

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: CALEB PIGG, Conductor
Norfolk Southern

Marriott Courtyard
Decatur, Alabama

Friday,
February 2, 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
Norfolk Southern

SHAUN McCOY, Gulf Division Superintendent,
Transportation
Norfolk Southern

STEPHEN YOUNG, Operating Practices Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration

DAVID WYATT, Investigator, Safety Task Force
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

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. Pigg)

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I N T E R V I E W

MR. STROT: Okay. Good morning. My name is Ben Strot. I am an investigator for the NTSB. Today is February 2nd, 2024, and we are meeting here at the Marriott Courtyard 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 line 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. 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 to the process. We are currently in the fact-finding phase. That will be followed by analysis, probable cause finding, and finally any recommendations we see necessary.

Today we're here to speak with Caleb Pigg. Before we go -- before we begin, we'll go around the table and introduce ourselves for the transcriptionist. Be sure to speak up, speak clearly, and spell your last name out as you introduce yourself.

My name is Ben Strot, S-t-r-o-t, rail accident investigator for the NTSB.

MR. THOMPSON: Matt Thompson. I am IIC for the NTSB.

MR. YOUNG: Stephen Young, FRA operating practices inspector.

1 MR. STROT: If you could spell your last name?

2 MR. YOUNG: Y-o-u-n-g.

3 MR. HUNT: Randall Hunt, H-u-n-t, senior director of bridge
4 and safety, Norfolk Southern.

5 MR. MCCOY: Shaun McCoy, M-c-C-o-y, Transportation, Norfolk
6 Southern, division superintendent.

7 MR. PIGG: Caleb Pigg, P-i-g-g, conductor.

8 MR. SIZEMORE: Todd Sizemore, S-i-z-e-m-o-r-e, BLET local
9 chairman Fourth Division, 423.

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

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

14 DR. JENNER: Stephen Jenner, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, J-e-n-n-e-r. I'm
15 a human performance investigator with the NTSB.

16 MR. STROT: All right. Thank you.

17 And when we're asking questions, one thing I do ask is please
18 re-state your name before you ask a question. That way the
19 transcriptionist knows who's asking questions and not just having
20 to guess.

21 All right. Mr. Pigg, do you mind if we go by Caleb?

22 MR. PIGG: That's fine.

23 MR. STROT: All right. Thank you.

24 As we spoke beforehand, this interview is being recorded.

25 Are you okay with that?

1 MR. PIGG: Yes, sir.

2 MR. STROT: Okay. And as such, it will be made part of the
3 public docket and we cannot promise any confidentiality. Are you
4 okay with that?

5 MR. PIGG: Yes, sir.

6 MR. STROT: All right. Thank you.

7 All right. During this interview, you're allowed to have one
8 representative.

9 Mr. Sizemore, you are representative?

10 MR. SIZEMORE: Yes, sir.

11 MR. STROT: Okay.

12 Your representative cannot testify for you, object to any
13 questions, anything like that. If you have a need to confer with
14 Mr. Sizemore, we can take a break and I'll give you time to talk
15 about whatever you need to talk about.

16 Please answer the questions today to the best of your
17 recollection. If you don't understand a question or you didn't
18 hear the whole question, please ask for it to be repeated or
19 explained. If you realize you misstated something or need to
20 modify it, that's fine to do that as well.

21 If anyone needs a break during this interview, just give me
22 the international signal for timeout, and we'll take a break and
23 come back on the record afterwards.

24 All right. Any questions?

25 (No response.)

INTERVIEW OF CALEB PIGG

BY MR. STROT:

Q. Okay. So we'll just start off. First thing, Caleb, if you can just give us a rundown of your railroad history? What have you done for NS, any other railroad you've worked for, anything like that?

A. I've been with Norfolk Southern for 12 years, July will be 13, working as a conductor. I've worked off the extra board for 6 years. I've been in Decatur Yard off and on for the remainder.

Q. Okay. So you hired out here in Decatur?

A. Out of Sheffield Terminal. Yes, sir.

Q. Okay. What year did you say that was?

A. That was 2012.

Q. Okay. Any railroad experience prior to that?

A. No, sir.

Q. Okay. And not promoted to engineer, just conductor?

A. Not yet.

Q. Okay. All right. And what's your experience with working here in Decatur in the yard? How often do you work here?

A. I'm on a swing shift job. We work Saturdays, we work 7 a.m.; Sunday/Monday we work 6 p.m.; Tuesday/Wednesday 3 p.m.; off Thursday/Friday.

