

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: \*

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NORFOLK SOUTHERN EMPLOYEE \*

FATALITY NEAR DECATUR, ALABAMA \* Accident No.: RRD24FR007

ON JANUARY 31, 2024 \*

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Interview of: BRADLEY MALONE, Brakeman  
Norfolk Southern

Marriott Courtyard  
Decatur, Alabama

Saturday,  
February 3, 2024



APPEARANCES:

BEN STROT, Rail Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

MATT THOMPSON, Investigator in Charge  
National Transportation Safety Board

STEPHEN JENNER, Ph.D., Human Performance Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

RANDY HUNT, Senior Director of Bridge and Safety  
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SHAUN McCOY, Gulf Division Superintendent,  
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STEPHEN YOUNG, Operating Practices Inspector  
Federal Railroad Administration

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DAVID WYATT, Investigator, Safety Task Force  
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CHRIS CHRISTIANSON, Investigator, National Safety Team  
SMART-Transportation Division

TODD SIZEMORE, Local Chairman, Division 423  
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)  
(On behalf of Mr. Malone)

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I N T E R V I E W

MR. STROT: All right. Good afternoon. My name is Ben Strot. I'm an investigator for the NTSB. Today is February 3rd, 2024, and we are meeting at the Marriott Courtyard here in Decatur, Alabama. This interview is being conducted in reference to NTSB accident number RRD24FR007, an employee fatality near Decatur, Alabama, on the Norfolk Southern that occurred on January 31st, 2024.

The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged with determining the probable cause of transportation accidents and promoting transportation safety. It is not part of the DOT, FRA, or any other regulatory agency. NTSB has no regulatory or enforcement powers, and we will publish recommendations to any party that we believe can act on those recommendations to prevent accidents from happening in the future. There are several phases in the process. We're currently in the fact-finding phase. That will be followed by analysis, probable cause finding, and finally any recommendations that we see necessary.

Today we're here to speak with Bradley Malone. Before we begin, we'll go around the table and introduce ourselves for the transcriptionist. Please spell your last name and speak clearly and speak up so it can be heard.

My name is Ben Strot, S-t-r-o-t, with the NTSB.

MR. THOMPSON: Matt Thompson, T-h-o-m-p-s-o-n. I'm the NTSB IIC.

1 MR. HUNT: Randy Hunt, H-u-n-t, Norfolk Southern safety.

2 MR. S. McCOY: Shaun M-c-C-o-y, Norfolk Southern,

3 Transportation division superintendent.

4 MR. YOUNG: Stephen Young, Y-o-u-n-g, FRA.

5 MR. B. McCOY: Byrl M-c-C-o-y, with the FRA.

6 MR. SIZEMORE: Tom Sizemore, S-i-z-e-m-o-r-e, BLET 423, local  
7 chairman.

8 MR. MALONE: Bradley Malone, M-a-l-o-n-e, transportation  
9 brakeman.

10 MR. WYATT: David Wyatt, W-y-a-t-t, BLET Safety Taskforce  
11 investigator.

12 MR. CHRISTIANSON: Chris Christianson,  
13 C-h-r-i-s-t-i-a-n-s-o-n, SMART-TD investigator.

14 DR. JENNER: I'm Stephen Jenner, J-e-n-n-e-r, with the NTSB.

15 MR. STROT: All right. Thank you all.

16 When we go around and we're asking questions, please remember  
17 to state your last name for the transcriptionist.

18 And Mr. Malone, do you mind if we go by Bradley today?

19 MR. MALONE: That's fine.

20 MR. STROT: All right. Thank you.

21 As we spoke beforehand, this interview will be recorded, and  
22 are you okay with that?

23 MR. MALONE: Yes, sir.

24 MR. STROT: And it'll be transcribed and be put in the public  
25 docket, so we can't guarantee any confidentiality. Are you -- you

1 understand that?

