

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: NORMAN CHAPMAN, Track Inspector
SEPTA

SEPTA Headquarters
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Thursday,
July 11, 2019

APPEARANCES:

TROY LLOYD, Chairman, Track and Engineering Group
National Transportation Safety Board

BILL BANNON, Vice President
Transport Workers Union (TWU), Local 234

RONALD BENSON, JR., Director of Construction Safety
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority
(SEPTA)

DAVID STUMP, Chief Engineering Officer
SEPTA Track Department

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. LLOYD: Okay, we are on the record with Mr. Norman
3 Chapman.

4 So, let's go ahead and get started. Just to remind
5 everybody, while we're doing the interview, speak clearly and
6 loudly so we can get a good recording. Any time we do -- any time
7 we ask a question, I'd like us all to state our first and last
8 name. So if I ask a question, I'd go this is Troy from the NTSB
9 and I'll start my questions. If you -- same thing with you, we'll
10 go around the table and get everybody's name and how they spell
11 their last name and all that stuff.

12 Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Troy Lloyd. I'm from
13 the National Transportation Safety Board. Today's date is July
14 11th, 2019, and we are at the SEPTA headquarters located in
15 Philadelphia, on the 12th floor, located in the 12B conference
16 room. We are interviewing Mr. Norman Chapman, who works as a
17 first class track maintainer assigned to the inspections branch
18 for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, SEPTA.

19 This interview is in connection with an accident that
20 occurred on July 8th, 2019 in Erie interlocking. The NTSB
21 accident reference number is RRD19FR009.

22 The purpose of this investigation is to increase safety, not
23 to assign blame, fault or liability. The NTSB cannot offer any
24 guarantee to confidentiality or immunity from legal or certificate
25 actions. A transcript or summary of the interview will go on the

1 public docket, so once this is done we have a public docket that
2 we put in finals and all that stuff.

3 The interviewee can have one representative of the
4 interviewee's choice. Note that the representative may not
5 testify for the interviewee. Any representative comments should
6 be limited.

7 Do you have anyone that you want to legally represent you? A
8 union rep, anything there?

9 MR. CHAPMAN: A union rep.

10 MR. LLOYD: What's that?

11 MR. CHAPMAN: Bill Bannon.

12 MR. LLOYD: You want to have Mr. -- Bill, he'd like you to
13 represent him as his legal representative.

14 MR. BANNON: Can I ask or explain it? Can I talk to him for
15 a moment?

16 MR. LLOYD: Absolutely. We're going off the record right
17 now.

18 (Off the record.)

19 (On the record.)

20 MR. LLOYD: Okay. We are back on the record. As I stated
21 earlier, the interviewee can have one representative of the
22 interviewee's choice. Note, the representative may not testify
23 for the interviewee; representative comments should be limited.
24 Legal advisory objections are not grounds for NTSB to refrain
25 from asking questions.

1 Do you understand this interview is going to be recorded?

2 MR. CHAPMAN: Yes.

3 MR. LLOYD: Do you have any legal representation right now
4 during this interview?

5 MR. CHAPMAN: No.

6 MR. LLOYD: So you have refused to have Mr. Bill Bannon
7 from --

8 MR. CHAPMAN: Yes.

9 MR. LLOYD: -- being legal?

10 MR. CHAPMAN: Yes.

11 MR. LLOYD: Okay. Do you concur with that, Bill?

12 MR. BANNON: Yes.

13 MR. LLOYD: So before we start this interview and questions,
14 let's go around the table and introduce ourselves. Please spell
15 your last name, who you are representing, and your work title.
16 I'd like to remind everybody again to speak clearly so we can get
17 an accurate recording. I'll start off with myself and then pass
18 off to my right, to Mr. Chapman here.

19 Again, my name is Troy Lloyd. I'm with the NTSB. Spelling
20 of my last name is L-L-O-Y-D, and I am the track and engineering
21 group chairman for this accident.

