

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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SEPTA TRACK WORKER FATALITY *

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA *

Accident No.: RRD19FR009

JULY 8, 2019 *

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Interview of: JAMES JENKINS
Train Operator

Union Hall, TWU Local 234
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Thursday,
July 11, 2019

APPEARANCES:

DAVID BUCHER, Chief, Rail Division
National Transportation Safety Board

GEORGE GOOD, Accident Investigator
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

RICK DOLBIN, Project Manager, State Safety Oversight
(SSO), Rail Transit Safety Review Program (RTSRP)
PennDOT

ELIZABETH BONINI, Program Manager SSO/RTSRP
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AMELIJA SORG-TAYLOR, Project Analyst, RTSRP
PennDOT

ANTHONY HARRIS, Project Officer, RTSRP
PennDOT

JOSEPH WILSON, Operational Safety Officer
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority
(SEPTA)

JAMES CREEDON, Director of Transportation, Subway
Elevated Division
SEPTA

DEAN JONES, Training
SEPTA

RONALD NEWMAN, Business Agent
TWU Local 234

JADEANE DAYE, Business Agent
TWU Local 234
(On behalf of Mr. Jenkins)

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. BUCHER: Hello, this is David Bucher, B-U-C-H-E-R. I'm
3 the chief of the Rail Division for the National Transportation
4 Safety Board. Today's date is July 11, 2019, and we are at the
5 Transport Workers Union, TWU, Local 234 Union Hall, located in
6 Philadelphia, PA.

7 We are interviewing James Jenkins who works as a car operator
8 for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, SEPTA.
9 This interview is in connection with the accident that occurred on
10 July 8, 2019, at Erie interlocking. The NTSB accident reference
11 number is RRD19FR009.

12 The purpose of this investigation is to increase safety, not
13 assign fault, blame, or liability, however NTSB cannot guaranty
14 full confidentiality or immunity because this interview is going
15 to go in the docket. People will know your name.

16 The interviewee can have one representative. The
17 representative may not testify, but you can adjourn and talk off-
18 line. And you do know this is being recorded.

19 Before we start this interview we'll go around the table and
20 introduce ourselves. Please spell your last name.

21 MS. DAYE: Jadeane Daye, D-A-Y-E.

22 MS. SORG-TAYLOR: Amelija Sorg-Taylor, S-O-R-G - T-A-Y-L-O-R.

23 MR. WILSON: Joseph Wilson, W-I-L-S-O-N, SEPTA System Safety
24 Officer.

25 MR. HARRIS: Anthony Harris, H-A-R-R-I-S.

1 MR. BUCHER: SEPTA?

2 MR. HARRIS: PennDOT.

3 MR. BUCHER: PennDOT.

4 MR. CREEDON: James Creedon, C-R-E-E-D-O-N , SEPTA, director
5 of transportation.

6 MR. JONES: Dean Jones, J-O-N-E-S, SEPTA.

7 MR. DOLBIN: Rick Dolbin, D-O-L-B-I-N, with PennDOT, State
8 Safety Oversight.

9 MS. BONINI: Elizabeth Bonini, E-L-I-Z-A-B-E-T-H, Bonini,
10 B-O-N-I-N-I. PennDOT Rail Transit Safety Review Program, State
11 Safety Oversight program manager.

12 MR. NEWMAN: Ronald Newman, N-E-W-M-A-N, business agent, TWU
13 Local 234.

14 MR. GOOD: George Good, G-O-O-D, Federal Transit
15 Administration, accident investigator.

16 MR. BUCHER: Okay, thank you.

17 INTERVIEW OF JAMES JENKINS

18 BY MR. BUCHER:

19 Q. James, as I said before, if you could just go start by going
20 through your day beginning when you got up to get ready to go to
21 work?

22 A. Monday morning I think I woke up at maybe around 5:45 that
23 morning. It was actually a pretty good day, starting out. I had
24 what's called like a swing shift. I started, I think I worked for
25 maybe close to three hours, this might be two and a half trips on

1 the Ridge, 8th and Market, and then I have a swing. During the
2 swing, I went to the gym, worked out, came back home. I believe I
3 took a short nap and showered and went back to work for my second
4 half.

