

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

SEPTA TROLLEY DERAILMENT \*

IN SOUTHWEST PHILADELPHIA, \*

PENNSYLVANIA ON JULY 27, 2023 \*

Accident No.: RRD23FR014

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: ALVIN McCOLLIN, Electronics Specialist  
SEPTA, Elmwood District

Residence Inn  
Philadelphia Center City  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Saturday,  
July 29, 2023

## APPEARANCES:

JOHN MANUTES, Investigator-in-Charge  
National Transportation Safety Board

GEORGE GOOD, Senior Accident Investigator  
Federal Transit Administration

JAMES MICHAEL McLAUGHLIN, Safety Oversight Regional  
Manager  
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

PAUL SOUTHARD, Business Agent  
TWU Local 234  
Representative for Alvin McCollin

RON NEWMAN, Business Agent  
TWU Local 234

EDWARD CARRUTHERS, Senior Director  
Metro Rail Equipment Maintenance

RONALD KEELE, Chief Safety Officer  
SEPTA

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I N T E R V I E W

(4:00 p.m.)

1  
2  
3 MR. MANUTES: Okay. Good afternoon. My name is John  
4 Manutes. I am an investigator with the National Transportation  
5 Safety Board.

6 Today is July 29th, 2023. It's about 4:00 p.m. here at  
7 the --

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Residence.

9 MR. MANUTES: -- Residence -- we are located at Residence Inn  
10 at City Center in Philadelphia but we are speaking by phone to  
11 Alvin McCollin.

12 The interview is being conducted in reference to NTSB  
13 accident number RRD23FR014, which was an uncontrolled trolley  
14 movement resulting in a derailment.

15 The NTSB is an independent federal agency. We are charged  
16 with determining the probable causes of transportation accidents  
17 and promoting transportation safety. It is not part of the  
18 Department of Transportation, the Federal Transit Administration  
19 or any other federal, state or regulatory agency. NTSB has no  
20 regulatory or enforcement powers. We publish recommendations to  
21 any party such as an agency, railroad or union, that we believe  
22 can act on those recommendations to prevent accidents from  
23 happening in the future.

24 As I said, today we're here to speak with Alvin McCollin.

25 The NTSB uses a party system to ensure participation from the

1 subject matter experts. Those folks I pre-briefed you on are here  
2 to conduct follow-up questions and to help document the interview.

3 So we're going to go around the room and everybody will  
4 introduce ourselves by saying their name, spelling their name and  
5 tell us who they're with and what their title is. We'll begin --  
6 I'll begin. Again, my name is John Manutes, J-o-h-n, M-a-n-u-t-e-  
7 s. I'm a railroad accident investigator with the NTSB, and I am  
8 the investigator-in-charge for this accident.

9 Go ahead, George.

10 MR. GOOD: George Good, G-e-o-r-g-e, G-o-o-d, senior accident  
11 investigator with the Federal Transit Administration, FTA.

12 MR. McLAUGHLIN: James Michael McLaughlin, J-a-m-e-s, M-i-c-  
13 h-a-e-l, M-c-L-a-u-g-h-l-i-n. I am the state safety oversight  
14 regional manager with Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

15 MR. McCOLLIN: Could you spell that last name again?

16 MR. McLAUGHLIN: M-c-L-a-u-g-h-l-i-n.

17 MR. MANUTES: And, Alvin, just so you know, you are the first  
18 person that will get the written transcript from this, okay. So  
19 you'll have all these names spelled out for you there, too.

20 MR. McCOLLIN: Okay. Cool.

21 MR. SOUTHARD: Paul Southard, business agent, TWU Local 234,  
22 P-a-u-l, S-o-u-t-h-a-r-d.

23 MR. NEWMAN: Ronald Newman, TWU Local 234 business agent, R-  
24 o-n, N-e-w-m-a-n.

25 MR. CARRUTHERS: Edward Carruthers, senior director, Metro

1 Rail equipment maintenance, E-d-w-a-r-d, C-a-r-r-u-t-h-e-r-s.

2 MR. KEELE: Ronald Keele, R-o-n-a-l-d, K-e-e-l-e, and I'm the  
3 chief safety officer here at SEPTA.

4 MR. MANUTES: Okay. I need to ask, are either of you  
5 representing him or are you both panel? Do you represent him?

6 MR. SOUTHARD: I represent him

7 MR. MANUTES: Okay. Alvin, Paul is here as your  
8 representative. If he's okay with that, are you okay with that?

9 MR. McCOLLIN: Yes, I'm okay with that.

10 MR. MANUTES: Okay. I will still give him the opportunity to  
11 ask some questions because that's how the team's been working, but  
12 if you have any concerns or, Alvin, if you need to go offline and  
13 talk to your representative at any point about a question or  
14 concern, you can do that, okay. You can stop this interview and  
15 put it on pause any time, and we'll start again later, okay.