22 MR. CHAPMAN: My name is Norman Chapman. I'm a track
23 inspector, track maintainer first class. My last name is spelled
24 C-H-A-P as in Paul, M-A-N.

25 MR. BANNON: Bill Bannon, B-A-N-N-O-N, vice president TWU

1 Local 234.

2 MR. BENSON: Ronald Benson, Jr., director of construction
3 safety for SEPTA.

4 MR. STUMP: David Stump. Last name is spelled S-T-U-M-P.
5 I'm chief engineering officer for SEPTA's Track Department.

6 MR. LLOYD: I'd like to -- appreciate you coming in,
7 Mr. Chapman, and -- Mr. Chapman, Norman, Norm, how do you --

8 MR. CHAPMAN: Norman.

9 MR. LLOYD: Norman, Norm, whatever?

10 MR. CHAPMAN: Um-hum.

11 INTERVIEW OF NORMAN CHAPMAN

12 BY MR. LLOYD:

13 Q. Okay. So if I could get, you know, just real quick, brief
14 history of your work history here at SEPTA: day you was hired,
15 how you became a track inspector, and how'd you just work your way
16 up through the system where you are today?

17 A. I got hired in 1989, March 1989, and -- actually on my
18 birthday. And I worked in the track gang approximately 2 years,
19 and they were having interviews to be a track inspector after that
20 2-year mark, and I went for the interview. So I interviewed and
21 took a computer test and passed, then I took a performance test
22 and passed that, and that's how I became a track inspector.

23 Q. My man.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you're saying around 1991?

25 MR. CHAPMAN: Yes.

1 BY MR. LLOYD:

2 Q. That's sounds (indiscernible) years of service. So you've
3 been a track inspector --

4 A. Ever since.

5 Q. Ever since?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. My man. Wow. You like track inspection?

8 A. Do I like it? Yes.

9 Q. See what's out there; something's different every day.

10 A. Well, that, and I was thinking about, you know, my family
11 riding the train, other people's family. You know, I like to see
12 what's out there, and if I can fix it, fix it. If I can't, I
13 would call someone.

14 Q. I like that. As a track inspector you're getting -- so let
15 me ask you a question. Is this probably more of an MW-1000, MW-
16 100, whatever it's called, but when you find something, let's sit
17 there and say it's a track condition or a track defect --

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. -- then you're given some options?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. What are those options, and the order of options?

22 A. I can repair it, restrict it, or take it out of service.

23 Q. My man, you hit all three of them. I love it. So what's
24 your normal run right now where you're at?

25 A. I'm on the street -- on the street.

1 Q. You're on the street. Do you like that?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. You like that better than working in the subway and all that?

4 A. Yes. Um-hum.

5 Q. Why is that?

6 A. Well --

7 MR. BANNON: The city fresh air. (Laughter)

8 MR. CHAPMAN: I like it better because I get fresh air.

9 BY MR. LLOYD:

10 Q. I gotcha.

11 A. You know, and I get to see more -- learn newer things.

12 Because I spent so many years in the subway and now that I'm on
13 the street, I like it.

14 Q. What's the difference in me being a track inspector in the
15 subway versus where you're at now when it comes to on-track
16 protection?

17 A. Well, I'm in a high rail vehicle, per se, or I drive a
18 vehicle. And I'm in an area at restricted speed and I'm looking
19 for defects. It can be a gauge defect; it could be surface
20 alignment. Because the rail's on concrete. I can't see the
21 fasteners, but I can see when a rail is -- you know, got humps and
22 dips, deviations and stuff like that. If I see a problem, I can
23 take my truck and block the intersection or block the area where
24 I'm at and take a measurement. If I need more protection, I would
25 call someone and take care of my business.

1 Q. So basically you're out there, you sit up in a high rail
2 vehicle, it's different from if you're walking and you're around
3 subways --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. -- where you have someone supplying you some type of on-track
6 protection?