2 MR. MALONE: Yes, sir.

3 MR. STROT: Okay. During your interview, you're allowed your  
4 representative. You brought Mr. Sizemore here. He can --  
5 Mr. Sizemore can't any answer any questions for you, he can't  
6 object to any questions, but if you have anything you need to  
7 confer with him on, we can take a break at any time and go out  
8 there. And Mr. Sizemore's been here for a couple interviews. If  
9 he can help clarify anything, that is okay.

10 Please answer the questions today to the best of your  
11 recollection. If you don't remember something, that's perfectly  
12 fine. If you need to change your answer, you know, if you think  
13 of something that you misspoke about, that's fine, just let us  
14 know that, you know, we need to back up a little bit and change  
15 something.

16 If you need any breaks, anything at all, just let me know.  
17 Give me a symbol, we'll take a break and reconvene after that,  
18 so -- are you ready to go?

19 MR. MALONE: I'm ready to go.

20 INTERVIEW OF BRADLEY MALONE

21 BY MR. STROT:

22 Q. All right. First thing, Bradley, if you could just tell us  
23 about your railroad career, what you've done for the NS, different  
24 positions, how long you've been in different places, things of  
25 that nature?

1 A. Hired out in January of '97, marked up in June of '97 as a  
2 conductor. Forced to Memphis. I was the youngest of my group, so  
3 spent my first few years in Memphis, Tennessee, till I could hold  
4 job in Decatur, Alabama. And then I came to Decatur, Alabama as a  
5 brakeman, a switchman at the time, and worked out of Decatur until  
6 they moved me to -- it was time to go to engineer school. And I  
7 went to engineer school in '04. I don't remember the month, but  
8 went in '04, and qualified engineer March of '05. And stayed  
9 running an engine till Norfolk Southern and BLE and UTU all got  
10 together and said we could flow back. So I believe it was April  
11 2014, flowed back. I've been working on the ground ever since  
12 except for a few stints when they needed me to step back up and be  
13 an engineer for a week or two at a time. But majority, for the  
14 last nearly 10 years, been working this job with Jason on -- here  
15 in Decatur.

16 Q. Appreciate that. That's -- and that's pretty rare to be able  
17 to stay on a job that long with the same people. That makes a  
18 good team to be together that long.

19 MR. STROT: Any questions on experience that anybody's got?

20 (No response.)

21 BY MR. STROT:

22 Q. Okay. Bradley, if you could just walk us through the day of  
23 the incident from when you came on duty? I don't need you to go  
24 into any detail that's going to be difficult for you, but just if  
25 you can run us through what you heard --

1 A. You talking about the whole day?

2 Q. Well, as much of it as you can from the time you went on duty  
3 till the time of the incident.

4 A. Yes, sir. Come on duty at 7 o'clock. Jason prints our  
5 paperwork out, and kind of go over the paperwork, what we got to  
6 switch for the day. We had a heavy day that day, bunch of cars in  
7 the yard. And of course we talked about what we were going to do,  
8 where we were going to start at. Just finding that starting point  
9 is always usually the toughest thing for the day. But after you  
10 find the starting points, you can just start knocking on it and  
11 get it, you know, knocked on out.

12 But we built the Chattanooga's in number 1. We had more  
13 Chattanooga's than anything. Talked to the trainmaster and  
14 decided we're going to fill up 1 with Chattanooga's, anything left  
15 over we was going to Sheffield, at Sheffield. At the time we --  
16 Sheffield traffic was in number 10, so we was kicking Sheffield's  
17 to 10, Chattanooga's to 1. Didn't have a CS6 track, didn't have  
18 another clear track at the time, so we kicked a few CS6's in track  
19 4. When we got the majority of the day done, what we had in the  
20 yard, we had over 100 cars in the siding that we needed to switch.