Q. Gotcha.

A. I've been on that particular job off and on for 2 years.

Q. Okay. So you're regular assigned to it right now?

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Okay. All right.

3 MR. STROT: Any questions on experience?

4 (No response.)

5 BY MR. STROT:

6 Q. All right. Caleb, I guess if you could, take us through the
7 day of the accident from the time you came on duty till the time
8 you tied up, just everything that you can remember from the moves
9 you were making, where you were at during those moves, where
10 everyone else was at. If you'd go through that?

11 A. All right. We come on duty at 3 p.m. A typical day, look on
12 my NTR device, saw my work order. I print a track list of what I
13 need. I pick out my cars, which ones I'm going to take with me to
14 the industries. I always write down my outbounds on the back side
15 of that paper.

16 Whenever I got all my game plan together as far as how I'm
17 going to switch my cars at, where I'm going to switch my cars,
18 we -- the U-Man takes us to the east end of the yard. We pick out
19 our engine. It was a foreign SD40. We pull that SD40 -- I
20 believe it was out of track 8. Pull out 7 switch, line it, couple
21 to track 7. The head car in that track 7 was one of my three C25
22 industry cars that I was going to take. I get three step. I
23 laced the air on that head car and I leave the handbrakes on the
24 second and third -- handbrakes is on east end of Decatur Yard. I
25 know I'm bringing them cars right back, I leave the handbrake on.

1 I then tell the engineer to pull them. I believe my cut was
2 11 deep. I'm going to pull the cars up to me. I tell him to pull
3 them. I step back, position myself, you know, see the cars come
4 by. I noticed that on some of these cars I'm pulling by there's
5 air brake piston -- pistons are out. I try to attempt to bleed
6 them off. I don't know if I was successful. I noticed there had
7 been some air on. So that tells me there was a cut had been set
8 on top of 7 at some point.

9 I count Jeff down, my engineer, and find my car. As I
10 make -- before I make the cut, I notice there is handbrakes on
11 these cars. I tell him, you know, that'll do. I walk over, go to
12 pull the pin, and I believe the slack was in. I don't think I
13 took slack. I believe slack was already in. I pulled the pin --
14 before I pull this pin, I tell my trainee, I say, walk over there
15 to the 9 switch, line it, because that's where I'm setting my
16 other two C25's. Line 11 and line 10 was my other two cars I'm
17 taking to the industry with me. I tell him to walk over to the 9
18 switch, line it, and stay put.

19 I pull the engineer out over the 7 switch. I line the
20 switch. I walk back to where I'm going to gravity roll these cars
21 into 9, tell him slack. Take slack, roll these cars into track 9.
22 As these cars go by the switch, I line the 7 switch. I tell my
23 engineer back them up five and couple. But after I told this
24 engineer five and couple, these two cars that I done gravity
25 rolled in 9 has cleared to where I can see the vision of 7, all of

1 7. I noticed that these cars has done rolled from where I had
2 previously made my cut. I tell Jeff, these cars has rolled back
3 some, you are cleared for 10.

4 About that time, Bradley on -- the brakeman on 08, and I hear
5 him come over the radio something about cars rolling in 7. Tells
6 Chris Wilson -- I don't remember if he said pull them, shove them;
7 he told him to make a movement. I holler at Bradley. I say, is
8 them cars rolling in 7? I didn't get a response. Bradley then
9 tells him pull them or shove them. I hear Chris say, I'm trying,
10 I'm trying. And about that time, you can hear, you know, some
11 kind of -- type of collision, and it's just silence.

12 At this time, my shove move, I don't -- you know, I lose
13 relevance of it. I'm more concerned of what's going on at the
14 other end of the yard. My trainee at this time has done come over
15 to me and said, what's going on; what's happening? I said, I
16 believe these cars we have cut has rolled back. He said, you
17 know, what does that, you know, what does that mean? I said they
18 rolled back, they're rolling out of this track 7. And about that
19 time, Bradley -- somebody needs to call 911, somebody call 911.