7 A. Yes, yes.

8 Q. Okay. Have you ever worked in the subways where you had to
9 have someone with you providing you on-track protection?

10 A. Oh, yes.

11 Q. What kind of protection was that?

12 A. TAW.

13 Q. Okay, TAW stands -- what?

14 A. Train approach warning.

15 Q. Train approach warning. So it's watchman protection?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay. What's your feelings on train approach warning in a
18 subway environment with speeds up to 70 mile an hour, dodging 2 or
19 3 minute headway trains?

20 A. Well, if I have a watchperson, depending what I'm doing, if
21 I'm just walking up and down the tracks, you know, I will wait
22 until -- I'll wait until the train has slowed down. And then
23 depending what section of -- because we have, like on Broad
24 Street, four tracks, two locals and two express tracks. On the
25 local it's more easier to clear because you can stand against the

1 wall. On the express tracks, it's not that easy to clear. So I
2 will walk the local track first, and then when -- at a certain
3 time the express trains stop running, they run on a different
4 frequency, I'll start doing the express tracks.

5 And that's how I would do it, and our job is to see stuff
6 under load. And I know that they would want us out there, like,
7 you know, a load line, but it's better for me to inspect -- I can
8 wait for a train to come every 8 to 10 minutes, and I'll see an
9 area, I'll step back and watch a train go over it and if it's
10 doing lateral movement, any certain -- I can take a measurement
11 and see what I have. But as far as load line, I'm very skeptical
12 about that. I wouldn't try to go on there myself personally.

13 Q. So load line is when they're moving the maximum amount of
14 trains --

15 A. At this time, yes.

16 Q. -- headway? And you're talking -- so let's talk about doing
17 a switch inspection at Erie interlocking during load line time.

18 A. Um-hum.

19 Q. What's your feeling about that?

20 A. I don't like it. I wouldn't -- I don't, I don't like it.

21 Q. Could --

22 A. If it -- you know, it will take me longer to do what I have
23 to do, but I'm not going to -- if I'm feeling a certain type of
24 way about the condition that I'm under, I wouldn't work under
25 those conditions until it's -- do I feel safer.

1 Q. So what could be done then to make it safer for the guys?

2 A. Working the interlockings, you mean, or just in general?

3 Q. An interlocking.

4 A. Interlockings? I would say --

5 Q. And then in general, absolutely.

6 A. Okay. Interlockings, I would say wait until the load line
7 dies down and -- or either done at night or the weekends.

8 Q. Weekends a little less train traffic for the express trains?

9 A. Yes.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Even when there are events?

11 MR. CHAPMAN: Yes.

12 MR. LLOYD: That's good. Shoot it over to you, Bill.

13 MR. BANNON: Okay.

14 BY MR. BANNON:

15 Q. So, Norm, you've been -- obviously you've been a track
16 inspector for some time and you've gone through different --
17 you've picked in many various pickings throughout the years as a
18 track inspector.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. You've seen the runs. I want to specifically talk about the
21 detailed switch inspection runs.

22 A. Okay.

23 Q. For certain -- at a certain point and for a long time the
24 detailed switch inspection run was a two-man run, correct?

25 A. Yes, correct.

1 Q. And that was two qualified track maintainers, 213.7 track
2 maintainers?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Right now, the run has been changed from two guys to a track
5 maintainer and a watchman?

6 A. Yes, um-hum.

7 Q. Do you think it's better with two qualified track maintainers
8 doing switches or the way it's being done now?

9 A. I think it's better with two qualified track maintainers
10 doing switches.

11 Q. Why would you say that?

12 A. Because I have experience in doing that. When it's two
13 people, we both know what we're looking for, we know what we're
14 doing, and we can watch out for each other. But with me by
15 myself, I'm stretching (indiscernible) help, and sometimes I can't
16 get an accurate measurement because I'm worrying about a train
17 coming up. I would suggest a two-man crew plus a watchperson.