21 BL04, Randy Hester and -- I forget who he was with -- Kevin  
22 Tittle, they offered to take care of a few cars off the east end  
23 of the siding for us because they knew we had a heavy day, so they  
24 handled about the east 40. So he went to the east end, handled  
25 about 40 of those cars, which wasn't too bad, just a few blocks

1 here and there. He moved all our Sheffields from 10 out to the  
2 east end of the siding. So that cleared up a track for CS6's, and  
3 he had about eight CS6's that he put back in number 10 for us and  
4 tied them down for us at butt post for our other CS6's we had on  
5 the yard. We didn't have but about 25 CS6's that day, total,  
6 something like that.

7 But when it got time for us to go to the siding, that left us  
8 about 65 or 70 or so in the siding that we needed to handle, and  
9 that's too much to bring in the yard at one time. So we went up  
10 there and we made a cut, come in with some cars. If I remember  
11 correctly, we come in and it was three Chattanooga's was east out.  
12 We kicked three Chattanooga's to 1. We kicked one of the 75 cars  
13 to 11. We shoved a bunch of Amoco's in the Amoco track. And then  
14 we had a bunch of HMCRs we shoved in track 5. And then we went  
15 back to the siding to get the rest of it.

16 We were delayed getting into the siding for about an hour.  
17 There was a Sperry car that come by, so we had to wait till them  
18 boys got to Wheeler, down there, before we could take care of the  
19 siding. So we was delayed about an hour or we would have been  
20 done an hour sooner, but --

21 We went back out there and got the rest of the siding. We  
22 brought the rest of the siding in and there was a total of five  
23 Sheffields in that cut. It was a block of two and then a block of  
24 three and the three was next to our motor. So we went back out  
25 there and got the rest of the siding. Jason was down there in

1 the, still in the yard side and I got the rest of the siding up  
2 there, me and Engineer Wilson. And I shoved about 15 or 18 cars  
3 to Jason; he was ahead of the shove. And I set two cars back into  
4 the siding because that's where the rest of our Sheffields and  
5 mixed up Chattanooga's were, and then a couple back up to the  
6 other cut of cars that -- and Jason was bleeding those as I was up  
7 there setting them two out.

8 And then I come back in with the rest of it, and I set -- he  
9 had three Sheffields in the siding. And when we coupled to that  
10 stuff that was toward the yard -- this was our last cut of the  
11 day. This was our last 20 or so cars. So that made about seven  
12 CS6's next to the motor. That's what was next to the motor.

13 Anyway, we come there and got rid of it, just -- we kicked  
14 two CS6's to 10, we shoved one rail to a coupling. Jay Parker,  
15 the utility man, made that coupling for us. We thought it was  
16 solid and -- but we had a hold of seven or eight CS6's. We needed  
17 to go to 4 rail and pick up those other CS6's that we had kicked  
18 on the west end of 4 from earlier that day, because those other  
19 eight, seven or eight CS6's was on the east end of 10 that 04 put  
20 in there for us, so that we'd get all the CS6's in the same track.

21 So I got out of the Kubota. I don't know if I told Jason I'd  
22 see him down there in 10 or if I told him over the radio. So he  
23 was watching Engineer Wilson come at us, and I was over there in  
24 number 4. I coupled us up, stretched them out, made sure we had a  
25 hold of all that we needed to have a hold of. And then Jason was

1 up there at the switch, the number 4 switch, to turn him back to  
2 me in number 10. So there was cars in every track, 5, 6, 7, 8 and  
3 9. I knew A80 was at the east end of the yard, so before I could  
4 crawl through those tracks, I hollered at him and I said, what  
5 track are you all in? And he said he was going to 7 or in 7. But  
6 anyway, I jumped on over 5 and 6. When I got to 7, I looked east,  
7 didn't see any motors down there. Seven was still, so I crawled  
8 over. Or if I see him down there anyway, I got three still,  
9 crawled over. And crawled over 8 and 9, and I was standing down  
10 there. I wasn't right at the clear post in 10. I was a couple of  
11 car lengths past it.

