

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

BNSF FATAL RAIL ACCIDENT *
IN LOUISIANA, MISSOURI, *
ON APRIL 7, 2021 *

Accident No.: RRD21LR009

* * * * *

Interview of: JASON CASHMAN, Locomotive Engineer
BNSF Railway

Holiday Inn Express
120 Shinn Lane
Hannibal, Missouri

Friday,
April 9, 2021

APPEARANCES:

ZACHARY ZAGATA, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

JOSEPH CIEMNY, Investigator
SMART Transportation Division

PATRICK SCOTT, Operating Practices Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration

BOB PELLETIER, Investigator in Charge
Federal Railroad Administration

DAVID MOULDON, Operating Practices Supervisor
Federal Railroad Administration

RON SIMPSON, District 6 Grade Crossing and Operating
Practices Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration

RANDY DUMEY, Investigator
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

RYAN RINGELMAN, System Safety
BNSF Railway

AARON RATLEDGE, General Director of Operating Practices
and Rules
BNSF Railway

DOUGLAS STOUT, Local Chairman
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:12 a.m.)

1
2
3 MR. ZAGATA: Good afternoon. My name is Zach Zagata. I am
4 the NTSB IIC for this accident. We're here today on April 9th at
5 11:12 to conduct an interview with Jason Cashman who works for
6 BNSF. This interview is in conjunction with NTSB's investigation
7 of an employee fatality accident. The NTSB accident reference
8 number is RRD21LR009. The purpose of this investigation is to
9 increase safety and not to assign fault, blame, or liability.

10 Before beginning our interviews and questions, let's go
11 around the table and introduce ourselves. Please spell your last
12 name, who you're representing, and your title. I would like to
13 remind everybody to speak clearly so we can get an accurate
14 recording. I'll start off and then pass it off to my right.
15 Again, my name is Zach Zagata, and that's Z-a-g-a-t-a, and I'm the
16 NTSB IIC.

17 MR. CIEMNY: Joseph Ciemny, spelled C-i-e-m-n-y, I'm an
18 investigator with SMART Transportation Division.

19 MR. SCOTT: Patrick Scott, S-c-o-t-t, FRA inspector.

20 MR. PELLETIER: Bob Pelletier, P-e-l-l-e-t-i-e-r, FRA IIC.

21 MR. MOULDON: David Mouldon, M-o-u-l-d-o-n, operating
22 practices supervisor.

23 MR. SIMPSON: Ron Simpson, S-i-m-p-s-o-n, FRA inspector.

24 MR. DUMEY: Randy Dumey, D-u-m-e-y, BLET investigator.

25 MR. RINGELMAN: Ryan Ringelman, R-i-n-g-e-l-m-a-n, BNSF

1 system safety.

2 MR. RATLEDGE: Aaron Ratledge, R-a-t-l-e-d-g-e, general
3 director, operating practices and rules for BNSF Railway.

4 MR. STOUT: Douglas Stout, BLET Local Chairman, S-t-o-u-t.

5 MR. CASHMAN: Jason Cashman, C-a-s-h-m-a-n, locomotive
6 engineer, BNSF.

7 MR. ZAGATA: Okay. Thank you.

8 INTERVIEW OF JASON CASHMAN

9 BY MR. ZAGATA:

10 Q. And, as we previously discussed, do we have your permission
11 to record our discussion with you today?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Okay. And do you understand that your answers will be part
14 of the public docket, and as such, we cannot guarantee any
15 confidentiality?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. Okay. Thank you. With that, if you just kind of go ahead
18 and start out and describe your day for us.

19 A. From like start time, 11 o'clock?

20 Q. Yeah, that'd be perfect. Appreciate it.

21 A. On duty 11 o'clock, West Quincy. Went out, left the depot
22 pretty much right at 11 o'clock, yard bay into the yard, got on
23 the power. I don't know, power was in 16, I think. Went down
24 lead, went back to the 11 track, was clear, back to our train in
25 12. Pulled it out, had three or four cars to set out, set them in

1 15. Back to train at 12, air test. (Indiscernible) the yard,
2 stopped at Faulk for less than an hour. Met one train, went to
3 the NS stop for about 5 minutes. Got a clear signal, left NS,
4 straight to Louisiana. Ran around our train, did the proper air
5 test on that, shoved back to Cosgrove.