5 Second half started out good too, as well, like the first
6 half. You know, we get to the end of the line, we talk to the
7 other train operators and discuss each other's days and, you know,
8 or just have down time. Actually on my second half I do, I leave
9 from, I do a half a trip from Olney to 8th and Market, and then I
10 sit down at 8th and Market for an hour. So I have a lot of down
11 time that first initial trip.

12 I started my, the second half of my first trip, I believe it
13 was 4:14. We normally make a relief at Olney, Olney terminal.
14 Came back down, I believe it was the 5:10 trip, which is my second
15 trip. Everything was going good, I didn't get cut out by the
16 express train coming out of, from Fairmount on the Ridge. For
17 some reason there were more people than, now I'm only working on
18 Mondays, but from the Monday's that I remember prior, I was
19 picking up more people than normal. Get to Girard Avenue, next
20 stop North Philadelphia, next stop Erie. I pull into Erie. I
21 open the doors, unload the passengers. More passengers get back
22 on, only a few.

23 I look down, I mean I have all clear signals. Close the
24 doors, and I take off. Just going like basically normal speed.
25 I'm going down and as soon as I got into the tunnel, I saw another

1 train coming down on Track 2. The express is in a Ridge run on
2 Track 2, Track 2 coming southbound, and Track 3 going northbound.
3 So there was a train coming southbound on Track 2.

4 From what I remember, I thought it was the 8th and Market,
5 because I saw the yellow lights. I initially saw the train coming
6 first, and as I saw the train, in the tunnel, I saw two workers in
7 it, well I can't say the track area because they weren't in the
8 track area. But the two workers were between Track 2 and Track 3,
9 between the southbound track and the northbound express track. It
10 was kind of like I was standing up, and I think that's the only,
11 not the only reason I saw them, but it kind of like, wow, what are
12 they doing there? Like. I was going the normal speed, but I was
13 going slow enough where I could still see the train coming, and I
14 could see them there as well. Maybe a split second after I passed
15 them, the two workers, I heard a boom. Like a big bang on the
16 non-operating side of the train. And I just dumped it, I just
17 dumped the train after that.

18 I dumped the train because the two workers were the only, I
19 don't want to say, things back there, but they, that was all that
20 was back there. When I was coming through there, there was
21 nothing to, like, obstruct the track area and so I just dumped the
22 train. And the, one of the two workers got on the radio and he
23 called the train dispatcher. He called the mayday. I didn't call
24 in mayday. And the train dispatcher proceeded to interact with
25 him.

1 Q. Okay. Just to go back to the beginning of the day, at first,
2 you go on duty at Fern Rock?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And that's where you pick up your first equipment of the day
5 or --

6 A. Well, that's where you report at Fern Rock --

7 Q. -- report in and you go on duty?

8 A. Yes, we report at Fern Rock and then, depending on what line,
9 you are, like, I was on the 8th and Market, so we made relief at
10 Olney, so I had to catch a train from Fern Rock to Olney to meet
11 my train, to take it southbound.

12 Q. Okay, so you deadheaded to Olney?

13 A. Right.

14 Q. And you picked up the train that was involved in the accident
15 at Olney?

16 A. No.

17 Q. No, this is, okay, --

18 A. Swing shift.

19 Q. -- that's the first one of the day, so you were.

20 A. Yeah, it's the first part of the day.

21 Q. You made a couple trips on the Market Street line? Before --

22 A. On the Ridge line.

23 Q. The Ridge.

24 A. The Market Ridge.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. It was all Ridge, the entire day, but I just had a split
2 shift.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. So I do two and a half trips in the morning, and then, I
5 believe, it's four trips in the afternoon on the second half.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. (Indiscernible) the swing.

8 Q. Okay. All right. Okay, and jumping ahead to the last train.
9 Okay, you got, where did you pick up the last train of the day?