12 So Jason's in the Kubota. He turned it to me in number 10.  
13 And so I'm watching down through there, and it was -- I got enough  
14 room. I can see those seven or eight cars down there. Jason  
15 ain't even got to go watch it, but he does. He heads down there  
16 to watch it. We had plenty of room. That track can hold about  
17 35. Like I say, we had about 25 total.

18 Anyway, so as we're shoving, I'm on the north side of the  
19 track 10 and I can -- there's a hopper car here beside me in 9. I  
20 can see under 9 and 8, I can see 7 rail rolling, rolling back  
21 west. So I hollered on the radio. I said 7 rail -- I don't  
22 remember exactly what I said -- the 7 rail's rolling. I said  
23 shove them on here, Flat, get them on in here. And he answered me  
24 and said something like I am or I'm trying. I think he said I am.  
25 But I hollered back, I said, I know you are. But as I'm -- I take

1 off running west because I don't know, I don't know if one car has  
2 come by me or four, where I'm standing. I don't know how close  
3 the 7 rail is getting to be fouling and -- to hitting us. And I  
4 don't know how far Engineer Wilson is from getting his motors to  
5 clear 7. I don't know if he has four cars or a half an inch. So  
6 that's the reason I said shove them, get them on in here.

7 And as I take off running, I can see 7 rail come out and it  
8 hit our lead engine, our west engine. It hit the fuel tank first.  
9 Diesel fuel went everywhere. It was spewing everywhere as I was  
10 running up there. And then it started eating that cab up on the  
11 engineer's side and just -- it wouldn't stop. It just kept going.  
12 And I hollered on the radio to Jason, I believe. I said, get some  
13 help, call somebody. And as I said that, I just went ahead, as I  
14 was running, and I hit 911 on my walkie-talkie. And I get on up  
15 to the engine, and the cars are stopped. They fouled 7. They  
16 done done their thing and they're stopped now. Our engines are  
17 stopped with our cars. And -- let's see, where am I at?

18 I run through that diesel fuel. Now I, I crawl up on the  
19 motor, and I seen Engineer Wilson. He was laying on his back  
20 right beside the 7 rail and the switching lead, west of our  
21 engine. And the cars -- so those cars in 7 are by him and he's  
22 laying right beside the 7 rail, flat on his back. There's a big  
23 metal box of scrap. I grab it and I throw it out of the way. It  
24 was just in my way. I couldn't get to him too good. It wasn't on  
25 him; it was just beside him. And he was (indiscernible). He was

1 intact. I thought he jumped off the engine before impact. And I  
2 said, thank God you jumped, Flat; thank God you jumped. And I was  
3 talking to him, and I got down there on top of him and looked at  
4 his eyes. He was -- he had a cut on his head, wasn't too bad. He  
5 was bleeding from his head, and bleeding from the back of head,  
6 that I found out later. And he was talking. And me and him were  
7 talking and I --

8 MR. STROT: Yeah. Yeah. Let's take a time out. Let's go  
9 off the record for just a moment. Hang on.

10 (Off the record.)

11 (On the record.)

12 MR. STROT: All right. We're back on the record.

13 And we'll go around and ask some questions. Appreciate your  
14 detail, Bradley. I really do. I don't have any further questions  
15 at this moment. We'll go around and --

16 MR. THOMPSON: No questions.

17 BY MR. HUNT:

18 Q. Just one question. This is Randy Hunt at NS. Do you have  
19 any idea how fast those cars were rolling when they went by you?

20 A. In 7 rail?

21 Q. Yes, sir.

22 A. I really couldn't tell. I don't -- I was blocked off between  
23 8 and 9; 8 and 9, you know, had cars in it. I couldn't tell.  
24 They -- more than a creep. More than a creep is all I can say.  
25 So --

1 Q. Okay. Did you hear anything squealing or --

2 A. No, sir. Just seen them moving. Just happened to see them  
3 moving underneath the 9 and 8 rail.

4 MR. HUNT: Thank you.

5 BY MR. YOUNG:

6 Q. Stephen Young, FRA. So about how deep down in -- you said  
7 you were in 10 when you saw the cars roll?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. About how many cars back were you from the --

10 A. From the clear post to 10, the little green mark, I might  
11 have been 100 foot, maybe two car lengths past --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- the clear post, maybe a little further, something like  
14 that. I wasn't right at the clear post.