20 And me and my conductor looked at each other, well, we take
21 off running. We run all the way to the west end of the yard to
22 meet Bradley and Chris, see what happened in the accident. And
23 before -- you know, whenever I'm running up there, I see the
24 engine, and my heart just goes all the way to my stomach. I can
25 see Chris laying on the ground, Bradley with him. And I run up to

1 Bradley and Chris, and Chris sees me. He's talking to Bradley.

2 Q. You don't have to recount all that if you don't want to. I
3 don't want you to have to replay that.

4 A. Okay.

5 Q. I mean, I know that's a tough time.

6 A. That's -- I mean, me and my conductor trainee run from the
7 east end of the yard to the west to, you know, see what's going
8 on.

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. You know, all we heard was the radio, you know, need 911.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. So we run all the way down there and find the accident.

13 Q. Okay. Just backing up to the beginning, you come on duty,
14 your main job is industry work --

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. -- but you have to build your own cut there in the yard and
17 take it out?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. The single SD40 that you all got to use, was it coupled into
20 road power when you all got it or was it by itself?

21 A. It was -- there was three motors there together and we cut
22 that SD40 off.

23 Q. Okay. Okay. Let me see. When you're switching in the yard
24 in Decatur, from your experience, which way does the grade roll?

25 A. The yard is -- the way it's built, it's a bowl. Typically,

1 if you're kicking a lot of cars and switching cars, you do it on
2 the west end. It's easier. You can get out with more cars and
3 with less engine power. You can switch on the east end of the
4 yard, but typically if you're handling a lot of cars, you know,
5 you have to have more power. It's kind of harder to get -- as far
6 as kicking cars, it's kind of harder to switch cars on the east
7 end. It can be done, but it's -- typically you want to do it on
8 the west if it's a lot.

9 Q. Gotcha. And that night, you were on the east end?

10 A. I was on the east. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Okay. And you said you get slack. So, I mean, you can just
12 pull the pin and the car will roll, you don't have to kick it too
13 hard from that east end to get them in there?

14 A. No, sir.

15 Q. Okay. And you said whenever you made that cut in 7 to come
16 out with the 11 cars, there were already handbrakes?

17 A. There was existing handbrakes.

18 Q. Okay. And from your knowledge, what is the securement
19 guidelines in Decatur Yard or --

20 A. Just three handbrakes on the east end of Decatur Yard,
21 expedite C102.

22 Q. What's expedite C102?

23 A. Well, I mean, you don't have to do a C102.

24 Q. Oh, okay. Okay. That's NS's release test?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Okay. Sorry. I'm more familiar with GCOR. And are those
2 instructions in the timetable; is that where you find those?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 MR. STROT: Okay. All right. I think that's all the
5 questions I have. Matt?

6 MR. THOMPSON: Matt Thompson, TH1, PS1. I don't really have
7 anything at this time.

8 MR. STROT: All right.

9 BY MR. YOUNG:

10 Q. Steve Young, Y-o-u-n-g. So you said when you came on duty
11 you check your NTR, get your work order switch list. Do you have
12 a written printed out switch list?

13 A. That day?

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. I had a track list and I wrote my industry pull cars on that
16 track list. And I do not where that went. Because Brandon
17 Whitley asked me that day for it and I had no clue where that list
18 went.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. So I reprinted him a track list of 7 and that's what I turned
21 in to him. And how I made my cuts, I wrote down notes as how I
22 done it.

23 Q. Okay. You said when you were, I believe when you were
24 pulling cars out of CT7 you noticed some of them had air on them
25 and you bled them off.

1 A. I attempted to.

2 Q. Do you remember how many that was?

3 A. I want to say it was between two -- line two, car two to

4 four.

5 Q. Okay. And jams. So whenever you guys refer to jams like in

6 a track, are we talking about butted knuckles?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Is that relatively common or --

9 A. I mean, it happens. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Okay. I was just kind of curious if --

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. -- it happened all the time.

13 A. I mean, kicking cars, you know, on the lead, and if you, you

14 know, if you cut them off in a -- kick them off in curve --

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. -- yeah, that's where it creates --

17 Q. Have to cross over and pull the other one or whatever?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Okay. And whenever you made that cut in track 7, before

20 pulling out past the drill to kick the cars, do you remember

21 roughly where you were in that track whenever you made that cut?

22 Were you up near the clearance point? Were you --

23 A. I was back from the clearance point some. I don't -- I can't

24 remember how far back, but I didn't pull him up to the true

25 clearance point. No, sir.