10 A. Before the incident?

11 Q. Yes.

12 A. At 8th and Market.

13 Q. Okay. And you relieved somebody that was on it before?

14 A. Well, there's a operator that brings it in to 8th and Market
15 --

16 Q. Right.

17 A. -- on the southbound side, and then you take it out on the
18 northbound side.

19 Q. Okay. All right, so you just replaced him. Did he give you
20 any information when you relieved him?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Okay. When you took over the train, did, you took it through
23 several stations. There was no equipment problems? This is what
24 I'm looking for.

25 A. None at all.

1 Q. The brakes worked like they were supposed to? The radio
2 worked like it was supposed to? And your, the headlights worked,
3 that you could tell from the cab that the headlight was working?

4 A. That the headlights were on, yes.

5 Q. Okay. The radio, did the radio work?

6 A. My radio?

7 Q. Yes.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. Did you happened to hear anything from the train
10 dispatcher?

11 A. I don't remember.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. There's always chatter on the radio, but for the most part,
14 but I don't recall hearing anything.

15 Q. Okay. And during your swing, okay, did you have a portable
16 radio with you too?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Okay. How many cars were In your train?

19 A. Two.

20 Q. Two?

21 A. Two.

22 Q. Okay, and you were the only person on the, the only SEPTA
23 employee on the train? There was no conductor, or anything?

24 A. No.

25 Q. Okay, and there were no distractions from the employ, the

1 passengers, nothing was going on that was out of the ordinary?

2 A. No, nothing out of the ordinary. Just like I said, it was,
3 there was more people on that particular trip than what I've seen
4 previously.

5 Q. Okay, cause it --

6 A. And that was the only thing, observation, that I made as far
7 as anything being different.

8 Q. So it was kind of full leaving Erie Station.

9 A. Not leaving Erie. A lot of people got off at Erie.

10 Q. Oh, off?

11 A. Prior to Erie, I mean, that's what I remember. Like, wow,
12 that's a lot of people that just got off the train, so.

13 Q. Okay. How long have you worked on the line?

14 A. The Broad Street line?

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. Almost 4-years. It'll be 4-years in October.

17 Q. Okay. All right. I'm going to start around. We'll start
18 questions --

19 BY MR. WILSON:

20 Q. Joseph Wilson, W-I-L-S-O-N. All right. Do you recall which
21 way the workers were facing as you were passing?

22 A. They were facing Track 2.

23 Q. Did you see any hand signals being given to you before
24 passing them?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Now, when you said you left Erie doing normal speed, you have
2 an approximate idea of how many miles per hours that was as your
3 taking off?

4 A. When I dumped the train, it was before the interlocking
5 signal, so I would say maybe 30?

6 Q. And that was going to be my next question. So you said, when
7 you heard the noise, you put the train in emergency. It didn't go
8 into emergency on its own?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay, so. As you noticed the workers and were passing them,
11 could you see if they had vests on? Or anything like that that
12 stood out?

13 A. I think that would be the only thing that did stand out.
14 They had vests on.

15 Q. They had vests, so you could see the vests?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. All right, as an operator, when you're out there and there
18 are workers that are in the tracks, how will you, as operator,
19 usually notify the presence of railway workers in the track?

20 A. Usually through hand signals, or the train inspect. Well,
21 usually, it's normally through hand signals, or a work zone is set
22 up.

23 Q. Okay, that's all I have right now.

24 BY MR. CREEDON:

25 Q. James Creedon, when you entered Erie northbound 2-track, you

1 pulled up to the --

2 A. Three track.

3 Q. -- or 3 track, I'm sorry, 3 track. When you pulled up to the
4 2, 3 car marker --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. -- did you notice anybody in the track area in front of you?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Okay. That's all I have.