6 Brakeman got the mainline switch, that shoved back five cars,
7 conductor's riding to derail. The conductor lined the derail, got
8 back on the platform, gave me a -- on the point, back up 20.
9 Shoved back, he counted me down to -- I don't know, to the highway
10 to the derail, (indiscernible) back there where he was counting
11 to. Practices, he shoves me back till the engine's clear the
12 derail and then stop for the brakeman to restore, so he was down
13 to about a three-car count, and I told him I was stopping at one.
14 He -- I stopped at one car. Brakeman restored the mainline and
15 the derail.

16 Brakeman got on the motor, told conductor we were ready to
17 shove back. There's a pause. The brakeman started walking back
18 towards the plant. Conductor came on radio on (indiscernible)
19 derail's down in plant, conductor's on the ground, back up 10
20 cars. The brakeman jumped on the side of the car. He was on the
21 engineer's side, so I made sure he was sure on side of the car
22 before I started initiating movement. Backed up 10 cars to stop.
23 Brakeman got off the cars, started walking back into the plant
24 more. And I got conductor's on the ground, back up 20 cars. Make
25 sure the brakeman got on the side of the car, started shoving

1 back.

2 Getting to the point where I didn't -- I was wanting to hear
3 communication. I didn't. So I started -- I got tight air set on
4 the -- 10 pounds of air set on the cars, came out of throttle,
5 easing it -- I was easing it to a stop, because I didn't hear
6 again any communication, and I think my speed was 3 or 4 miles an
7 hour when the dispatcher answered Louisiana radio. Just straight
8 airing it all the way, stopped. Answered the radio, and right
9 after I answered the radio, I heard the brakeman yelling, we need
10 medical assistance. So I hollered at the radio on the dispatcher
11 to get him to come back in to let him know. He didn't come back
12 in. I dialed 911 on the radio. He answered emergency radio, and
13 I let him know we needed emergency assistance at Dyno Nobel.

14 And that pretty much concluded the day. Then, you know,
15 that's when everything -- the ambulance and stuff, all that showed
16 up. That was the day -- our day in a short.

17 MR. ZAGATA: Okay. I appreciate it. So now what we're going
18 to do is we're going to open it up and go around with questions.
19 We're going to start out with Joe and go from there, so --

20 MR. CIEMNY: Yeah.

21 BY MR. CIEMNY:

22 Q. Jason, appreciate your time. Couple questions for you. From
23 the point you stopped your train after an emergency call, did you
24 move your train again?

25 A. No, sir.

1 Q. After the officials showed up, they didn't have you move it
2 or anything?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Okay. How long have you been working this job? Is it
5 regularly assigned --

6 A. I've been on this job since the 12th of March.

7 Q. Okay. Are you also conductor qualified?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. Did you ever work that job as a conductor?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Ask you a few questions regarding the conditions of this
12 industry. How would you describe the walking conditions out
13 there, from what you can see or from what you've seen in the past?

14 A. I want to say it's been 2 years since I've been in there on
15 the ground. It's not the worst, not the best. You know, worked
16 on -- I've walked on worse, but, I mean, I can't -- I don't know
17 if they've done any improvements or -- in the past 2 years, so I
18 can't relate to that.

19 MR. CIEMNY: I've got nothing further.

20 MR. ZAGATA: Just remind everybody to state your name and --

21 MR. CIEMNY: Oh, yeah. That was Joseph Ciemny on the record
22 previously.

23 MR. SIMPSON: Yeah.

24 BY MR. SIMPSON:

25 Q. Ron Simpson, FRA. I believe I just got one question --

1 A. Okay.

2 Q. -- for you, Jason. Was there anything unusual Buddy, his
3 demeanor, the way he reacted at the yard office or anything before
4 you guys left, anything noticeable?

