

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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WMATA METRO TRAIN DERAILMENT, *

IN ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA, *

Accident No.: RRD21FR010

ON OCTOBER 12, 2021 *

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Interview of: TERRY ABNEY, Rail Traffic Controller
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Landover, Maryland

Friday,
October 15, 2021

APPEARANCES:

STEPHEN JENNER, Operations and Human Performance Group
Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board

GREG KUPKA, Deputy Chief of Safety Assurance
Safety Department

BRUCE WALKER, Subject Matter Expert for Operations
Washington Metro Safety Commission

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I N T E R V I E W

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2 MR. JENNER: Good afternoon, my name is Stephen Jenner; I am
3 with the NTSB serving at the Operations and Human Performance
4 Group Chairman for this accident.

5 Today is October 15th, 2021; we are here at Carmen Turner
6 Facility in Landover, Maryland to conduct an interview with Mr.
7 Terry Abney, who works for WMATA.

8 This interview is in conjunction with NTSB's investigation of
9 the October 12th, 2021, derailment of a Metro Train in Arlington,
10 Virginia. The NTSB Reference No. is RRD22LR001.

11 The purpose of this investigation is to increase safety and
12 not assign fault, blame or liability. Before we begin our
13 interview and questions, we'll go around the table and introduce
14 ourselves and please spell your name and your title and who you're
15 with.

16 Again my name is Stephen Jenner, S-T-E-P-H-E-N, J-E-N-N-E-R.
17 I'm a Human Performance Investigator with the NTSB and we'll go to
18 my right.

19 MR. KUPKA: My name is Greg Kupka, G-R-E-G, K-U-P-K-A, I'm in
20 the Safety Department and my title is Deputy Chief of Safety
21 Assurance.

22 MR. WALKER: Thank you, Terry. My name is Bruce Walker, B-R-
23 U-C-E, last name Walker, W-A-L-K-E-R, I'm with the Washington
24 Metro Safety Commission, my title is Subject Matter Expert for
25 Operations.

1 MR. ABNEY: My name is Terry Abney, T-E-R-R-Y, A-B-N-E-Y; I'm
2 a Rail Traffic Controller for WMATA.

3 MR. JENNER: Thank you.

4 INTERVIEW OF TERRY ABNEY

5 BY MR. JENNER:

6 Q. If you would, just start off and sort of give us a
7 description of your background in the transit world, when did you
8 get started and how did you get into your current position?

9 A. I've been with Metro for 23 years now. I started off as a
10 bus operator. I've been a train operator. I've been a rail
11 supervisor also a utility depot and division clerk. I also took
12 the exam for Q&A in the tower.

13 And now I'm a rail traffic controller down at Central Control
14 which I'm on, it's the whole railroad.

15 Q. And how long have you been in this position?

16 A. At least six years now, it will be seven years, I believe,
17 no, six years this month, I think it is, yeah.

18 Q. Now I understand that there are - you work in pairs?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. Tell me about your responsibilities, does that remain
21 the same every day or do you alternate?

22 A. Depending on the position, whether I'm on the radio or the
23 buttons.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. So your responsibilities does change from the radio to the

1 buttons, you know. Basically on the radio you're more so
2 basically controlling the line talking to all the operators,
3 talking to the workers. Basically monitoring your line, you know,
4 just dealing with all the troubleshooting and emergencies via
5 radio.

6 And the button person is the one who actually maneuvers say,
7 for instance, if you need to setup a single tracking or if you
8 need to setup work locations, this is what the button person does
9 and answer the phones and make notifications.

10 Q. Do you sometimes perform, perform the duties of a radio and
11 sometimes perform the duties of a button?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. Tell me about your training, I guess your training was
14 a little over six years ago?

15 A. Well, we get certified it seems like every year now but the
16 training was -- I mean it was successful training. Basically,
17 like I say, I've been down on the rail for probably about - let's
18 just say I've been on the bus for maybe like eight months and I've
19 been on the rail ever since and I've got 23 years with the company
20 so I basically know the language of the rail and everything, know
21 how, you know, everything functions so I've been down on the rail.

22 And I've been a super, I've been in utility supervision back
23 in 2006 supervising and I went permanent in 2008 and I came down
24 to Central Control I want to say in 2013, I think it was, '13 or
25 '14 and I've been down here and been in this position since so.

1 Q. Okay. So training that's specific to rail traffic control,
2 is there classroom training for that?

3 A. Yes, it's classroom training and classroom certification.

4 Q. About how long is that, the classroom training portion?

5 A. I would say at least a year, at least a year, give or take,
6 yeah. At least a year give or take.

7 Q. Wow. And during that time you learn both the buttons person
8 -

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. -- and the radio? Okay. I imagine part of that year you're
11 sort of observing an experienced person and then you switch chairs
12 and they observe you, is that right?