16 MR. McCOLLIN: Yeah, okay.

17 MR. MANUTES: Okay. Second to that, I need to ask, Alvin, do  
18 I have your permission to record this interview with you today?

19 MR. McCOLLIN: I have to ask my union rep.

20 MR. MANUTES: Okay.

21 MR. SOUTHARD: I'm here.

22 MR. MANUTES: Would you advise him that we can record this  
23 interview?

24 MR. SOUTHARD: Yes, you can -- yeah, we're investigating the  
25 whole situation. We got you, Alvin.

1 MR. McCOLLIN: I'm new to anything like this. So I don't  
2 really know.

3 MR. MANUTES: I know. It's a bad, it's a bad situation to  
4 have to do it this way, and I really appreciate you talking to us  
5 on the phone before you go on vacation. Paul says that we're good  
6 to record. So are you comfortable with that? Are we good to  
7 record?

8 MR. McCOLLIN: Yeah, I regard my union rep recommendation.

9 MR. MANUTES: Okay. Thank you.

10 INTERVIEW OF ALVIN McCOLLIN

11 BY MR. MANUTES:

12 Q. If you could, please state and spell your name again for the  
13 transcriptionist.

14 A. Alvin McCollin, A-l-v-i-n, McCollin, M-c-C-o-l-l-i-n.

15 Q. Okay. Thank you. And what is your position at SEPTA?

16 A. Electronics specialist.

17 Q. Electronics specialist. Okay. How long have you been on  
18 that job?

19 A. That job is like about 15 months.

20 Q. About 15 months.

21 A. As a specialist. I was a first class mechanic for 4 years.

22 Q. Okay. So 15 months as an electrical specialist --  
23 electronics specialist. And prior to that what was the other time  
24 at SEPTA?

25 A. First class mechanic.

1 MR. MANUTES: Okay. Is an electronics specialist -- this is  
2 sort of for the group, Alvin. Is an electronics specialist a  
3 promotion from first class mechanic?

4 MR. SOUTHARD: Yes.

5 MR. MANUTES: Okay. Very good.

6 MR. McCOLLIN: Yes.

7 MR. MANUTES: Thank you.

8 BY MR. MANUTES:

9 Q. Where do you normally work? Do you work in the Elmwood  
10 facility?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. Do you also work out on the territory or is all your  
13 work there at Elmwood?

14 A. All at Elmwood.

15 Q. Okay. All at Elmwood. Very good. Thank you. So, the first  
16 question is very open ended, and it's really up to you to spend,  
17 you know, 5, 10, 15 minutes, whatever you want, explaining to us  
18 what your contact with that 9107 was. I understand there was an  
19 air compression change out, but I don't know any details. I don't  
20 know anything about your job, how your job runs. I don't know  
21 anything about changing out air compressors on trolleys at SEPTA.  
22 So it's really up to you here. This is your interview, to help us  
23 as investigators understand, you know, what you did on that  
24 trolley. And I don't, I don't know how far back to ask you to go.  
25 I don't know if you worked on it the day before, a week before, or



1 just on Thursday. So the first question is really open ended.  
2 What was your contact with the 9107? Who told you to go to work  
3 on it? And what did you do? And just walk us through sort of  
4 your day that day.

5 A. Well, around 7 p.m., Ameer, the supervisor, asked me to do a  
6 leak test -- air leak test on the compressor. He give me the form  
7 that's to be filled out -- but he didn't give me the form. He  
8 told me to do the leak -- air leak test but I also did the pop off  
9 pressure, and also did the -- measured the (indiscernible) on the  
10 heaters and the stop and start -- compressor to start and then it  
11 stops. That was -- what I did. I record the information on the  
12 given sheet, and I returned it to him.

13 Q. What -- could you say it again for me just because of the  
14 speaker phone. What kind of sheet was that that you returned the  
15 information on?

16 A. It was a sheet that normally that you have to fill out with  
17 the value, what you watch for the air leak test.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. The value you got for the testing, the forms on the heaters.  
20 When the compressor stops and starts and if the compressor go too  
21 high, then the pressure cause the -- it will pop off this valve  
22 into the atmosphere. I had to check that.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. And I give that to Ameer, the supervisor --

25 Q. Ameer.

1 A. -- the values I got.

2 Q. Okay. So Ameer is the supervisor that asked you to go out  
3 and to the leak test and he's the supervisor that you returned the  
4 form to?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Okay. Very good. Thank you. During your time on the leak  
7 test, did you notice if the vehicle had chocks placed on the  
8 wheels? And I should have said, I don't know and I don't remember  
9 are perfectly acceptable answers. Don't make anything up. Just  
10 what do you remember?

