

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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RAILWAY WORKER FATALITY *

INVOLVING WHEELING & LAKE ERIE * Accident No.: RRD24LR006

RAILWAY NEAR JEWETT, OHIO ON *

JANUARY 15, 2024 *

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Interview of: PAUL MARTELL, Dispatcher
Genesee and Wyoming

Genesee and Wyoming Dispatch Center
Coshocton, Ohio
& via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday,
January 17, 2024

APPEARANCES:

BEN STROT, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

WES MCQUINN, Signal Inspector
Federal Railway Authority

CHAD BROSKI, Track Safety Inspector
Federal Railway Authority

TIM SLUSSER, General Manager
Ohio Central Railroad Systems

DAVID CASACELI, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

SCOTT BUNTEN, Safety Task Force Investigator
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen

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I N T E R V I E W

(4:02 p.m.)

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2
3 MR. STROT: All right. Good afternoon. My name is Ben
4 Strot. I'm an accident investigator for the NTSB. Today is
5 Wednesday, January 17th, 2024, and we are meeting at the Genessee
6 and Wyoming offices and also via Teams with the Genessee and
7 Wyoming dispatching center. This interview is being conducted in
8 reference to NTSB Accident No. RRD24LR006, an employee fatality
9 near Jewett, Ohio on the Genessee and Wyoming railroad that
10 occurred on January 15th, 2024.

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

21 Today, we are here to speak with Paul Martell, dispatcher.
22 And before we begin, we'll go around the table, introduce
23 ourselves for the transcriptionist. Please be sure to speak up
24 and speak clearly and spell out your names as we go around.

25 My name is Ben Strot, S-T-R-O-T, NTSB rail accident

1 investigator.

2 MR. MCQUINN: Wes McQuinn, M-C-Q-U-I-N-N, FRA Signal
3 Inspector.

4 MR. BROSKI: I'm Chad Broski, B-R-O-S-K-I, FRA Track Safety
5 Inspector.

6 MR. SLUSSER: Tim Slusser, S-L-U-S-S-E-R, General Manager,
7 Ohio Central Railroad.

8 MR. CASACELI: David Casaceli, C-A-S-A-C-E-L-I, NTSB
9 Investigator-in-Charge.

10 MR. STROT: Scott.

11 MR. BUNTEN: Scott Buntten, B-U-N-T-E-N, Brotherhood of
12 Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, National Safety Task Force
13 Investigator.

14 MR. STROT: And then Mr. Martell.

15 MR. MARTELL: Okay. Paul Martell, M-A-R-T-E-L-L, and
16 railroad dispatcher here at the ARDC.

17 MR. STROT: All right, thank you. And, Mr. Martell, do you
18 mind if we go by first name Paul?

19 MR. MARTELL: Yes, that's fine.

20 MR. STROT: All right. I appreciate it.

21 INTERVIEW OF PAUL MARTELL

22 BY MR. STROT:

23 Q. Now as we spoke beforehand, do you understand that this
24 investigation is being recorded?

25 A. Yes, I understand.

1 Q. And as such, it would be made part of the public docket and
2 you understand that we cannot promise any confidentiality?

3 A. Yes, I understand.

4 Q. Okay. And as part of our investigation or interview -- I'm
5 sorry -- part of our interview, you are allowed to have a
6 representative with you if you would like. That could be anybody
7 from your wife to your attorney or anyone in between, but you
8 don't have to. So would you like a representative or are you
9 good?

10 A. No, I'm good, thank you.

11 Q. Okay, all right. Nothing difficult here today. Okay. So
12 we'll go and get started off. First question is just can you give
13 us a rundown of your railroad experience, you know, what have you
14 done for anybody else in the railroad world, what other railroad
15 jobs that you've held and what are you doing now?

16 A. Okay. I've got about ten years total -- well, coming up on
17 ten years -- in the railroad industry in general. I started out
18 as a conductor with the New England Central Railroad. Worked
19 there for -- I believe it was a couple of years, and then I
20 decided I didn't like the cold anymore. So I transferred over to
21 ARDC.

22 So I started out in crew calling. I believe they're calling
23 it operations management now. But I worked there briefly. I was
24 recruited out of there pretty quickly to go to dispatch, so I've
25 been working ever since and yes, pretty much the entire time I've

1 been at Genesee and Wyoming.