9 BY MR. JONES:

10 Q. Dean Jones, J-O-N-E-S, SEPTA. Do you recall what was the
11 first point you actually saw the workers?

12 A. I know I was in the tunnel. I wasn't too far out of the
13 tunnel, but I was out the tunnel, I mean I was out in the, I mean
14 it was dark, so and I had just left out the tunnel. I don't
15 know --

16 Q. When you say tunnel, you mean station?

17 A. No, the tunnel. I had already left Erie, and I was, of
18 course, you know the station is lit.

19 Q. Correct.

20 A. So when you come out of the station, and I'm saying tunnel
21 like, now it's dark --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. -- not complete darkness, but -- .

24 Q. I understand. So you didn't see him entering Erie?

25 A. No.

1 Q. So you first recognized them when they were leaving, when you
2 were leaving the area?

3 A. When I got on top.

4 Q. Yes, I understand. That's all I have.

5 BY MR. DOLBIN:

6 Q. Rick Dolbin, D-O-L-B-I-N. Had you seen these workers or
7 other workers throughout the day in that afternoon shift? Do you
8 recall any other signals or any other time you had stopped, or
9 acknowledged them?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Okay. That's all I have. Thank you.

12 BY MS. BONINI:

13 Q. Elizabeth Bonini, B-O-N-I-N I. Were you wearing any ear
14 protection at the time?

15 A. No.

16 Q. All right, oh, okay. Thank you.

17 BY MR. GOOD:

18 Q. George Good, G-O-O-D. Just a question. Is there any, does
19 SEPTA have any rules when you see track workers and they don't
20 give signals that you need to reduce speed, or you just didn't
21 have time, you just came right up on them and didn't have time?

22 A. When you have time enough to see them, you might hit it like
23 one long one on the horn, to acknowledge that you do see them, you
24 know. I guess as a precaution, you know, for you and them.

25 Q. But is there any rule, just to say you did see them way

1 ahead, that you had to reduce speed as you go by them, especially
2 if they're not giving you a proceed?

3 A. Can you say that one more time?

4 Q. So, maybe not in this case, but say you workers ahead, far
5 ahead and you didn't know they were there, does SEPTA have any
6 rules that you need to reduce your speed, especially if they're
7 not giving you a proceed signal?

8 A. Well, it would be the long horn. The one to let them know
9 that you see them. You're saying like, if I see somebody in the
10 track area and I for example I can see the have a vest, so I'm
11 thinking they're, I'm assuming they're authorized personnel in the
12 track area, just one long one on the horn.

13 Q. But you don't have any requirement to reduce speed?

14 A. Well, I guess if, I guess it's kind of like, I would say it's
15 more or less up to you. I mean, when I see workers in the track
16 area and even if they give a hand signal, I'm not flying by them.
17 I'm still just taking my time.

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. And, I guess, it depends on where you're at in the track too.
20 I mean, if you're coming to a station, if you're leaving a
21 station, I mean, it depends on where their at. If they
22 are far enough away, where you can go normal speed.

23 Q. But normally they're, people in the track area are required
24 to give you a proceed, required to give a proceed signal to the
25 train (indiscernible) --

1 A. Stop or proceed.

2 Q. Yeah, stop or proceed. Okay, thank you.

3 BY MR. BUCHER:

4 Q. I have a couple more. Is it common to, for you to see track
5 workers in the area interlocking? I mean, does that happen often?
6 You go through a (indiscernible), oh, they're there?

7 A. Off hand? Not that often. I mean, once again, usually
8 there's a work zone set up, and that's usually dependent on what
9 time of day it is. I don't recall seeing a lot of workers there.
10 It depends, it depends on what's getting done. I mean, if it's
11 something major, then that's something that we'll know about, and
12 then there'll be a work zone set up so that we know, it's a, you
13 know.

14 MR. BUCHER: Okay. I think that's all I have. Looking
15 around the table for any follow-up questions?

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: No. No. No.

17 MR. BUCHER: Okay. All right. well, I think that's it.
18 Thank you.

19 MR. JENKINS: Thank you.

20 MR. BUCHER: Appreciate it, James.

21 MR. JENKINS: No problem.

22 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: SEPTA TRACK WORKER FATALITY
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA
JULY 8, 2019
Interview of James Jenkins

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD19FR009

PLACE: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

DATE: July 11, 2019

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