1 Q. Okay. So like just up on the east end but not --

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. -- not at the clearance point? And do you remember off the
4 top of your head how many cars were in 7 just from looking at your
5 track list?

6 A. I believe it was 45, as best I can remember.

7 Q. And how many did you cut off?

8 A. Eleven.

9 Q. Eleven?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. You kicked two over to 9?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Whenever you were making that cut, did you look back to see
14 you had ahold of the whole track?

15 A. No, sir.

16 Q. Were there some still in there? You didn't? Okay.

17 A. No.

18 MR. YOUNG: Yeah, that's it. I appreciate it.

19 BY MR. McCOY:

20 Q. I have some questions for you. When you -- this is Shaun
21 McCoy, M-c-C-o-y. Caleb, when you cut the -- you said you cut the
22 11 off?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Were they -- did those cars have handbrakes on them?

25 A. Yes, sir.

- 1 Q. And did you apply those or you said they were already on?
- 2 A. They was existing handbrakes. Yes, sir.
- 3 Q. Where did you cut those off in 7? In the clearance point?
- 4 Were they down at the (indiscernible)
- 5 A. It wasn't up to the clearance point. No, sir.
- 6 Q. Okay. And so you made a standing cut on those?
- 7 A. I pulled them up. You know, I tell him I get -- count him
- 8 down to how many ever, tell him that'll do, and just pull the pin.
- 9 Yes, sir.
- 10 Q. And when you pulled away, you didn't notice they were
- 11 moving --
- 12 A. No.
- 13 Q. -- or anything like that?
- 14 A. I didn't notice at all if they was moving. As far as my
- 15 knowledge, they were still there. You know, whenever I kicked
- 16 those cars off and I told him five and couple, that's where I last
- 17 saw those cars.
- 18 Q. And you said that the CT, you sent him over to 9?
- 19 A. Yes, sir.
- 20 Q. To get the switch for the two you set over?
- 21 A. Yes, sir.
- 22 Q. Did -- was he -- so he wasn't with you when you made the cut
- 23 on the 11?
- 24 A. He was standing away, you know, away from it.
- 25 MR. McCOY: That's all the questions I had.

1 BY MR. HUNT:

2 Q. I just had a couple follow-up. So when you bled the air off,
3 that was in the 11 cars that you pulled out?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Oh -- and that's Randy Hunt, Norfolk Southern. You didn't
6 bleed anything that you left in the track?

7 A. No, sir.

8 Q. Okay. And the handbrakes that were left on the track that
9 you said were on 7, how many were on that track?

10 A. That was three.

11 Q. So you checked all three of them?

12 A. I seen all three.

13 Q. Okay. Is that typical in Decatur to have handbrakes in
14 middle of tracks or --

15 A. Typically. A lot of times, you know, if you switch, block
16 swap cars on the east end of the yard, you know -- say if I got
17 five cars, for example, off of CT09 and I needed the sixth car,
18 well, I'll set -- and track 7, you know, had room in it, I come
19 off with the head five, set them over, and I couple and don't
20 knock handbrakes off. The handbrakes stay on there, I couple,
21 shove. You know, that's sometimes what happens. Yes, sir.

22 Q. And so then you'd wrap three more at the east end before you
23 (indiscernible)

24 A. Yeah. Right. And sometimes that's how preexisting
25 handbrakes, that's how they're in there, from other people making

1 switches. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Do you have any idea where those cars -- you know, who put
3 the cars in there with the handbrakes?

4 A. No clue.

5 MR. HUNT: Okay. That's all I have.

6 MR. STROT: Okay.

7 MR. WYATT: Give me a second.

8 MR. STROT: Okay.

9 BY MR. WYATT:

10 Q. Good morning. David Wyatt, BLET. First, thank you for
11 coming here. This isn't an easy thing to go through, an easy
12 thing to talk about, and thank you for doing it.

13 As far as questions go, I apologize, but the -- you said that
14 there's three handbrakes required on the east end of track number
15 7 at all times, when you're leaving you set them on, right?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. Okay. And now when you were -- after you had set the cars to
18 track number 9 and were going back into 7, who was directing that
19 movement to re-couple to track number 7?

20 A. I was.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. That was you?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 MR. WYATT: All right. Let's see. Okay. No, I think that's

1 it for right now. Thank you.

2 MR. CHRISTIANSON: Chris Christianson with SMART-TD. I want
3 to echo what David said. Thank you for coming. I know it's
4 really difficult and I have no questions at this time.