13 A. Well, I mean when you become an OJT then they will put you
14 with a certified controller.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. And then, yeah, then you would work whatever position that
17 they're working you would work that where there's buttons already
18 and they would, they would sit back and just monitor, you know, so
19 basically you're just basically under their instructions.

20 Because, you know, as a student you don't know everything,
21 you know, so basically you're just being, you know, monitored by
22 them, just to make sure everything's alright. That's OJT so and
23 then when you become certified then, you know, everything changed
24 so.

25 Q. And did I hear you mention earlier that certification you

1 have to get recertified?

2 A. Yeah, certification, basically you take the test and then
3 they do simulate different types of situations, troubleshooting,
4 dealing with emergencies on the railroad, doing your
5 (indiscernible) configurations, your power configurations and all
6 of that is into certification.

7 Q. Okay. And is that an annual occurrence or is that just
8 initially?

9 A. I would, I would say, I would say at least it's every year.

10 Q. All right.

11 A. Yeah, yeah, every year to two years depending on how back -
12 sometimes they get a little backed up but so far, you know, I
13 believe it's like every year get certified.

14 Q. Very good. Great, thanks, thanks for that. So I would like
15 to hear if you would tell us about your day, the day of the
16 incident, when did you go on duty and what time and you'd just
17 walk us through.

18 A. Come on duty at 2:00.

19 Q. 2:00 p.m.?

20 A. Yes, 2:00 p.m., correct. 2:00, my hours are from 2 p.m. to
21 10 p.m. and I had a student so I was actually training him. He's
22 in the OJT so I was his instructor and we were on OX No. 2 radio
23 and the event -- when the event happened the operator had reported
24 over the air that he had a stuck holding brake.

25 So my student, you know, I just went on and just let him see

1 if he can troubleshoot the train so he repeated back to the -- I
2 mean he instructed the operator to recycle the friction brake
3 toggle switch in the lead car just to see if that -- sometimes
4 that would release the brake.

5 And the operator said he did it so then I asked the operator
6 -- no, I told, I said, "Well, how do you operate the key down and
7 key back up and recycle the ATC package?" Sometimes that will
8 release the brakes as well, will move the train.

9 So when he mentioned that to the operator the operator
10 stated, "Central, be advised, I just got punched by a customer and
11 said there was smoke coming from the train." And that's when I
12 got the radio and said, "Okay, operator," I asked him, I just
13 repeated the instructions, I said, "Well, did you key down, key
14 back up and recycle your ATC package?" He said, "No, Central, I
15 didn't do that yet."

16 I said, "Well, go ahead and key down and key back up, I
17 understand you said there's smoke coming from the, coming from the
18 train, I need you to key down, key back up because I need that
19 train moving." I wanted to get the train out of the tunnel.

20 And so he said he'd keyed down and keyed back up and still no
21 movement. So I just on and told him to brake power knockout. So
22 I'm still thinking, I'm troubleshooting the brake issue because
23 sometimes when a stuck holding brake occurs on a train it will
24 cause a little smoke because the brakes are sticking.

25 So therefore normally when you brake power knockout power

1 knockout will release the brakes and the train will be able to
2 move. So that was my last option, I said, "Well, go ahead and
3 brake power knockout and I gave him a restricted speed once he
4 braked power knockout to the platform going in the direction of
5 Arlington Cemetery Track No. 2.

6 And he was able to move. So at this time when he got to an
7 upgrade he says, "Central, be advised, I cannot move now," you
8 know, the train, "I cannot get up the hill." So that's when I
9 told him, I asked him, I said, "Okay, so what car reported of the
10 stuck holding brake?" And he gave me the car number, I think it
11 was 7,200 and I told him to, "Go back to that car, give me a radio
12 check, keep your customers updated and go back and cut the trucks
13 on that car."

14 So at that time car equipment and supervisors were dispatched
15 from another Ops, from Ops 3, so they was en route at this time.
16 And when he went back there he came across, he says, "Central, be
17 advised, it look like it's a pull apart." I said, "It's a pull
18 apart."

19 So I asked him, normally when it's a pull apart the train
20 will be dumped. So then I asked him, "Do you have brake pipe
21 pressure?" He said, "Yeah, Central, I have brake pipe." "Okay,
22 well, it's not a pull apart."

23 So then he said, "Well, it looks like the train is on the
24 ground." So once he said that I said, "Okay, well, now we're
25 dealing with something else now." So I told him, "Just standby,

1 keep the customers updated and everything like that and give me a
2 head count of how many customers you have aboard the train, try to
3 move them to another car."

4 And that's when the supervisors and the car equipment arrived
5 on the scene and they were granted file time and everything and
6 third rail power was de-energized on Track No. 2 and they was
7 granted file time. I gave them permission to hot stick just to
8 verify that power was de-energized on Track No. 2 before he
9 actually stepped over on the track, you know, to board the train
10 and investigate.

11 So during that time the supervisor gave me a chain marker and
12 everything where the power was de-energized at and when he arrived
13 on the scene to check the train out he stated that the train was
14 in between the running rails like one truck was actually off the
15 running where he sent pictures and everything.