5 A. Since I've been on this job, Buddy's had the same demeanor
6 the whole time I've worked with him.

7 Q. Okay. The only other thing is, was -- do you remember if he
8 was on time for work that day? Was he late?

9 A. Buddy comes to work 2 hours before he's supposed to be there.

10 MR. SIMPSON: All right. Okay. That is all I have. Thank
11 you.

12 MR. ZAGATA: Randy?

13 MR. DUMEY: I'm going to pass.

14 MR. RATLEDGE: All right. Jason, again, Aaron Ratledge, BNSF
15 Railway. Thanks again for coming and talking to us.

16 MR. CASHMAN: Yes, sir.

17 MR. RATLEDGE: I know this is a difficult situation and hate
18 that you're having to go through it.

19 BY MR. RATLEDGE:

20 Q. Anything unusual the way you guys were doing work that day?
21 I know you've been on the job since March 12th, but was there
22 anything different --

23 A. This is --

24 Q. -- this time or with the way Buddy was handling his business
25 or anything like -- I mean, I understand you just told Ron that he

1 was same demeanor all the time, but any different in the work
2 practice --

3 A. The only --

4 Q. -- coming into the facility or anything like that?

5 A. The only thing different about that day was, is we had to run
6 around Louisiana, because we had more cars than we can run around
7 inside the plant.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. That was the only difference than any other day.

10 Q. And is that something you've had to do before because you've
11 had too many cars?

12 A. Yeah, that was -- I mean, it's normal practice on that job.

13 Q. To run around Louisiana?

14 A. To run around Louisiana.

15 Q. But on the days you have less than --

16 A. I want to say 10 cars. I don't know.

17 Q. You can use the --

18 A. I would say 10 cars, you can go inside the -- in industry and
19 run around it in there.

20 Q. In that 12 and 13 track?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Okay. You ever notice Buddy being on the other side of the
23 equipment, watching the shove or placing himself over there
24 instead of where he was at that day?

25 A. No, I mean, that's the first time that I have shoved in there

1 since I worked with him on -- just recently, and it's been years
2 -- probably a couple years since I've shoved in there previous.

3 Q. Okay. When you were on this job as a conductor a couple
4 years ago, were you kind of filling in for Buddy? We understand
5 Buddy's held this job for years. Were you his brakeman, or were
6 you just kind of backfilling off the extra board?

7 A. Extra board.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. So I -- it'd be Buddy or the brakeman.

10 Q. In the times that you've worked with Buddy since March 12th,
11 I mean, did you notice him standing in that area before or
12 choosing a different area while equipment was moving by him or --

13 A. No.

14 MR. RATLEDGE: Okay. I can't -- I don't have any other
15 questions at this time.

16 MR. DUMEY: Well, I've got one.

17 BY MR. DUMEY:

18 Q. Randy Dumey, BLET investigator. When these guys are riding
19 that shove car, do you have trouble hearing them sometimes? Is it
20 noisy or --

21 A. No. No, they do a pretty good job of covering the mic so the
22 wind's not hitting it, hitting the, you know, the mic. So it's --
23 it's pretty clear communication.

24 Q. Was it windy that day that the accident happened? You having
25 trouble hearing them or --

1 A. No.

2 MR. DUMEY: Okay. That's all I had.

3 MR. RATLEDGE: I do have one follow-up. After you.

4 BY MR. ZAGATA:

5 Q. Zach Zagata, NTSB. You mentioned that Buddy shows up for
6 work early, usually hour-and-a-half, 2 hours; is that correct?

7 A. Um-hum, that's correct.

8 Q. Okay. Do you know how long he would stay after work? Would
9 he do something similar, stay longer after you guys tied up, or --

10 A. I don't know.

11 Q. You don't know?

12 A. I don't have to do the iPad, so I tie up and leave.

13 Q. You tie up and leave?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. He was still -- would he still be there when you were leaving
16 a lot of times or --

17 A. Yeah, but I -- I mean, he's got iPad stuff.

18 Q. Got you.

19 A. And I don't think -- probably don't take that long.

20 Q. Okay. What are your typical hours, you guys on that job, as
21 far as how many hours you work?

22 A. Can you rephrase?

23 Q. How many hours in a normal day when you guys work? Do you
24 average like 10-hour days on that job or 12-hour days or --

25 A. Since I've been on the job, it has been slow at that

1 facility, so, I mean, we could be back in 5 hours. But, I mean,
2 we get -- might get back in 8 hours, but wouldn't -- normally this
3 hasn't -- I don't know, 8 hours, 9 hours is the longest I've
4 worked on it.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Except for the first day, we had 12½. I'm thinking
7 dispatcher or -- we didn't have a lot of work, we just had a lot
8 of meet -- lot of trains to meet, so --

9 Q. Got you. Okay. Appreciate it. Now, as far as that track,
10 does that track -- like when you're shoving in there, can you see
11 cars moving back and forth? Just being it's an industry track,
12 how do you feel that track is maintained? Is it --