11 A. I'm not sure.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. I can't remember.

14 Q. That's fine. No problem. No problem, Alvin. That's great.  
15 Thank you for telling us that. My other question is in your time  
16 doing the leak test on the 9107, did you ever change the position  
17 of the A1A or the A1B brake cut out valves?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Okay. Did you notice if the A1A or A1B were cut in or cut  
20 out?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Okay. Is that normally part of your process or normally not  
23 part of your process?

24 A. Not for that. Not for the leak test.

25 Q. Not for the leak test. What would you -- and this is, this

1 is a leading question but what would you assume -- would you  
2 assume normally that the brakes are just cut in if you didn't  
3 check them? Or, is that not fair? You can tell me that's not  
4 fair.

5 A. I'm sorry. Repeat that question again.

6 Q. So do you normally check the position of the cut out valves  
7 -- the brake valves?

8 A. I'm in the shop working, right, and I have to check for an  
9 air leak whether I work on the trolley or not. I check the  
10 position of the cut out valves.

11 Q. Normally you do but you didn't on that day?

12 A. Please repeat.

13 Q. So are you saying that normally you would look at the A1A and  
14 the A1B but you didn't on that day?

15 A. I didn't say that.

16 Q. You did say that or did not? Okay. So tell me again. I  
17 think you said when I work in the shop, I check them. What does  
18 that mean?

19 A. Let me explain.

20 Q. Yeah, please.

21 A. After I work on a trolley, I have to take out of the shop. I  
22 always examine the position of the brake cut outs.

23 Q. I got it now, Alvin. Thank you very much. If you've got to  
24 move it, you're going to check them.

25 A. After I work on it in the shop, I check it.

1 Q. Okay. Very good. I'm going to open up questions to the rest  
2 of the team here, and I'm going to sit down for a second.

3 MR. MANUTES: Go ahead, George. This will be George.

4 BY MR. GOOD:

5 Q. Hi, Alvin. When you -- have you ever done the change the  
6 whole compressor job or do you just strictly do like the leak  
7 test? We lost him again.

8 MR. MANUTES: For the transcriptionist, we lost the phone  
9 call. We're going to try and redial him in. I think I'll just  
10 leave the recording going.

11 MR. McCOLLIN: Hello.

12 MR. MANUTES: Hey, Alvin, you back with this.

13 MR. McCOLLIN: Yeah, I'm sorry. I don't know what went  
14 wrong. Something went wrong.

15 BY MR. GOOD:

16 Q. Yeah, this is George Good from FTA. Just -- I was just  
17 wondering if you were familiar when you complete a job, how that's  
18 relayed to the maintenance manager when the work's all completed  
19 and have you done the compressor job before?

20 A. I understand the last part of the question. I have done the  
21 compressor job before. But the first part it was --

22 MR. MANUTES: Well, let's stick with one at a time.

23 BY MR. MANUTES:

24 Q. So have you done -- in your 15 months as an electronics  
25 specialist --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Would you say you do it fairly regularly?

3 A. I did it -- as a specialist, I don't do it as much. I  
4 probably did it like twice since I was a specialist, but as far as  
5 a mechanic, I did it.

6 MR. MANUTES: Okay. And then I think I think the first part,  
7 I'll try and rephrase, and we'll see if we're on same page. How  
8 do you report that the work is done? Is that the question?

9 MR. GOOD: Yes.

10 BY MR. MANUTES:

11 Q. So how to your supervisor that the work is done?

12 A. Well, normally I would fix the compressor, (indiscernible),  
13 check the car. Hello.

14 Q. Yes, I think you broke up there a little bit. You normally  
15 do what again. I'm so sorry.

16 A. I (indiscernible) compressor digitally to test the test I  
17 mentioned before, and then I will just take the care and put it in  
18 line.

19 Q. Okay.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Take the car out and put it on the  
21 line.

22 BY MR. MANUTES:

23 Q. And how is that -- is that documented somewhere? Do you  
24 document that somewhere what was done and that it was completed?

25 A. Normally, okay, I would -- in my report, I would write I

1 change the compressor, I did all the tests and that what I do.  
2 And, you know, as soon as -- I will put the car in line.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Put the care on the line.