5 DR. JENNER: Thank you.

6 BY DR. JENNER:

7 Q. This is Steve Jenner with the NTSB. Thank you for your
8 description so far. I'm going to bounce around a bit just based
9 on some of the follow-up questions I have from what we've heard
10 earlier. When you came on scene, can you just talk about who you
11 saw, who you talked to, was there any job briefing conducted?

12 A. No, sir. I mean, we come on duty, we still saw that the day
13 switcher still had to switch, you know, an amount of cars. And
14 that's why I went to the east end. You know, I could -- I knew
15 that I could get what I needed off the east end of the yard and
16 not hinder 08. But as far as the job, I think I actually said on
17 the radio -- I hollered at Jason, which is the conductor on 08,
18 hey, I'm going to be in track 7, is that a, you know, is that a
19 problem? I don't remember how I worded it, but I hollered at
20 Jason telling him I'll be in 7. And that's -- as far as a job
21 briefing, that's it. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Okay. You had talked about a trainee. What is that person's
23 name, the trainee?

24 A. Otis Cistrunk (ph.).

25 Q. Had you worked with that trainee before?

1 A. Yes, sir. I worked with him the previous night, actually.

2 Q. We'll talk to him later, but what is -- what do you see his
3 responsibilities as for, you know, your concern? How -- what's
4 his role?

5 A. Well, whenever I typically have CTs, I would prefer them to
6 watch and see how I work. I try to get them involved some. I
7 don't try to put a lot of responsibility on them. I just -- I
8 want them to watch how I talk on the radio, watch how I switch,
9 you know, how I conduct myself, instead of putting the whole role
10 on him, any CT for that matter.

11 Q. Right. And I think I heard earlier that you did have him
12 like line a switch; is that correct?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I had him at switch. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Yeah. Did he -- did you have him perform any other duties
17 that day?

18 A. No, sir.

19 Q. Okay. Is he -- so he just sort of shadows you?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Okay. Does he ask you questions throughout?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Okay. From -- are you the person, do you direct all the
24 moves? Is that your responsibility?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. All right. Can you tell me, talk to me about the grade? We
2 were on scene yesterday and it's a little hard to visually
3 perceive the extent of the grade. So what can you tell me about
4 the yard from the west end and east end in terms of grade?

5 A. I mean, it's typically in a bowl shape, you know, to be able
6 to gravity roll cars from the east and the west. The switching
7 lead on the west is a lot more of a grade than the east. I mean,
8 that's all I know.

9 Q. And just for direction purposes, you were working on the east
10 end?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. And where the actual collision took place is that considered
13 the west end?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Okay. You had talked about a jam, butting knuckles. Is
16 that -- what does that mean to you when you see a jam in terms of
17 how you handle your operations?

18 A. I mean, if I know a jam is there, I'll stretch it out, open
19 up the knuckle and close it back up, and try to keep the track
20 (indiscernible). That's, I mean, that's all you can do for a jam
21 typically. Jams happen. I mean, when you kick and gravity roll
22 cars, they happen.

23 Q. All right. And I'm talking everything before the point of,
24 you know, collision. Was this a normal day for you?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Was there anything that we've already discussed or hasn't
2 been discussed that gave you some concern about the operations?

3 A. No, sir.

4 Q. This group of people you work with, how frequently have you
5 worked with each of these people?

6 A. As far as my engineer?

7 Q. Um-hum.

8 A. I worked with him a lot, you know, over the years. You know,
9 it's -- I've worked with him plenty, if that's what you're asking?

10 Q. Right. And for -- and other people who you were working with
11 this day, how often had you worked with the trainee? You said the
12 night before.

13 A. Right. Right.

14 Q. Had you worked with him previous?

15 A. I don't know, I don't know if I worked with him another day
16 before that day. No, I don't think I have.

17 Q. Okay. And again, I think you answered the question, was
18 there anything that he did that day that gave you concern?