18 Q. Right. As far as the length of runs, the inspection runs,
19 how far they are, do you think they should be shortened?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. You're familiar with the hotspots list?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. List of hotspots. Do you know off the top of your head, are
24 any interlockings in any of the -- on the hotspot list?

25 A. Any interlockings? I can't remember. I do have the list,

1 but I can't recall.

2 Q. Do you think they should be?

3 A. Honestly --

4 Q. Listed as hotspots?

5 A. Yes, yes.

6 Q. Now during your years of track inspection, and you kind of
7 already hinted on this, but during your years of track inspection,
8 you know, you go out in the morning, do your track inspection, go
9 out at night. Is it -- would you say it's the practice of
10 probably yourself and most of the track inspectors not to go if
11 you're working overtime, normally not to go into the track until
12 after load line?

13 A. Is it the practice?

14 Q. Yes, within -- with yourself and with most of the crew?

15 A. It would be the individual involved.

16 Q. Okay, do you -- you feel more comfortable waiting till --

17 A. Yeah, after -- yeah, yeah.

18 MR. BANNON: Okay. All right, I have nothing else.

19 BY MR. BENSON:

20 Q. Hey, Norman, how you doing?

21 A. How you doing?

22 Q. I have two quick questions. The one question Bill asked
23 about the two -- two inspectors, were you saying that it would be
24 two inspectors -- one inspector so you two could work together
25 plus a watchman?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Not two inspectors, and one's supposed to be watching and
3 one's supposed to be working?

4 A. Two inspectors plus a watchperson. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. My last question, unless you had already asked this
6 one. You said there was situations where if you didn't feel
7 comfortable, that you wouldn't do it. What would you do if asked
8 or told by your manager or above that you needed to get that done
9 now?

10 A. I would tell them I don't feel safe.

11 Q. And then what would you do?

12 A. I'd call my union.

13 MR. BENSON: That's all for me.

14 MR. STUMP: I don't have any questions.

15 BY MR. LLOYD:

16 Q. Norm, I'm going to end this here, and I'll tell you what --
17 this is Troy again from the NTSB. You've got a lot of years of
18 service under your belt, man. You've got just 1 year less than
19 me. I was 19 -- I was September of '88 coming out here boots on
20 the ground, did everything: track man, track inspector, assistant
21 superintendents, general superintendent, did it all when it come
22 to track maintenance, inspection, you know, production. But
23 you've got a lot of knowledge, skills, and abilities when it comes
24 to this. Sounds like you've been all over the system; you've
25 worked in the subway, you're on the street side. And I'm sure you

1 got that vehicle because you got the seniority to do it, right?

2 A. Um-hum.

3 Q. Exactly. That's what it comes down to.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. It comes down to the seniority. But in all, in everything
6 that's going on with the accident that occurred down in Erie, if
7 Norm Chapman had a say in what could be changed, what could
8 prevent that accident from happening again so you guys don't lose
9 another brother in this house, what would Norm Chapman change?

10 A. When performing switch inspections?

11 Q. Overall.

12 A. Overall?

13 Q. Whatever. Track inspections, switch inspections, what would
14 you change to RWP for on-track protection to make it much, much,
15 much safer?

16 A. What would I change? Let's see.

17 MR. BENSON: What would make life better for you out there?

18 MR. CHAPMAN: Well, track inspection, just often runs. Add
19 maybe an additional watchperson; instead of one maybe two. Yeah.
20 At the station where the train berth is at, have like some type of
21 -- like a signal, like a lighting system to let everybody know
22 that there's someone in the track area. Because operators, they
23 go from the train dispatcher making an announcement that we're in
24 the track area.

25 BY MR. LLOYD:

1 Q. Some type of an advance warning system?

2 A. Yeah. And after a while, you know, the train inspector's
3 busy with other things, doesn't announce us in the track area, and
4 -- it would be better. When a train pulls into the station, then
5 the next station or a couple stations down, they'll be reminded.
6 In other words, a reminder there's someone in the track area, if
7 the person is doing work or not, you know.