2 Q. Okay. And you cut out just for a second there when you said
3 you got tired of being cold, where did you go?

4 A. Up to the American Rail Dispatch Center.

5 (Crosstalk)

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. ARDC, that's what I heard you say. Sorry, the acronym is not
8 clicking quite yet. All right.

9 MR. STROT: So let's go around. Wes, you got any questions
10 on experience?

11 MR. MCQUINN: No.

12 MR. STROT: Tim.

13 MR. SLUSSER: No.

14 MR. STROT: Scott.

15 MR. BUNTEN: Yes, just one.

16 BY MR. BUNTEN:

17 Q. How long as a dispatcher?

18 A. I believe I'm coming up on six years. It's all hazy. Six,
19 seven years, somewhere in there.

20 Q. Okay, thank you.

21 MR. STROT: Tim.

22 MR. SLUSSER: No questions.

23 MR. STROT: Dave?

24 MR. CASACELI: (No audible response).

25 MR. STROT: All right.

1 BY MR. STROT:

2 Q. So next question is more about the day in general that this
3 incident occurred. What shift were you working on the -- I guess
4 it was the 14th?

5 A. Okay. I was working on the second shift. That's --
6 (Crosstalk)

7 A. -- 2130.

8 Q. I'm sorry, what time did you come in?

9 A. We come in around 1325 to -- yes.

10 Q. 2130?

11 A. Yes, usually 2135 to, again, complete transfer.

12 Q. Okay. So on the 14th, on the Ohio and --

13 MR. STROT: What is it the Ohio and Columbus River Railroad
14 right there?

15 MR. SLUSSER: Columbus and Ohio.

16 BY MR. STROT:

17 Q. Columbus and Ohio River Railroad. Do you remember the
18 interaction with the Form C that was out there for crossing
19 protection at New Rumley Road and if there was any discussions
20 about being permanent, going into DOBs?

21 A. No. There wasn't a whole lot of interaction there.
22 Basically, I took the ticket from the crew caller -- the trouble
23 desk, rather, who issued it -- who issued the Form C.
24 (Indiscernible), let her know that whether or not crews were
25 affected, whether or not I had a job brief with them. And then,

1 you know, obviously that the form had gotten issued. But then
2 after that no, there wasn't any follow-up. I just put on the DOB.

3 Q. Is that pretty standard procedure to just roll it into the
4 DOB or do you ever call a maintainer and see if they're going to,
5 you know, be able to clear it up before you put the DOBs out?

6 A. Yes, we don't have any specific operating rules on that. It
7 kind of depends on the dispatcher and the situation. Usually on
8 the weekends, I kind of assume that whatever we are issuing that
9 day is going to end up on the DOB usually because if there's,
10 like, an out-of-town maintainer taking some extra time.
11 Particularly that day, it was really bad weather. So I just made
12 the assumption that everything was going to stay out.

13 There are other situations where I would call a maintainer to
14 see whether or not the form would be going on the DOB. For
15 instance, if it was -- if the trouble call came in right before I
16 transferred, something along those lines -- or, sorry, right
17 before, rather, the DOBs went out -- just to see whether or not
18 who's going to be quick out to get it. But, yes, it's all
19 situational.

20 Q. Okay, all right.

21 MR. STROT: Wes.

22 MR. MCQUINN: No, I don't have anything right now.

23 MR. STROT: Chad.

24 MR. BROSKI: I have a couple of questions just to clarify.

25 BY MR. BROSKI:

1 Q. I've heard a couple of different terms with the trouble desk
2 versus the operations coordinator.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. What's the difference, sir?

5 A. Yes, I've been here a while, so some of the terms have
6 changed. So maybe I'm a little stuck on some of the old ones.
7 But, yes, we have -- crew call and our trouble department kind of
8 merged into operations coordinators, so they handle all of our
9 trouble calls. So when I say trouble desk, I mean the operations
10 coordinators. Sorry about that.

11 Q. Okay. No, it's okay. So for this specific event on the 14th
12 involving Mr. Davis, you were aware of a Form C directive from the
13 operations coordinator, and you made a -- okay, go ahead.

14 A. Well, yes, how it works is the operations coordinators, they
15 don't have any authority to issue mandatory directives. So they
16 basically take the trouble calls. They handle the trouble call,
17 they handle, for instance, notifying the police, notify the
18 maintainers, that sort of thing, so for the logistics of it. We
19 handle on our end the actual Form C protection. So I was the one
20 who issued the Form C, yes.

21 Q. And that was immediate that you issued the Form C when you
22 got --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- the notification from the operations coordinator through
25 email?