4 BY MR. MANUTES:

5 Q. And is there any kind of a written policy that you -- that's  
6 followed when that kind of work's done?

7 A. A written policy? Well, I've never seen one for changing the  
8 compressors. As I said before, there's the sheet for the values  
9 that I get from the compressor tests, that I performed on the  
10 compressor, the air leak test, the stop and start the compressor.  
11 There is a form, I fill it out and it's just a form that you have  
12 to fill in the blanks with values.

13 Q. Do you know what the number or the name of that form is?

14 A. No, I don't know right off hand. I know I go to the office,  
15 I know to put it in the office, but that night, Ameer and me, we  
16 couldn't find any. We did find one eventually. So, yes, but the  
17 supervisor normally know where they are in the filing cabinet.

18 Q. Okay. Thank you.

19 BY MR. McLAUGHLIN:

20 Q. Alvin, this is Michael McLaughlin with Penn DOT. I want to  
21 confirm the only thing that Ameer asked you to for this particular  
22 vehicle on this particular day was to do the air leak test. You  
23 were not involved in the actual removal or replacement of the air  
24 compressor. Is that correct?

25 A. That's correct.

1 Q. Okay. So, as a normal procedure for -- if you do -- on the  
2 times that you do remove the air compressor and replace the air  
3 compressor, do you disable the brakes for the trolley when you do  
4 that job?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And when you put the air compressor back in, at what point do  
7 you re-enable the brakes for that piece of equipment?

8 A. When I'm ready to take it out.

9 Q. Okay. So you put the air compressor back in, you do the leak  
10 test?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And then you re-enable the brakes when you're ready to take  
13 it out?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. I just wanted to make sure I understood the sequence  
16 of the process.

17 MR. MANUTES: You asked him about the process when he changed  
18 out an air compressor?

19 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yes.

20 MR. MANUTES: Okay.

21 MR. McLAUGHLIN: And that's all I have. Thank you.

22 MR. McCOLLIN: Thank you.

23 BY MR. SOUTHARD:

24 Q. Alvin, this is Paul Southard. When you are finished  
25 installing the compressor, do you normally (indiscernible) and put

1 it on your notes?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. So it is documented?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. That's all the questions I have.

6 MR. NEWMAN: Ronald Newman. I don't have any questions.

7 MR. CARRUTHERS: Ed Carruthers. I have no additional  
8 questions.

9 MR. MANUTES: Ron.

10 MR. KEELE: I don't have none.

11 MR. MANUTES: Go ahead.

12 MR. McLAUGHLIN: I just have one more quick question.

13 Michael McLaughlin.

14 BY MR. McLAUGHLIN:

15 Q. Do you -- how often do you reference the notes on the Vemis  
16 (ph.) system for trolleys or equipment that you're working on?

17 A. Reference as -- can you explain reference? What does  
18 reference mean in this context?

19 Q. Sure. So if you're working on a piece of equipment, will you  
20 go in and check the notes in Vemis prior to working on it just to  
21 see what's going on with that piece of equipment?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay. That's it. Thank you.

24 BY MR. MANUTES:

25 Q. Okay. Alvin, this is John Manutes again with the NTSB. A



1 couple of quick follow ups. On the leak down test you did, did  
2 you notice anything abnormal with the compressor or the vehicle at  
3 all that caused you concern?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Okay. And do you work with -- is blue flag protection the  
6 right word? Blue signal. Do you use blue signals when you do air  
7 compressor work or the leak down work?

8 A. I do not know what is blue signal.

9 Q. Okay. Fair answer.

10 MR. MANUTES: I'm going to open it up to the rest of the  
11 group here, and then I'll close it out.

12 MR. GOOD: George Good, FTA.

13 BY MR. GOOD:

14 Q. Just one more question. What kind of training is involved in  
15 changing an air compressor? Is there formal training or on-the-  
16 job training or what's the initial training?

17 A. It's on-the-job training. You learn by one of the other  
18 mechanics walking you through the procedure.

19 Q. All right. Thank you.

20 MR. McLAUGHLIN: I don't have anything else. Thank you.

21 MR. SOUTHARD: Nothing.

22 MR. KEELE: Oh, Ronald Keele.

23 BY MR. KEELE:

24 Q. I have a question, just a follow up. You say when you do the  
25 compressor, you do disable the brakes?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And when you're complete, you re-engage the brakes?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. On that particular day, did you re-engage the brakes?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay.