8 I'd like to -- maybe something like a fixed location light.
9 Like, you know -- because at certain stations the train inspector
10 has some type of blue light or something alerting operators saying
11 that -- if it comes on, the operator will call the train
12 dispatcher, I have a red light or a blue light, is there something
13 going on? Oh yeah, there's a work gang such and such, blah blah
14 blah, you know. Something similar to that.

15 Q. Gotcha.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They have that (indiscernible) --

17 MR. CHAPMAN: Yes.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I mean, at -- they have
19 (indiscernible).

20 MR. BANNON: And it's for specifically work sites.

21 MR. CHAPMAN: Yeah.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That they're not in the
23 (indiscernible).

24 MR. BENSON: If emergencies or something comes up, a blue
25 light comes on and the operator goes over and speaks to --

1 MR. LLOYD: Yeah, like an emergency call box or something, or
2 ETS, emergency -- would that be where your trip station's probably
3 at, too, where you can cut third rail power?

4 MR. BENSON: No.

5 MR. BANNON: No, this is just a notification -- as they start
6 their run, they see the light on, they're required to call and
7 find out what's the light on for.

8 MR. CHAPMAN: What's going on with this light --

9 MR. LLOYD: The train operators --

10 MR. BENSON: Operators --

11 MR. LLOYD: They can sit here and say, look, we got people
12 down there walking.

13 MR. BENSON: Yes, exactly.

14 MR. BANNON: Well, there are four work zones, some that are
15 not planned. So they wouldn't be on the book holder, they
16 wouldn't have any idea that they were there unless they responded
17 to that light.

18 MR. LLOYD: And what's that train operator's instructions,
19 once he says, well, we got a work zone down there? Dos he go
20 restricted speed leaving the station or something like that?

21 MR. BENSON: There will be all the operating rules set up.

22 MR. BANNON: All the operating rules. They're basically just
23 letting them know that you have a work zone out there that's not
24 planned, that you don't know about. You're going to follow the
25 signs that are out there properly.

1 MR. BENSON: Probably set up a work zone to regulate their
2 speed.

3 MR. BANNON: So then there may be speed signs out there --

4 MR. BENSON: There will be, yeah.

5 MR. CHAPMAN: Yes.

6 MR. LLOYD: And a portable train stop and so forth.

7 BY MR. BANNON:

8 Q. So Norm, one thing I did want to talk to you about real
9 quick, I'd like to get your thoughts on this. One of the ideas
10 that we're talking about going forward is basically what you've
11 talked about, what you thought might help in a sense. What we're
12 talking about doing in order to go back to work is to put an
13 advanced watchperson on the platform at the berthing area.

14 A. On the platform?

15 Q. With a flag. In addition to what we're doing now. In
16 addition to the watchman, the inspector would be with -- he would
17 basically, as the train pulls in, call up on the radio, hey, you
18 know, Norm there's a train out there. And obviously what we want
19 you to do is clear up right away, and then call him back and say
20 we're clear. What he's going to do is he's going to stop and talk
21 to the operator. So he tells the operator, listen, I've got a
22 track inspector out here between here and the next station, be
23 careful. Go at 30 miles an hour until you're cleared. That's one
24 of the things that we're very seriously thinking about doing.
25 It's not quite what you're talking about with the signs and the

1 advanced warning signs, but do you think that would be helpful to
2 you? Do you think that would make you feel safer and do you think
3 that would be safer?

4 A. Yes, yes.

5 Q. Yes, it would be safer?

6 A. Yeah, um-hum.

7 MR. BANNON: Okay. That's all I have.

8 MR. BENSON: I'm good.

9 MR. LLOYD: I think we're done. Thank you.

10 Mr. Chapman, we are off the record. Thank you very much.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thanks a lot for coming.

12 (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: SEPTA TRACK WORKER FATALITY
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA
JULY 8, 2019
Interview of Norman Chapman

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.


Danielle K. Klunk
Transcriber