19 A. No, sir. No, sir.

20 Q. For clarification -- I heard you mention the name Bradley.
21 Who is he and what's his title?

22 A. He's a brakeman on 08.

23 DR. JENNER: That's all the questions I have now. Thank you.

24 MR. STROT: Okay. So we'll go around one more round for
25 follow-up.

1 BY MR. STROT:

2 Q. This is Ben Strot, NTSB. When you come on duty is there a
3 supervisor in Decatur that's there when you come on duty?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Is that a trainmaster or --

6 A. Trainmaster.

7 Q. Okay. And they're there when you come on duty every day?

8 A. (No audible response.)

9 Q. Okay. Do you all have any job briefing with them prior to
10 going out on what other moves are being made and what you're going
11 to do that day?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Okay. When you made the cut in 7 track, did you bring the
14 cars to a complete stop when you pulled that pin or --

15 A. Yeah. I mean, they stopped.

16 Q. Okay. Yeah.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Okay. And then whenever you were coupling up and pulling 7
19 track out, could you tell if there were any gaps in it? Did you
20 look down the track?

21 A. I couldn't tell, no.

22 Q. Gotcha. Okay. And then during these moves, where was the
23 U-Man at just from your perspective; do you know?

24 A. I don't have a clue.

25 Q. He dropped you off and --

1 A. He dropped me off. That's the last I saw.

2 Q. Okay. He wasn't working with you all at that point?

3 A. No, sir.

4 Q. Okay. Let's see. I know we've asked a lot about grade, but
5 when you let a car go on the east end and let's say you've got
6 your bumpers, you know, quite a ways down the track, will it pick
7 up a lot of speed before it gets to the other end or --

8 A. It can.

9 Q. Yeah. Okay.

10 MR. STROT: All right. That's all I've got as follow-up.

11 Matt?

12 BY MR. THOMPSON:

13 Q. Matt Thompson, NTSB. Just curious, in the past you working
14 at that yard, have you ever had anything roll out on you on the
15 track?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I've never experienced something like this.

19 Q. Yeah, I -- and I don't mean in a full capacity. I mean, have
20 you ever had cars roll 10 feet, roll 20 feet? No? Okay.

21 MR. THOMPSON: That's all I have.

22 BY MR. YOUNG:

23 Q. Steve Young, FRA. So back to the job briefing thing. So
24 whenever you first went on duty, you checked your NTR. Did you
25 have a job briefing with your crew, with the CT, and the engineer?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. I told them all what -- you know, we was going to the east
4 end of the yard, had to get three C25 hoppers to take to the
5 (indiscernible).

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And I told my CT that's, you know, that's how we're going to
8 do it.

9 Q. Right. And just to try to get familiar with the operation at
10 Decatur Yard, is it common to have two crews switching on opposite
11 ends of the yard at the same time?

12 A. Sometimes. You know, sometimes.

13 Q. Okay. And, I mean, it seems like a pretty active yard so I'm
14 just trying to figure out, you know, when you come on duty --

15 A. Yeah, it's a lot of movement going on.

16 Q. Yeah. And so back to butted knuckles or back to jams. Just,
17 say on a typical day, you're switching a cut of cars on the east
18 end and you, you know, kick cars into multiple tracks. After you
19 finish kicking a cut or at the end of the day before you go off
20 duty, do you go in and check the tracks to see if everything's
21 together or --

22 A. Sometimes. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Sometimes?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. And the same with the handbrakes, at what point during a

1 normal day after -- you know, if you flat switch 50 cars or
2 whatever, do you go in after the fact and set handbrakes on the
3 three cars or do it while you're switching or --

4 A. They should always -- yeah, they should always be on three
5 cars in each track before you're switching and after you're
6 switching.

7 Q. Okay.

8 MR. YOUNG: All right. Yeah, that's it. Appreciate it.

9 MR. STROT: Any follow-ups?

10 BY MR. McCOY:

11 Q. When you --

12 MR. STROT: Introduce yourself, please.

13 MR. McCOY: Oh, sorry. Shaun McCoy, Norfolk Southern.

14 BY MR. McCOY:

15 Q. A follow-up to the last question with the three handbrakes.
16 Before you leave, we make sure there's three brakes on the track,
17 and where do they have to be at?

18 A. On the east end.

19 Q. On the east end?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. And that's consistent with what we do daily?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 MR. McCOY: Okay. That's all I got.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have any questions.

25 MR. STROT: Okay. David?

1 BY MR. WYATT:

2 Q. Just one -- Mr. Wyatt (indiscernible) Caleb there. I just
3 had one other thing. When you're kicking on that end, when you
4 pull the lever to let the car gravity roll away, what knuckle is
5 left open? The one on the car you hold or the one on the car that
6 you're letting go?