16 And that's when we had to prepare for evacuation and we had
17 to, you know, call it for emergency response and everything. So
18 during that time I asked him again to, "Give me a head count, just
19 walk through the train, keep the customers updated and everything,
20 just walk through the train."

21 And during that time I'm still monitoring the railroad. So
22 now I'm turning trains around, making sure no trains are being
23 held off the platform because we don't want another incident where
24 customers start self-excitation of the train.

25 So now I'm just making sure every train is held on the

1 platform and I'm turning trains around just to keep the line, you
2 know, moving and everything. And so after that, you know, it was
3 a long process.

4 The fire department finally arrived. I can't remember the
5 times though but they finally arrived. And transit, transit was
6 actually there first so transit was actually there first and then
7 the fire department.

8 And so they was trying to figure out how to -- whether they
9 wanted to bring in a train to rescue or they wanted the customers
10 to walk towards Rosin or walk towards Arlington Cemetery. So I
11 definitely didn't want to bring a train down, so when he said it
12 was derailed I definitely didn't want to bring a train down there
13 because of the derailment, you don't know how, you know, the train
14 is configured in order for a train to pull up behind or in front.

15 So I definitely didn't want to do it but I'm still following
16 their instructions, you know, what I'm saying so, I'm just, like I
17 said, still controlling the railroad and at the same time I made -
18 - during that time I made Supervisor Weaver the on scene commander
19 until, you know, transit and them arrived, you know, so SOP 1A
20 wasn't affecting everything.

21 And when the fire department finally arrived and everything
22 they walked down and they started evacuating the customers walking
23 them back to Arlington Cemetery and, you know, that was --
24 basically that was it, the story.

25 Now to be honest with you, I used the safest precautions

1 necessary because at the time that the operator told me there was
2 a stuck holding brake that's what I was troubleshooting the stuck
3 holding brake, I didn't want to deviate, I just wanted to make
4 sure that I cover all bases in order to get the train moving when
5 he said it was a stuck holding brake.

6 So I just wanted to make sure, you know, like I said, I
7 wanted to get the customers safely to the platform ASAP before any
8 self-evacuation.

9 Q. Thank you.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. So I'm going to back and ask you some questions just for
12 clarification. So during your response I heard that you had the
13 student do some communications?

14 A. In the beginning, yeah.

15 Q. In the beginning. And at what point did you take over?

16 A. When the controller said it was smoke.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I mean the operator, I'm sorry, the operator, the operator.

19 Q. Yeah, sure, sure. Were you okay with how the student was -
20 the initial, initial communications from the student?

21 A. Yeah, because he -- but basically he only had one, one time
22 to give that operator instructions to recycle the brake, you know,
23 toggle switch and then once the operator came back that's when he
24 said it was smoke and that's when I jumped in right then after it
25 because, you know, I was more experienced than, you know, my

1 student.

2 Q. Right. When you're giving instructions do you have any
3 manuals or guidelines that you refer to in terms of, you know,
4 what procedure to do next and --

5 A. Yeah, yeah. Troubleshooting is basically -- I mean I know
6 troubleshooting but, yeah, you do have guidelines that you follow
7 so I know the troubleshooting basically by heart, you know,
8 because I've been on the railroad for, you know, an amount of
9 years.

10 Q. Right.

11 A. So basically you just check, making sure that the indicators
12 on his console are correct like the brake pipe pressure, did all
13 doors close and everything like that, everything that's pertaining
14 to the train in order to keep the train moving, making sure
15 everything is up to par.

16 Q. Right.

17 A. And then you ask him what his brakes under pressure does when
18 it goes to a point of power but with these new 7,000s, you know,
19 they have a screen that lets you know automatically what the
20 problem is on the screen.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. So it's actually, what, nine indicators that we have to go
23 through with the 7,000s.

24 Q. So just to clarify there are manuals you can refer to?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. But you didn't have a need to reference them based on your
2 experience?

3 A. Well I wouldn't say I didn't have a need to reference them.
4 Like I said, depending on the situation but, yes, we do have a
5 manual on the console that you go by, a troubleshoot guide.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. That you go by so basically, like I said, with the stuck
8 holding brake you have three options basically to, to go down with
9 in order to get the train moving, like I said, with the toggle
10 switch you have the power knockout and then you have cut trucks.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. You know, to get the train moving.

13 Q. Right.

14 A. So, yes, you do, you do have guidelines that you do follow
15 when it comes to troubleshooting, correct.

16 Q. Right. But you have it memorized, is that what you're
17 telling me you have it memorized that?

18 A. Well, I mean, yeah, basically. I mean, yeah, I do have it
19 memorized. I'm not saying, you know, sometimes it may come to a
20 point whereas that, you know, what the operator is telling you
21 could be wrong because you have a stuck brake and then you have a
22 stuck holding brake, so it's two different ways of dealing with
23 that.