1 A. That's correct. Well, first, what you're supposed to do, and
2 what I did is, check whether or not there would be any crews out
3 there that would be affected by it. You know, we issue the Form
4 C, make sure the crew's out there. And then after that, you get
5 with the operations coordinator to go from there, and in this
6 case, she had notified the maintainer, notified the police, that
7 sort of thing.

8 Q. And then how soon after did you decide to then make it
9 official for the DOB, which would --

10 (Crosstalk)

11 A. Yes, I just waited, basically, until I started looking at it
12 around 1900. The DOB is good till 2000. It was a really -- in
13 terms of bulletin in terms of train movement, but there was a lot
14 of weather across all of my railroads, a lot of crossings and that
15 sort of thing. So it took quite a while to roll all of the forms
16 onto the DOB. But I started at around 1900, started to make
17 determinations about that.

18 Q. Okay. You explained that really well. Thank you. Had you
19 or -- this instance, our understanding is that Mr. Davis did not
20 contact you prior to you going off shift. Is that correct?

21 A. That's correct. I never heard from him as far as
22 (indiscernible), we didn't know.

23 Q. And do you -- and I'm also asking, do cell maintainers
24 contact you to job brief you on their situation? Is there a
25 policy that you're aware of or no policy for them to contact you?

1 A. I don't think there's an official policy. As far as I'm
2 aware, there's none. If there is like a, for instance, a false
3 activation and the maintainers have been working on it for a
4 while, they're aware of what time the DOBs go out. So sometimes
5 we will get maintainers calling to let us know whether or not it's
6 going to be out or whether or not they're going to fix it that
7 night.

8 Q. Do you ever call then?

9 A. Occasionally, I'll call them. Again, it depends on the
10 situation. So, for instance, if they -- if we get a false
11 activation, a trouble ticket right before the DOBs go out, I might
12 call him just to see how far out he is, like, what his plans are,
13 that sort of thing just to -- so I can make a determination
14 whether or not that goes on a DOB. But that, I didn't reach out
15 to him to check, no.

16 Q. Thank you, Paul. That's all I had.

17 MR. STROT: Scott.

18 MR. BUNTEN: I have no questions at this time.

19 MR. STROT: All right, Tim.

20 MR. SLUSSER: Tim Slusser, Ohio Central.

21 BY MR. SLUSSER:

22 Q. Paul, when the trouble code comes to you, the -- or it comes
23 from Asset Pro, it does say on there that the maintainer is called
24 that -- I know you rolled that into the DOB, but your job brief
25 was the third shift turnover. Did you tell them that a maintainer

1 was called for that?

2 A. Generally, it's the assumption, that it would be the
3 exception that a maintainer wouldn't have been called or that
4 maybe, like, something that's pending, like for instance, the
5 operation coordinator can't get in touch with them to get someone
6 dispatched to do that.

7 So, you know, I'll job brief with that with the next guy, but
8 the assumption is if I'm handing off a crossing to someone that
9 someone was called on it. That's sort of the standard procedure
10 if it gets to the next person, yes. It would be extremely rare
11 for a maintainer not to be called.

12 Q. So what you're saying is there was -- since it was on the
13 DOB, you and the third-shift dispatcher didn't talk about a
14 maintainer being called for that particular crossing?

15 A. No, not for that particular crossing, no. It was -- I was
16 just aware of it and, I guess, I don't know, maybe we should be
17 job briefing with each crossing to, you know, let the next guy
18 know whether or not a maintainer had been called, but that's sort
19 of the general assumption is that one is.

20 Q. Gotcha. All right, thank you, Paul.

21 A. Yes.

22 MR. STROT: Dave.

23 BY MR. CASACELI:

24 Q. Do you -- David Casaceli, NTSB. Paul, do you ever call
25 signal maintainers up directly or is that always coming from the

1 operations coordinators?

2 A. Yes, actually I do that, today, not too long ago. Basically,
3 if something comes directly to us, not through the operations
4 coordinators, for instance, a train crew reports something or
5 today it was a flagman reporting something, then I go through the
6 entire process. You know, issuing a Form C, contacting the crews,
7 contacting the maintainer, contacting the police, creating the
8 Asset Pro ticket.

9 Here's where the operations coordinators kind of handle
10 those. Most of that is kind of an efficiency thing, trying to
11 take some of the logistics (indiscernible) off the dispatchers.
12 So we're capable of doing that. We do it pretty regularly, yes.