15 Q. But right in that general area?

16 A. Yes, sir. Yeah, within 100 foot of it.

17 Q. And then did -- and I know it's impossible to gauge how quick  
18 something's moving on the rail, but it was -- was it moving fast  
19 enough to alert you to tell the engineer?

20 A. Yes, sir. It was moving -- like I say, I see them creep  
21 before, but they was moving a little faster than -- so that's the  
22 reason I told him to get them all in there.

23 MR. YOUNG: All right. Thank you.

24 MR. B. MCCOY: Byrl McCoy, FRA. I have no questions.

25 MR. WYATT: David Wyatt, Safety Task Force, no questions.

1 Thank you for being here, and I am very sorry. Thank you.

2 MR. CRISTIANSO: Chris Christianson, SMART-TD. I don't have  
3 any questions. Thank you for being here and I'm sorry.

4 BY DR. JENNER:

5 Q. Steve Jenner with the NTSB. Thank you for being here. I  
6 just want to jump ahead a little. After the incident, did you  
7 talk to -- did the other crew working on the west end, did they  
8 show up? Did any of them show up and you talked to them?

9 A. I was on the west end.

10 Q. Oh, I'm sorry, on the east end, on the east end.

11 A. The other crew?

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir, I seen them while I was attending -- I  
14 got to Engineer Wilson, I just happened to be the first one to get  
15 to him.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. So I was with him first. And I knew other people were coming  
18 up from around.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. I could sense people and hear people. Jay and -- Jay Parker  
21 and Jason Hall, they -- I think they went over there and hit the  
22 engine fuel switches while I was with Engineer Wilson. I put my  
23 belt around his right leg and he was -- he had a pretty bad leg  
24 injury on the back of his right leg. I didn't know what I was  
25 doing, but I took my belt and used it as a tourniquet and hollered

1 for some -- I hollered for some water and then Jay, Jay Parker got  
2 me some water. And I had a pair of those soft liner gloves in my  
3 shirt pocket of my jacket. I told him, hey, throw me my jacket;  
4 somebody hand me my jacket, hand me my jacket. And I got those  
5 soft liner gloves and I was trying to see how bad the cut was on  
6 Engineer Wilson's head, and I did that. I could sense people  
7 around me, but, yeah, I finally did see the crew from the east  
8 end. Yes, sir.

9 Q. And did that --

10 A. I don't know how quick it was when I seen them.

11 Q. Right. Did that include -- do you know Caleb?

12 A. Yes. I seen Caleb, and he had a conductor trainee, Otis -- I  
13 don't know his last name now, so --

14 Q. Right. Did they show up at the same time?

15 A. I don't -- I just -- Otis come over there with me at one time  
16 with Engineer Wilson, and I -- Caleb was there, too, but he was  
17 over there with like the -- he was over there on the road side.  
18 He was close, but he wasn't right there with me.

19 Q. Right. But when was the first time that you saw them that  
20 you recall? When they -- because if they came to the site, to the  
21 scene, did they -- do you know if they showed up at the same time?