24 You know, like a stuck brake you have to go to a point of
25 power, hold it for like five seconds and it will tell you what car

1 that is on, you know. So now he was telling me that 7,200 had the
2 stuck holding brake. So when we asked him to recycle the toggle
3 switch and everything it still didn't release the brake so.

4 Yeah, but yeah we do have guidelines and I don't remember
5 everything by heart but, yeah, we do have guidelines that we do
6 follow.

7 Q. Okay. How was the radio communication during this event with
8 you and the train operator?

9 A. It was pretty, it was pretty good. It was decent. It was
10 decent, no complaints.

11 Q. Okay. Decent meaning there were no problems or --

12 A. No, there wasn't no problem, no.

13 Q. Okay. What sort of coordination do you have with -- between
14 you and the button guy during this event?

15 A. Well basically the button person makes the notifications,
16 makes the phone calls and protects the area to keep trains from
17 coming in and everything. He's basically strategize, you know,
18 so. By me having more time than him so basically I was basically
19 giving him the structures about what trains we want to turn around
20 and everything, you know, what trains I'm holding and all of that,
21 so I'm just helping him out with all of that, you know, just to
22 keep the trains moving.

23 Q. All right. I haven't seen the layout of the, of the rock.
24 Are you sitting next to each other?

25 A. No, I'd say probably about I may be sitting here and he may

1 be sitting like probably just be maybe a couple of feet in between
2 the wall and the table. So it's a nice little distance, we can
3 probably sit maybe like five people at a console.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. That's how, that's how wide the console.

6 Q. I see.

7 A. Yeah, they pretty wide.

8 Q. So are you pointing to about 10, 12 feet away maybe?

9 A. You know, like that.

10 Q. Roughly, okay. Is he, is he overhearing the radio
11 conversation?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. He can hear what the --

14 A. Yeah, he has a radio.

15 Q. -- train operator is saying?

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. Okay. Who's in charge of de-energizing the track?

18 A. We bring it down, the button control.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. The button person.

21 Q. Any issues with, with that process that -- do you know if he
22 had any problem doing that?

23 A. If he did he never, he never let me know.

24 Q. Right. Okay. How did things go in terms of you giving
25 instructions and the train operator being able to respond to him,

1 you know, appropriately and in a timely manner?

2 A. He did, he did a good job. I think he did a good job
3 responding, letting me know what was going on and everything so.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. You know, no issues with that.

6 Q. Is there anything that you needed to hear from him that he
7 wasn't able to report? Were you getting the information that you
8 needed from him?

9 A. Yes, yes. I was basically getting all the information I
10 needed from him and then once, then once the supervisor got there
11 then, you know, then the supervisor was just letting me know, you
12 know, more information and everything, what was going on because
13 the supervisors were able to walk around the train and let me know
14 what was actually going on.

15 So basically I just wanted the operator just to stay aboard
16 and just to keep the customers, you know, safe.

17 Q. So how common is a stuck holding brake?

18 A. How common is it?

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. Very common.

21 Q. And what does very common mean?

22 A. You may get like maybe like one or two a day minimum.

23 Q. Okay. So one or two a day, I assume you go through a similar
24 process that you went, at least initially; does that usually
25 resolve the problem?

1 A. Yes, yes. Sometimes the operator can, like I said, for
2 instance, when the doors are closing instead of waiting for the
3 doors to fully close because, you know, it doesn't close
4 simultaneously so, you know, you may have the first two cars close
5 faster than the trailing cars and then when the first two doors
6 close sometimes the operators will go to a point of power which
7 will allow the brakes to be stuck because now you've still got
8 your doors open.

9 So now they will come back and say, Central, be advised, I've
10 got stuck holding brake. So what we do is just say, key down, key
11 back up, recycle your whole package and let everything, you know,
12 reset itself and then he's able to move.

13 So that can be an issue, you know, for catching a stuck
14 holding brake.

15 Q. Right. So at what point did you in your mind determine that
16 this is more than a stuck holding brake event?

17 A. Well when the operator said that the train looked like it was
18 pull apart and then he said the train was on the ground.

19 Q. Okay. And those two statements occurred pretty --

20 A. Yeah, that's --

21 Q. -- in the same time?

22 A. Yes, yeah, that's not, that's not too normal, stuck holding
23 brake there so.

24 Q. Got it. So once it's determined that it's on the ground does
25 that end any opportunity to try to move the train?

1 A. Yes, yes, most definitely.

2 Q. Let me ask you something, if you had given instructions
3 before you knew it was on the ground to go through these different
4 cycles and then try to continue on at restricted speed, restricted
5 speed, is there a miles per hour associated with that?

6 A. Yes. We basically have to tell them and I gave him, I told
7 him restricted speed at 10 miles an hour.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Because, like I said, sometimes power knockout can give you a
10 false indication of brakes being released but at the same time the
11 train will be still moving, so I wanted him to move as slow as
12 possible so it wouldn't cause anymore smoke to come from the
13 trucks.