7 A. As far as what I kicked in 9?

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. You actually have to open that west car, you know, and --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 MR. WYATT: Okay. Yeah, that's it. I just wanted to see.
13 Thank you.

14 MR. CHRISTIANSON: Chris Christianson, SMART-TD. No
15 questions at this time.

16 BY DR. JENNER:

17 Q. Okay. This is Steve Jenner, NTSB. As I discussed before,
18 I'm also interested in your overall fitness and your work
19 schedule. So earlier you described, I just didn't write down
20 quick enough, a typical workweek schedule. Could you walk me
21 through that again?

22 A. Yes, sir. On Saturdays we come in at 7.

23 Q. Seven in the morning?

24 A. Seven in the morning, yes, sir. Get off, average, you know,
25 5, 5 o'clock. Sundays we come in at 6 p.m., average of getting

1 off, between 4, 5 a.m. Same for Monday, because that's the same
2 job we work 2 days in a row. Then we flip back to 3 o'clock. We
3 come back, you know, a little earlier --

4 Q. On Tuesday?

5 A. -- on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

6 Q. Three o'clock --

7 A. Three p.m.

8 Q. -- p.m.?

9 A. Yes, sir. And typically work between 1 to 2 o'clock.

10 Q. A.M.?

11 A. In the morning, yes, sir.

12 Q. Okay. And now your --

13 A. And then off days is Thursday/Friday.

14 Q. Oh, Tuesday actually goes into Wednesday, the 1 to 2 a.m.?

15 So Tuesday starts at 3 p.m. and then you work into Wednesday 1 to
16 2 a.m. So you're off for the rest of the day Wednesday?

17 A. We come back in Wednesday at 3 p.m.

18 Q. Okay. Oh, again, once again. Okay. To about the same --

19 A. Same --

20 Q. -- work hour, 1 to 2 a.m.?

21 A. Average about same time.

22 Q. And then Thursdays off and Friday is off. Okay. How's that
23 schedule work for you?

24 A. I mean, I like it. You know, I -- it suits for me and my
25 family.

1 Q. Okay. So I'm going to challenge you here. The accident
2 happened Wednesday. Can you tell me about -- so Monday you worked
3 6 p.m. till around 4 to 5 a.m. What do you do when you come home
4 Monday around 4 to 5 a.m.?

5 A. I normally go home, take a shower, and just go to bed.

6 Q. What time do you go to bed?

7 A. It might be -- it's an hour drive from Decatur Yard to my
8 house. You know, I -- whatever time I get there, it's normally
9 within an hour I go to bed then.

10 Q. Okay. How long do you sleep like on Monday?

11 A. Five hours, typically for me.

12 Q. Okay. What do you -- so now you're into Tuesday. You wake
13 up. Do you eat, hang out?

14 A. I mean, whenever I wake up working during the week, I'll wake
15 up, fix me a cup of coffee and eat breakfast. I've got anything
16 to do, you know, around my house, I'll do it. If not, yeah, I'll
17 hang out.

18 Q. Okay. Hour drive to get to work on Tuesday also?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. And Tuesday was 3 p.m. till around 1 to 2 a.m.?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Yes. And so you go home and it takes you an hour to get
23 home, go to sleep, sleep for --

24 A. About the same. I mean, average, I'd say about --

25 Q. Okay. Same routine?

1 A. About, yeah.

2 Q. Okay. How did you feel when -- you know, in terms of
3 alertness when you went on duty on Wednesday?

4 A. I was perfectly fine.

5 Q. Okay. Just about your health, how's your overall health?

6 A. I feel like I'm healthy. I mean, I don't have no issues.

7 Q. Right. No colds or allergies?

8 A. I mean, every once in a while I'll get a stuffy nose, if
9 that's what you're asking.

10 Q. Um-hum. But on this day, you felt -- how'd you feel?

11 A. I felt fine.

12 Q. Okay. Terrific. Thank you for that. One question we
13 haven't asked you yet, changing subjects, is what do you think
14 happened? Why do you think the cars rolled back?

15 A. I don't know. I mean, it's something I never experienced. I
16 don't have an answer to that, you know. I don't know.

17 DR. JENNER: Okay. All right. I appreciate that. Thank
18 you. That's all I have.

19 BY MR. STROT:

20 Q. And I apologize. I do have a quick follow-up question.
21 You said there's a trainmaster on duty when you come on. Who was
22 it that night? Who was working?