22 A. That I don't, that I don't know.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. I couldn't tell you that.

25 Q. Okay. When the ambulance arrived were you there at the time?

1 A. I stayed with Engineer Wilson till -- and I wasn't the only  
2 one, there was other people there, too. But I stayed right there  
3 with him --

4 Q. Right.

5 A. -- till -- a police officer arrived first. I still was with  
6 him, holding his hand. And a police officer showed up first, then  
7 two firefighter trucks showed up, then I had to get out of the way  
8 for the ambulance to get there. And as soon as the ambulance got  
9 there, I told that old boy, I said I don't know what I'm doing,  
10 that tourniquet's been on there probably 15 minutes, that belt.  
11 And I said his hands is real cold. His hands was like ice, but  
12 his face and his body wasn't. Because I had unbuttoned his shirt.  
13 I said I'm going to just look at you and make sure you're all  
14 right before they arrived. And but his hands was like a chunk of  
15 ice. And when the ambulance got there and they come over there  
16 and I told them how long that belt had been around his leg, I went  
17 behind the fire truck and I broke down.

18 DR. JENNER: Okay. All right. I appreciate all your answers  
19 here. Thank you.

20 MR. STROT: Ben Strot, NTSB. We'll go around one time for  
21 any follow-up questions.

22 BY MR. STROT:

23 Q. Bradley, you said you crossed over all those tracks. I think  
24 you said 5, 6 and 7, you were crossing through?

25 A. Eight and 9.

1 Q. Eight and 9. Okay.

2 A. Five, 6, 7, 8, 9.

3 Q. Five, 6, 7, 8, 9?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. When you crossed through 7, could you tell where 7 was  
6 positioned from the clearance point on the west end?

7 A. No, sir. I couldn't tell you that because I was three or --  
8 wherever was in 10, I just went -- if that makes sense to you, I  
9 crossed straight over --

10 Q. Straight across.

11 A. -- from 4, and however I landed up over there is where I was  
12 at. But I didn't -- I don't know how close the west end was. I  
13 know it was in the clear.

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. But I don't know how far it was from the clear post.

16 Q. When you say you looked east and you didn't see any  
17 locomotives down there, did you happen to see any gaps in 7 track?

18 A. I wasn't looking. I was looking for a black engine.

19 Q. Totally understand. All right.

20 MR. STROT: Thank you, sir. That's all the questions I have.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

22 BY MR. HUNT:

23 Q. Did you -- did your crew happen to be in 7 doing any work  
24 during the course of the day?

25 A. We had kicked some cars in there. I'm sure, I'm sure we had.

1 Q. Had you -- when you were in -- did you go in 7 yourself or  
2 was that your conductor?

3 A. No, we had kicked car in there. We had never --

4 Q. Oh, you hadn't, you hadn't had anybody in 7. Okay.

5 A. We hadn't been in 7. No, sir. We had to kick some cars in  
6 there.

7 MR. HUNT: Okay. Understood. Thank you very much. That was  
8 Randy Hunt, NS.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Nothing.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

13 DR. JENNER: Nothing.

14 MR. STROT: All right. Bradley, really appreciate your  
15 answers today and detail. Is there anything else you'd like to  
16 add?

17 MR. MALONE: No, sir.

18 MR. STROT: Okay. If we have any follow-up questions, do you  
19 mind if I contact you at the information you gave me?

20 MR. MALONE: You all (indiscernible).

21 MR. STROT: Okay. On behalf of the NTSB, I'd like to thank  
22 you for your time and cooperation and details. Thank you so much.

23 MR. MALONE: Thank you all.

24 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

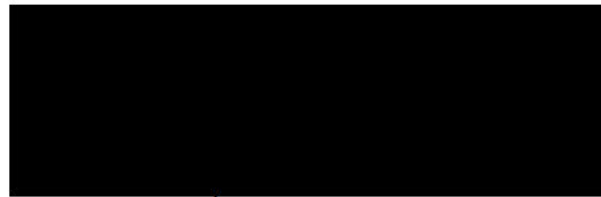
IN THE MATTER OF:       NORFOLK SOUTHERN EMPLOYEE  
                              FATALITY NEAR DECATUR, ALABAMA  
                              ON JANUARY 31, 2024  
                              Interview of Bradley Malone

ACCIDENT NO.:           RRD24FR007

PLACE:                   Decatur, Alabama

DATE:                    February 3, 2024

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.



Transcriber