14 Q. Yeah, right. Now if from your experience as a train
15 operator, if you had to move 10 miles per hour how would you
16 manipulate the throttle?

17 A. Basically maybe like P3 to coast, P3 to coast, P3 to coast.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Yeah, P3, just let it coast.

20 Q. If, we're actually -- we talked to the train operator earlier
21 and we didn't think to ask how he, how he handled the train, so
22 I'm not sure what he did but if we, if we learn that he went to,
23 let's say to P5 then to coast would that have been acceptable,
24 would have surprised you?

25 A. I mean, I mean, no, I mean, because, I mean, as long as he's

1 keeping it at a 10, you know, that's the thing because, you know,
2 just as long as he's keeping it at a 10.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. He can probably do P1 or P2 as long as he's keeping it at the
5 10. But, you know, for me, you know, sometimes maybe like a P3 so
6 you don't go over 10 miles like that, you know, what I'm saying?

7 Q. Right.

8 A. Because, you know, when you're like stepping on your gas, you
9 know, you take off so.

10 Q. Sure.

11 A. And then you want to try to pull off as slow as possible as
12 well because you never know, like I said, with the stuck on the
13 brake you don't want to accumulate anymore smoke, especially in
14 the tunnel coming from the --

15 Q. Right.

16 A. -- you know the trucks being stuck.

17 Q. Okay. I think you said earlier that your, one of your
18 intentions was to get the train to the platform --

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. What's, what was your reasoning behind that?

21 A. Because we had a down train and we had a stuck holding brake
22 problem and we broke out. When you brake seal switches the train
23 has to be offloaded immediately, you know, once you brake the seal
24 switches like the power knockout, once that's broken then you
25 definitely offload at the next station. And, like I said, I

1 didn't want the customers, you know, sitting in a tunnel, you
2 know.

3 Q. So you've had a little time to reflect on this event, how do
4 you think it went well in terms of how it was handled?

5 A. Well nothing is 100 percent. My thing is to me personally I
6 think it went pretty well dealing with the issue and monitoring
7 the railroad at the same time, because even though I have an issue
8 that I'm dealing with I still have to monitor the railroad to keep
9 the other trains moving so that everything doesn't come to a
10 complete stop once you're done with the issue, you know. So I
11 think it went - I really think it went pretty well.

12 Q. Okay. Is there something that you would have liked to see
13 done differently in terms of what procedures or protocol you're
14 supposed to, you know, operate under?

15 A. No, I mean, you know, I guess when you're in the game the
16 plays are totally different when somebody's outside looking at it
17 because, you know, you're in the game so basically you're going
18 with the safest precautions necessary and then after the fact,
19 after everything's over, you know, you always get maybe we should
20 have did it this way, maybe we should have did it that way and
21 everything like that but --

22 Q. Right.

23 A. I mean, everybody has a reason after the fact, you know, what
24 I'm saying so.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. Like I said, I was just doing from the safest precautions
2 necessary to get the customers safely to the platform as soon as
3 possible.

4 Q. Right. So as I described earlier we try to look at any
5 incident as, you know, a potential learning experience.

6 A. Right.

7 Q. So if -- is there anything specifically that you can think of
8 that maybe we should have done something differently to make this
9 to have gone a little, you know, even smoother?

10 A. Like I said, I don't -- technically I don't maneuver the
11 calls under derailment so basically that can start there and maybe
12 we need to do, maybe it was a track issue or maybe it was a train
13 issue. And like I said, I didn't find out the fact until a few
14 minutes into the troubleshooting, that's when we found out that
15 the train was derailed.

16 Had I known that the train was derailed, you know, from the
17 beginning then definitely we could have dealt with it in a whole
18 different way, you know, but basically what I was given by the
19 train operator that it was a stuck holding brake, so I dealt with
20 that problem so I wouldn't deviate from that problem, you know,
21 jumping to something else and all the time it was a stuck holding
22 brake from the beginning. Do you follow me?

23 Q. Sure.

24 A. So I just wanted to make sure I had all of that covered
25 first. Saying we could have did something different, I think we

1 did a perfect job by the information that we was given. Did we
2 move fast enough? I don't know, I wouldn't consider what's fast,
3 you know, because everything's safety first so that's my issue.

4 As long as -- I didn't want anybody to get hurt, I didn't
5 want anybody to jump down on the railway, you know, get hit by a
6 train or anything like that and I didn't want the train operators
7 to be holding off the stations, the whole Ops 2, you know what I'm
8 saying, and start causing more problems, trains running red
9 signal.

10 So that's, as a radio person that's the things that you have
11 to monitor, you know, you have to talk to these train -- all these
12 train operators, you had to get them to hold, so no one is holding
13 on -- off the platform making sure they don't run any risk, signal
14 them, look, I'm canceling the load at Smithsoni, hold on the
15 platform at Smithsoni.