23 A. Jim Ellison.

24 Q. You said Ellison?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Okay. How often do you see a trainmaster, road foreman,
2 anybody out in the field operations testing and stuff like that?

3 A. A lot.

4 Q. Pretty much daily or --

5 A. I see the current trainmaster up there daily, yeah.

6 Q. Okay. And is there just the one trainmaster or is there more
7 than one that come out?

8 A. There's two trainmasters in Decatur.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 MR. STROT: Okay. All right. I apologize for that. That's
12 all I've got.

13 Anybody have any follow-up questions?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, sir.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

16 MR. STROT: Okay. Just a last couple of things here. Are
17 there any questions we asked you -- that we didn't ask you that we
18 should have?

19 MR. PIGG: No, sir.

20 MR. STROT: Anything that you'd like to add?

21 MR. PIGG: No, sir.

22 MR. STROT: All right. If we have follow-up questions, do
23 you mind if we give you a call?

24 MR. PIGG: It's fine. Whatever has to happen.

25 MR. STROT: Okay. Is there anybody else that you can think

1 of that we should interview or talk to?

2 MR. PIGG: No, sir.

3 MR. STROT: Okay. Well, on behalf of the NTSB, thank you for
4 your time. Thank you for your explanation, your detail and
5 cooperation during this tough time. So thank you so much.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you, sir.

7 (Off the record.)

8 (On the record.)

9 MR. STROT: All right. We are back on the record with
10 Mr. Caleb Pigg for just some follow-on information. We're still
11 here at the Courtyard in Decatur, Alabama.

12 BY MR. STROT:

13 Q. Mr. Pigg, did you have something you wanted to add or --

14 A. As far as like on my CSR, you asked a question have I ever
15 seen any cars get away in the yard. I said no. Whenever I was at
16 an industry in Decatur Yard, at OCI, a legal drop zone, I
17 rolled -- gravity rolled seven cars out of there and tied one
18 handbrake up to stop the cars and it didn't stop. It end up -- we
19 end up meeting in a curve and it caused a derailment.

20 Q. Okay. And so this was in an industry?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Where is that industry located in Decatur?

23 A. It's off of Red Hat Road. As far as out on a branch line,
24 the "A" lead.

25 Q. So is that like on the east end of the yard, west end of the

1 yard?

2 MR. STROT: If you -- Mr. Sizemore, if you can explain it
3 better, that's perfectly fine. If you can just introduce yourself
4 to the recording?

5 MR. SIZEMORE: This is Todd Sizemore, local chairman,
6 S-i-z-e-m-o-r-e. The "A" lead is a branch line located right
7 there at the west end of the yard. It's approximately 4½ miles
8 long. I could be off a mile or 2 on that. Where this incident
9 took place was at the very -- it was about 3½, 4 miles from the
10 yard, from the confines of the Decatur Yard.

11 MR. STROT: So the industry lead starts on the west end of
12 the yard and then --

13 MR. SIZEMORE: Yes.

14 MR. STROT: -- heads out about 3 --

15 MR. SIZEMORE: Coming off the -- well, it comes off the main
16 line.

17 MR. STROT: Okay.

18 MR. SIZEMORE: Yes.

19 MR. STROT: Okay.

20 BY MR. STROT:

21 Q. All right. So the incident did not occur in Decatur Yard
22 proper, Mr. Pigg?

23 A. No, sir.

24 Q. Okay.

25 MR. STROT: Okay. Yeah, we'll go around for any questions.

1 Matt?

2 MR. THOMPSON: No. Nothing for me.

3 MR. STROT: Okay.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Nothing.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, sir.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, sir.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, sir.

8 MR. STROT: Okay. We've gone around the table. No further
9 questions. And I appreciate you coming back in and giving us that
10 information. I know it's been a couple years and also the fog of
11 what's going on right now can make it hard sometimes to recollect
12 what happened yesterday. So I appreciate you coming back in and
13 giving us that bit of information.

14 MR. PIGG: Yes, sir.

15 MR. STROT: Thank you.

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: NORFOLK SOUTHERN EMPLOYEE
 FATALITY NEAR DECATUR, ALABAMA
 ON JANUARY 31, 2024
 Interview of Caleb Pigg

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD24FR007

PLACE: Decatur, Alabama

DATE: February 2, 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

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