to keep all the chatter down so that way it's
22 easier for us to talk to each other, back and forth.

23 And then the head end, they'll have two radios up front, so
24 we tell them, you monitor the main line channel in case of the
25 dispatch need to get a hold of you for some reason. And then, we

1 monitor the, -- or then they'll also monitor the maintenance of
2 way channel, the channel that we're working off of. Same with the
3 brakeman. He monitors the main line channel and he monitors the
4 work channel. Up in my operator's cab, we only have one radio up
5 there and we just worked off the maintenance of way channel.

6 Q. You done there? You done?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Okay. So just go back for me, so how is the type of on track
9 protection that protects the train and the crew that's working up
10 in the RUM truck and untying rail, so how is that determined and
11 who determines that?

12 A. The -- maintenance of way guys see will determine that if we
13 work off of either train signal or train coordination, and once
14 our machine is knuckled to the train, we are part of the train so
15 we operate off of train coordination. So whatever the train crew
16 gets from the dispatch, we do what the train crew gets from the
17 dispatch, and the train crew and the maintenance of way guys
18 determine which -- what they want to operate off of, either track
19 and time or signal indication.

20 Q. So is the type of protection that's protecting the train,
21 protecting the work crew, all that stuff, is that the stuff in
22 some type of job safety briefing?

23 A. It's just, yes, it's discussed in the main briefing that we
24 have first thing in the morning. We discuss what protection we're
25 going to have, and we always tell them it's going to be train,

1 train coordination.

2 Q. Okay. Then everybody understands that's in the work crew
3 what train coordination protection means, and how it works?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 MR. LLOYD: Okay. I have no more questions, Tomas. Thank
6 you.

7 MR. TORRES: Okay. At this time we'll pass it on to the FRA.

8 BY MR. CARR:

9 Q. All right. This is David Carr with the FRA. Good afternoon
10 Matt. Thank you for your time here.

11 A. Yep.

12 Q. Let me just ask you, have you worked under signal protection
13 previously?

14 A. Yes. I've worked out in that area for the last 2 years, so
15 I'm familiar with the working under signal indication.

16 Q. Did anything stand out different on this day from other times
17 you've worked under signal indication?

18 A. No, sir. Everything seemed like the normal, normal day at
19 work.

20 Q. Okay. And just one other question, just if -- what can you
21 recall from the moment you guys started the reverse movement
22 heading east to drop off the track supervisor? Can you recall the
23 shoving communication between the brakeman and the engineer? How
24 many car counts or updates the brakeman gave prior to the incident
25 or roughly what, what can you recall?

1 A. I don't remember exactly how many, how many times he was able
2 to give an update. I just -- I know that from the time we dropped
3 our last piece of rail to the time we made contact with the other
4 train, it was a very short distance, within probably a quarter
5 mile. So he probably gives, I want to say, two or three car
6 counts before we made contact.

7 MR. CARR: Okay. Yeah. That's all the questions. I think
8 everything else has been answered or asked there to my
9 satisfaction right now, so thank you for your time Matt.

10 MR. THOMPSON: You're welcome.

11 MR. TORRES: Okay. At this time we'll pass it on to the
12 BNSF.

13 BY MR. RATLEDGE:

14 Q. Yeah. This is Aaron Ratledge. Like Dave Carr just
15 mentioned, all the questions that I was wanting to ask have been
16 asked. Matt, it just, it just, it just sounds like that, you
17 know, the job briefings were robust and it sounds like everything
18 was taken care of as really kind of just what you -- what your
19 expectations were showing up to work that day, and nothing was
20 really short cut out of the briefings, or anything like that. Is
21 that correct?

22 A. Correct.

23 MR. RATLEDGE: That's all I have at this time, Mr. Tomas.

24 MR. TORRES: Okay. How about Mr. Remington?

25 MR. REMINGTON: Tomas, I agree with Aaron and Dave.

1 Everything that I was curious about has been answered. I pass.

2 MR. TORRES: Okay. Thank you. SMART?

3 MR. JONES: Yeah, Tomas. I agree with Duke and everybody.

4 It's -- the questions have been answered. I'm satisfied. Thanks.

5 MR. TORRES: Okay. Troy, you have any follow-up questions?

6 MR. LLOYD: No, sir. Tomas, I have no additional questions.

7 Thank you.

8 MR. TORRES: Okay. I don't have any myself. So, if there's
9 no more questions, I guess this would conclude the interview.

10 (Off-the-record discussion.)

11 MR. TORRES: But anyway, don't hang up. If everybody's done,
12 I'll -- we'll conclude the interview. So this will be -- conclude
13 the interview, and everybody sit tight.

14 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

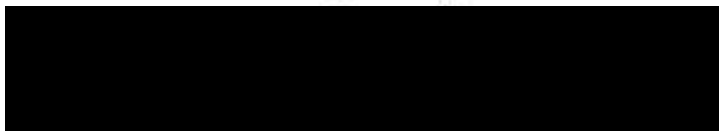
IN THE MATTER OF: TRAIN CRASH IN CROZIER CANYON
 NEAR KINGMAN, ARIZONA
 JUNE 5, 2018
 Interview of Matt Thompson

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD18FR009

PLACE: Telephone Interview

DATE: July 17, 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.

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area of the transcriber.

Transcriber