16 Then you've got to go back to Unit 53, can I get an update of
17 what's going on with the down train, you know, at Arlington
18 Cemetery, so he's coming back with that, jumping back and forth
19 and taking notes so, you know, I think we did a fine job, I really
20 do.

21 Q. All right. I appreciate that and that's my questions for
22 this round and we're just going to move to the right. Do you need
23 a break or you're good?

24 A. Oh, no, no.

25 Q. Great.

1 MR. KUPKA: So real quick --

2 MR. JENNER: Just introduce yourself.

3 MR. KUPKA: I'm sorry.

4 BY MR. KUPKA:

5 Q. Greg Kupka, WMATA safety.

6 A. Okay.

7 Q. Just real quick regarding your shifts and schedule, what day
8 were you in your shift position or what are your days off?

9 A. Friday, Saturday.

10 Q. You're Friday, Saturday?

11 A. Uh-huh.

12 Q. And you're usually 2 to 10, that's your normal?

13 A. Yes. They just changed, it was 1 to 9.

14 Q. Right. And do you recall how many hours of sleep you had the
15 night before?

16 A. Yes, I make sure I get enough sleep. Actually I get up every
17 morning at 8:00 and I do three miles on my bike and after I do
18 three miles, you know, I'm basically doing 10 rounds of my
19 (indiscernible) and heavy (indiscernible), you know,
20 (indiscernible), so I work out in the morning.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And then I eat my breakfast. My schedule doesn't change, I
23 eat my breakfast at 10:00.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Prepare myself to come to work and everything so, yes; I make

1 sure I get enough sleep.

2 Q. Okay. And how common is it to have a student as part of your
3 daily activity?

4 A. How common is it?

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. Basically whenever they have a class.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Now they've got classes coming in, you know, so I had a
9 student last month and actually, you know, the students they're in
10 class I want to say, well, they're on each shift for a month so
11 they have to do the morning shift for a month, midday shift for a
12 month and our shift for a month, so next week will be his last
13 week with me.

14 Q. Okay. So you're assigned students?

15 A. Yes, we're assigned.

16 Q. Excuse me, so they don't rotate around?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Okay. And do they give you any instruction how to manage or
19 teach your student when they're assigned to you?

20 A. There's not, you know, an instruction book that we go by.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. No, we just basically just see where they're at especially if
23 they're just coming from another shift like say, for instance,
24 they're just coming from the morning shift so I just want to see
25 how much do they know, you know.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And I let him know, okay, this is how we do it because, you
3 know, everybody trains different, you know.

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. So there's always going to be a problem with that.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. You know, this controller told me to do it this way, that
8 controller said do it this -- you know, so.

9 Q. Okay. And did the buttons have a student as well or just
10 you?

11 A. No, no, just me.

12 Q. Okay. So I have one final one. You said earlier, so you're
13 managing the incident and you're also managing all of Ops 2, is
14 their role, the supervision help you out there or does Rail 1 play
15 a role in terms of managing the emergencies?

16 A. Well basically Rail 2 -- well, you know, we don't talk to
17 Rail 1.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. So it's basically Rail 2 or 3 that we normally talk to.

20 Q. Rail 2, sorry.

21 A. And Rail 3 is basically the one who's letting us know, okay,
22 the fire department just arrived at Arlington Cemetery.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. The police, you know, they're at Rosin and they're going to
25 be calling you in a few minutes, maybe they want file time to walk

1 down to, you know, stuff like that. But at the same time they're
2 allowing us, you know, to handle the situation, if there's
3 anything they see different, like Rail 3 if there's anything he
4 sees different he'd be like, no, I'll tell you what, let's do it,
5 you know, let's turn this train around right here just to
6 alleviate stuff like that so if it comes to that.

7 Q. Okay. So they're leaving you alone --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. -- to manage it and then they step in only if with
10 information that's pertinent?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Uh-huh.

14 MR. KUPKA: That's all I have.

15 MR. JENNER: Okay.

16 BY MR. WALKER:

17 Q. Bruce Walker of the Washington Metro Safety Commission. So
18 just to repeat back what you said, so the information that was
19 provided by the train was a stuck holding brake?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. So then once the derailment was identified just can
22 you walk me through what indications you saw in Ames, the power
23 indications, can you tell me what you saw on your Ames screen?

24 A. Well, once we realized that the train was de-energized I
25 believe he did see the power, yeah, the power did come down, the

1 power did come down in our work location, I mean, I'm sorry, work
2 location. Yeah, the power did come down.

3 MR. WALKER: We're using the room, thank you.

4 MR. ABNEY: And that's at the same time that's when we had
5 supervisors pull up on Track No. 1 side to be dropped off, the
6 supervisors in car maintenance.