13 A. No, I couldn't see cars rocking.

14 Q. You don't see that in there?

15 A. No.

16 MR. ZAGATA: Okay. That's all I --

17 MR. CASHMAN: No.

18 MR. RATLEDGE: Yeah, just a couple of follow-ups.

19 BY MR. RATLEDGE:

20 Q. Aaron Ratledge. So you mentioned, you know, that you guys
21 talked when you went on duty at West Quincy. Any other
22 conversations in the cab about the work to be done at Dyno --

23 A. No.

24 Q. -- when you guys arrived at all?

25 A. No. I wear earplugs. The cab's loud, so I don't --

1 Q. Okay. Any job briefing that you recall whenever they got off
2 to run around the train at Louisiana about how they were going to
3 make the moves? At Louisiana or at Dyno?

4 A. Not with me.

5 Q. Okay. Do you have any idea -- and, again, I know this is
6 probably speculative, but do you know what Buddy's next move
7 would've been after you made that 20-car shove? And I know,
8 I'm --

9 A. I didn't even know what our first move was.

10 Q. Yeah, I'm a locomotive engineer, and we've been told hundreds
11 of times by conductors, just take signals, right?

12 A. Forward and reverse.

13 Q. Yep, yep. So just -- we're just trying to --

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. -- piece together what Buddy's next move would've been after
16 that 20-car shove.

17 A. Yeah, I -- no, I do not know.

18 Q. Okay. All right. And you also mentioned that Buddy works
19 off the iPad -- to the ETRF, right?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Does Buddy ever take that iPad on the ground with him, or
22 does he --

23 A. No.

24 Q. -- typically leave it in the --

25 A. It's in the motor.

1 Q. Okay. And he left it in the motor that day?

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Yeah. He didn't touch it till we was done at the mainline,
5 ready to go, before he switches his cars out.

6 MR. RATLEDGE: Okay. That's all I had. Thanks for letting
7 me ask.

8 MR. ZAGATA: Anybody else got any --

9 MR. CIEMNY: Yeah, I just got one follow-up. I just want
10 some clarification.

11 BY MR. CIEMNY:

12 Q. You said you've been on this -- this is Joseph Ciemny, again,
13 on the record. You've been on the job since March 12th, and I'm
14 not sure if I heard you correctly, but you said -- and correct me
15 if I'm wrong. Did you say this was the first time that you've had
16 to run around the cars at Louisiana?

17 A. Since I've been on this job, yes.

18 Q. Okay. So in roughly a month, this was the only time they
19 sent you out with too many cars where you had to use that
20 runaround?

21 A. Yes. Since I've been on the job.

22 MR. CIEMNY: Okay. That's all I had.

23 MR. ZAGATA: Okay. I appreciate it. Last question is, is
24 there anything you could think of that would prevent something
25 like this from happening again?

1 MR. CASHMAN: Just be aware of your surroundings, be vocal,
2 communicate. Yeah, I don't -- yeah, that's all I got. I don't
3 know.

4 MR. ZAGATA: Okay. No, no, I appreciate it. If you need
5 anything from us, let me know.

6 MR. CASHMAN: All right.

7 MR. ZAGATA: Okay. With that, we'll stop recording, so thank
8 you.

9 MR. CASHMAN: All right, yeah.

10 MR. ZAGATA: Oh, I guess we got one more (indiscernible).

11 BY MR. DUMEY:

12 Q. Randy Dumey, BLET. Sounds like you've known Buddy for a
13 while. Did he ever mention any like family issues or anything
14 that might've had him distracted that day?

15 A. No, not recently.

16 Q. You know, like an upcoming event, or somebody in his family's
17 sick or anything like that?

18 A. No, I've never heard him talk about his family.

19 MR. DUMEY: Okay. That's all I've got.

20 MR. ZAGATA: Anybody else?

21 (No audible response.)

22 MR. ZAGATA: All right. Like I say, I appreciate it, and
23 we'll stop recording.

24 MR. CASHMAN: All right.

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: BNSF FATAL RAIL ACCIDENT
 IN LOUISIANA, MISSOURI,
 ON APRIL 7, 2021
 Interview of Jason Cashman

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD21LR009

PLACE: Hannibal, Missouri

DATE: April 9, 2021

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.



Autumn Weslow
Transcriber