7 MR. CARRUTHERS: I have one follow up. Ed Carruthers, SEPTA.

8 BY MR. CARRUTHERS:

9 Q. You're certified to operate a trolley?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. As part of that certification, you went through  
12 training?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. And can you give us a little bit of detail about your  
15 understanding of the process to operate a trolley? So if there's  
16 any kind of pre-trip or any special instruction for operating from  
17 the rear panel?

18 A. Okay. I will start with rear panel. All doors must be  
19 closed, and you start to pull the handle down and the car will get  
20 propulsion and the car will move. And you could slow the car down  
21 by keep depressing the handle. In case of emergency, you push the  
22 handle right way around and that will apply brakes and also for  
23 (indiscernible). That's a forward. That's a reverse. Forward,  
24 normally I get -- how I do it, and this is how we learn. I  
25 (indiscernible) because I'm moving, put the (indiscernible) run

1 forward, make sure nobody's passing. I then move the trolley.  
2 That's basically how we do around the yard and stuff.

3 Q. In either scenario, are you checking the condition of the  
4 vehicle, checking the gauges, anything like that before you begin  
5 to operate?

6 A. Well, the gauges I will check like the speedometer, and I  
7 will check the air pressures.

8 BY MR. MANUTES:

9 Q. Let me -- this is John again. Let me lead you into another  
10 question. Does the real hossler (ph.) panel have gauges?

11 A. No, it doesn't.

12 Q. So would you -- how could you check the gauges in that  
13 scenario?

14 A. Oh, so I -- I'm sorry. I thought you understand what I said.  
15 I explain what I did at the back. I said what I did to the front.  
16 I can go, I can go over it again if you want me to.

17 Q. I guess my question is if you're operating from the read, do  
18 you go to the front to check the gauges first?

19 A. Yes, you will look and see where your air pressure's at  
20 because if your air pressure is too low, it's not, it's not  
21 charge. You're not going to get -- it's not going to charge. So  
22 it's not going to work. So most of -- you look at it. You get it  
23 up to where it's supposed to be. You have to make sure all doors  
24 are closed, and then you can go to the back to operate because  
25 there are no gauges to the back on these trolleys.

1 Q. Thank you.

2 A. Just handheld device.

3 Q. Thank you, Alvin. That's very helpful. And same question.  
4 When you're operating from the rear, do you operate the vehicle  
5 alone or do you have another person help you?

6 A. Alone.

7 Q. Okay. Very good.

8 MR. MANUTES: Does anybody have any follow ups?

9 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, one more.

10 BY MR. McLAUGHLIN:

11 Q. One more quick question, Alvin. This is Mike McLaughlin  
12 again. When you were doing the air leak test, did you check the  
13 notes for the 9107 in the Vemis system prior to doing that test at  
14 any point when working on it?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. I'm sorry. I didn't -- you said yes.

17 A. Yeah, I checked the noted.

18 Q. Okay. Was there anything in the notes about the brakes being  
19 disabled?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Okay. That's all I have. Thank you. Appreciate it.

22 BY MR. MANUTES:

23 Q. Alvin, we're going to let you go here. Is there anything  
24 else that you want to tell us about the 9107 or anything else at  
25 the Elmwood yard or facility that we didn't ask? Is there

1 anything that you'd like us to know or anything on your mind you'd  
2 like to tell about this?

3 A. I can't think of anything, not really.

4 Q. I understand. Okay. I will ask Paul to get you my contact  
5 information, so that you can call me any time you like. I've got  
6 your number, and I've got your email address. You're going to see  
7 a transcript but it's going to be a couple of weeks, okay. It'll  
8 take us some time to get it done, and if you want to call me  
9 before then, that's fine. Otherwise, we'll be in touch in a  
10 couple of weeks, okay.

11 A. Yeah, I should be back by then to work. So.

12 Q. Okay. Very good. Well, good luck at home today. I know  
13 it's a busy day, and try to enjoy your vacation. Thank you.

14 A. Thank you. Have a good day.

15 Q. You, too. Bye-bye.

16 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

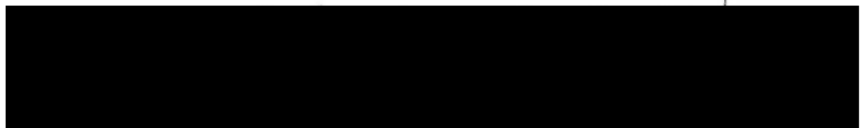
IN THE MATTER OF: SEPTA TROLLEY DERAILMENT  
IN SOUTHWEST PHILADELPHIA,  
PENNSYLVANIA ON JULY 27, 2023  
Interview of Alvin McCollin

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD23FR014

PLACE: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

DATE: July 29, 2023

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.



Kathryn A. Mirfin  
Transcriber