7 MR. WALKER: Okay.

8 MR. ABNEY: And that's when I granted them file time to hot
9 stick just to make sure power was de-energized and they gave --
10 they walked through the train, you know, and it gave me a better
11 picture, details of what was actually, you know, wrong with the
12 train, that it was on -- it was on the ground and everything like
13 that.

14 BY MR. WALKER:

15 Q. Okay. So while you were on the orange, blue and silver line
16 for the day did you see any other indications across the railroad
17 of any other power spikes or anything going on?

18 A. Actually, yeah. As the train was moving but that's -- you
19 know what to be honest with you, that's normal with 7,000s because
20 they draw so much power. Like say sometimes when they go through
21 the D&G or something like that brakera will pop open and they will
22 close back, you know what I'm saying.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. So you would get indications that power was down but it came
25 back and that was the indication I was getting when the train was

1 moving. I'm like, okay, who's bringing down power, you know, the
2 train is moving but the power was coming up, going down, coming
3 up, going down, coming up, going down.

4 And then after we realized that it was -- when we identified
5 that it was a derailment that's when we figured out, oh, okay,
6 maybe that train was hitting the third rail as it was coming down
7 but that's not common for a 7,000 to bring down power and it pops
8 back up, I mean that happens.

9 Q. Okay. So it was just as you're watching the board so it was
10 just a normal, regular day, nothing was more unusual on that
11 Tuesday of the derailment day as far as power goes?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay. So once the derailment occurred we talked lightly
14 about management so was it -- was management allowing you to do
15 your job or were they coming down giving directions, contradicting
16 each other, what was the atmosphere with the Rail 1?

17 A. No, they was, they was allowing me to do, they was allowing
18 me to do my job, it's just sometimes when you hear people in the
19 background talking and I'm trying to like, okay, yeah, I need to
20 take that somewhere else, you know, I'm trying to hear what's
21 going on, you know what I'm saying, because you may, you may have
22 in conversations sometimes you can hear the radio and hear them at
23 the same time.

24 And they may say, well, let's do it this way, this and that,
25 this and that, this and that. I'm like, okay, there's too many of

1 you all talking, you know, let, let me do this, let me do this,
2 you know, and that happened, you know.

3 But other than that, like I said, everything went fine
4 because Rail 3 basically was the one that I was mainly
5 conversating with, dealing with the issue and he was just letting
6 me know who were on the scene and everything like that.

7 Q. Excellent. So Rail 3, did Rail 2 come down to give any
8 directions or Rail 1?

9 A. No.

10 Q. So it was just Rail 3?

11 A. Yeah.

12 MR. WALKER: Okay. So that's it for me. Thank you, Mr.
13 Abney.

14 MR. ABNEY: Uh-huh.

15 BY MR. JENNER:

16 Q. Okay. This is Steve Jenner again.

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 Q. I'm not familiar with Rail 2, Rail 1, Rail 3, can you just
19 give me an education?

20 A. Okay. Rail 1 is the one who runs the whole Control Center.
21 Rail 2 is the one who, let's say for instance, Rail 3, Rail 3 is
22 the one who manages the incidents and everything, like say if you
23 have a problem on the floor or anything needs that Rail 3 comes
24 and assists, makes the phone calls to whatever department needs to
25 be made like calling emergency response unit, whatever. And Rail

1 2 just monitors the rest of the floor while Rail 3 is dealing with
2 the situation.

3 So during the situation you always talk, you always talk to
4 Rail 3 and not Rail 2.

5 Q. So Rail 3 is relevant to this incident?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. And who -- what makes up Rail 3, what type of folks?

8 A. Well it's assistant superintendent, yeah, the assistant
9 superintendent is on Rail 1. I'm sorry, the assistant
10 superintendents are Rail 2 and Rail 3 and then you have the
11 superintendents which is Rail 1.

12 Q. Are they, are they stationed in the Control Center throughout
13 the day?

14 A. Yeah, they're in the back with the liaisons like the fire
15 liaison and Metro Transmit liaison. So basically they, they let
16 Rail 3 know like transit is going to be on the railway for a
17 minute so don't bring up rail power, you know, like that and Rail
18 3 will come down and let us know, transit's going to remain on the
19 railroad or who's in charge of the incident, whether it's transit,
20 whether it's the fire department.

21 Rail 1 would let Rail 3 know and Rail 3 would come up and let
22 us know who's in charge of the area like that during an emergency
23 because Rail 1, like I say, he's back there with the fire liaison
24 and Metro Transit liaison so they talk, you know, talk to the
25 departments and stuff like that.

1 Q. If you can discuss the communications, the initial
2 communications with the fire department or police department,
3 who's in charge and when did that happen?

4 A. Well, we don't communicate with them. Yeah, we don't. So
5 like I said, Rail 3's the one who makes all the phone calls but
6 back at the desk normally Rail 1 is back there talking to, you
7 know, the liaisons that are sitting back there because they have a
8 fire department liaison and a Metro Transit liaison desk back
9 there in the back with Rail 1, so they basically communicate.

10 When the Metro Transit people get there he let them know,
11 okay, my people just arrived, blah, blah, blah, he let Rail 3
12 know. Rail 3 come up and say, okay, Transit just arrived at such
13 and such.

14 Q. All right.

15 A. You know, that's how, that's how that works.

16 Q. Do you know when the fire department was initially contacted
17 and --

18 A. No, I couldn't tell you that.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. No.

21 Q. Okay. I'm just going to ask a little more details about your
22 work rest routine. Friday and Saturday you're off so you work the
23 other five days of the week?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And you discussed a pretty strict routine -

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. -- you have about going to bed and waking up? What time do
3 you usually go to bed?

4 A. I'm normally in bed; I get off work at 10:00 so I'm normally
5 in bed no later than 1:30.

6 Q. And fall asleep pretty quickly after that?

7 A. Basically, yeah, yeah, you know.

8 Q. Okay. So from 1:30 you wake up at 8?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. So you're getting six and a half hours of sleep?

11 A. I guess that's what, yeah.

12 Q. Okay. Is that adequate for you?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. And so when it's time to start your shift you feel --
15 what's your alertness level and --

16 A. Oh, I'm alert, you know, I'm good.

17 Q. You feel rested and alert?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. And I ask of all the people about your overall health,
20 if I can ask you those questions, how is your overall health?

21 A. Good, good health, good health.

22 Q. Okay. And any chronic issues, high blood pressure or heart
23 disease or anything?

24 A. No.

25 Q. Any short term colds or allergies?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Have you ever been diagnosed with any type of sleep disorder?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Okay. Once you fall asleep do you feel -- do you wake up
5 during the night or -

6 A. I mean if I wake up maybe it's to use the bathroom but other
7 than that, no.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Because I drink plenty of water, you know, throughout the
10 day. I eat my meals, I eat six meals a day so, you know, yeah, I
11 work out.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. So I compete so basically, yeah.

14 Q. Oh, you do?

15 A. Yeah. So, yeah, I'm basically strict.

16 Q. Yeah. All right, thank you for that.

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 MR. JENNER: All right, that's it for now and we'll just
19 continue to go around the second time.

20 MR. KUPKA: This is Greg, I have no further questions.

21 MR. WALKER: This is Bruce, I have no further questions.

22 BY MR. JENNER:

23 Q. Great. I don't have any specific questions but what I'd like
24 to do is ask you, is there anything, questions of you or other
25 people we should be asking, do you think, to help us get a better

1 understanding of this event?

2 A. I mean, other than the button person, you know, he was there.
3 He was in the game so he basically because he can tell you his
4 responsibilities as to what he did and how he reacted, you know,
5 stuff like that. Because, like I said, by me monitoring the
6 railroad I can't sit here and hold his hand, you know what I'm
7 saying, so I don't know how quick he was moving or anything like
8 that but, like I said, when I -- once we did realize it was the
9 derailment then I did see power come down.

10 Q. All right. And final type question is, do you think there
11 can be any type of changes in terms of procedures or protocol or
12 computer equipment or anything to make your job easier and when
13 handling this type of event?

14 A. No, not really. I mean, where I have -- I mean, but this is,
15 basically I guess this is like off the record, basically when you
16 talk to other controllers and stuff like that they tell you that
17 their system is more updated than ours, you know, like the screens
18 and stuff like that but, you know, that's -- we do it, you know,
19 it's nothing really, nothing major that needs to be changed.

20 Q. Other controllers at other Transit properties?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay. From what you know of other Transit properties could
23 more sophisticated equipment have aided in this event?

24 A. I couldn't tell you that because I don't know what their
25 sophisticated equipment does for them, you know what I'm saying,

1 we were just talking about screen wise and all of that stuff so,
2 yeah.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. But other than that, it's workable. Like I said, we do a
5 fine job in dealing with the situation. If we can bring anything
6 up to par, especially up-to-date with our communications and
7 everything, you know, that would be a plus.

8 MR. JENNER: All right, very good. I have nothing else so I
9 want to thank you very much for taking time.

10 MR. ABNEY: No problem.

11 MR. JENNER: And we're going to let you go.

12 MR. ABNEY: I appreciate it, gentlemen. You all have a good
13 weekend.

14 MR. JENNER: Thank you, looking forward to that.

15 MR. KUPKAR: Thank you, sir.

16 MR. WALKER: Mr. Abney, enjoy your vacation.

17 MR. ABNEY: All right, thank you, Mr. Walker, appreciate it,
18 appreciate it.

19 MR. JENNIFER: Okay. (Indiscernible), thanks so much for
20 coming in.

21 MR. ABNEY: No problem, thank you.

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: WMATA METRO TRAIN DERAILMENT
 IN ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA
 ON OCTOBER 12, 2021
 Interview of Terry Abney

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD21FR010

PLACE: Landover, Maryland

DATE: October 15, 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.



Cheryl Farner Donovan
Transcriber