13 Q. So when you do that, what is a typical conversation sound
14 like with a signal maintainer, you know, what are you telling
15 them, what are they telling you, what are they talking about?
16 Let's say for a false activation because I know that's probably a
17 common call out (indiscernible) here, so you probably worked a few
18 of those in the last 6 or 8 years.

19 A. Yes, that's probably the most common one. Basically, I call
20 them, give them the type of call it is, so in this case a false
21 activation. I would let them know where it is, so mile post and
22 subdivision, and street, town, that sort of thing. And then I
23 just try to give them as much information as possible that I was
24 able to get from the caller. So, for instance, when it happened,
25 maybe how long the signals have been activated, that sort of thing

1 because I can help them out a little bit. And then they'll want
2 to know about the Form C protection, so that's kind of the gist of
3 the call.

4 Q. Okay, thank you.

5 MR. STROT: All right. Let's see.

6 BY MR. STROT:

7 Q. So once a signal maintainer gets dispatched to go out and
8 work on a trouble ticket, there's really no follow-up with that
9 dispatcher unless they call to tell you it's fixed, or if you're
10 concerned about it, it'll only go on the next day's DOB? I guess,
11 let's say a maintainer shows up out there and decides that he
12 can't fix it. He has no requirement to call you and let you know
13 that?

14 A. No, there's no requirement. It's good practice to do so. A
15 lot of maintainers will do that, like, if they get out there, for
16 instance, and they don't have the parts for it or they run odd
17 hours, if they have to go on hours-of-service. Most maintainers
18 will call and let us know. There are some maintainers that kind
19 of neglect to do that, and as far as where there is no hard pass
20 requirement that they have to notify us. In that case the Form C
21 protection just stays out. A separate ticket stays open until we
22 hear back.

23 Q. Okay. Other than the Asset Pro ticket showing that a
24 dispatcher was notified, is there anything else that tracks that
25 there is someone out there working on that?

1 A. We have the Asset Pro ticket as our main tracking. Other
2 than that, it would just basically be the Form C protection that's
3 remaining there. Those are kind of paired up, but no, there's no
4 -- there's anything that also tracks that.

5 Q. All right.

6 MR. STROT: Wes, do you have any questions?

7 MR. MCQUINN: No.

8 MR. STROT: Chad.

9 MR. BROSKI: No, thank you.

10 MR. STROT: Scott.

11 MR. BUNTEN: Yes, just one. Scott Buntен.

12 BY MR. BUNTEN:

13 Q. How often do maintainers job brief with you as far as
14 railroad worker protection or line worker protection, line of
15 sight issues? Does that ever occur?

16 A. I've had a few maintainers mention it, like, pretty much my
17 entire career. Like one particularly in there will mention that
18 they're using one worker protection. But most are getting
19 something like a track work from me, then no, they won't job brief
20 with me about that.

21 Q. Okay, thank you.

22 MR. BUNTEN: No further questions.

23 MR. STROT: Thanks, Scott. Tim.

24 MR. SLUSSER: Yes, one question. Tim Slusser, Ohio Central.

25 BY MR. SLUSSER:

1 Q. Paul, after the Form C's out and you let the operations
2 coordinator know to call the signal maintainer, do they reach back
3 out to you at all and say that they did talk to the maintainer and
4 they're in route or, you know, it's not going to be fixed today?
5 Anything like that?

6 A. Yes, they'll reach back out to me, let me know that the
7 maintainer was called, usually who was called, or if they're
8 having trouble getting in touch with the maintainer. They'll get
9 back with me about that so that we can work on it. Yes, that's
10 part of the process.

11 Q. Okay. And that -- do you remember did that -- that did
12 happen on this Sunday with this call-out?

13 (Crosstalk)

14 A. Yes, she did let me know that a maintainer had been notified
15 to go take a look.

16 Q. Okay. Thank you.

17 MR. CASACELI: David Casaceli, NTSB.

18 BY MR. CASACELI:

19 Q. When the maintainers that have called you in the past had
20 mentioned something about lone worker or ITD or the things that
21 Scott asked you about, do you know why they would be talking to
22 you about that stuff or is that just, you know, some guys do, some
23 guys don't?

24 A. Some guys will just volunteer the information, just like, you
25 know, just sort of talking because sometimes, you know, track runs

1 something along those lines, and they'll just say, okay, I'll just
2 (indiscernible), something along those lines. But it's never
3 specifically a job briefing.

4 Q. Okay. Thank you, sir.

5 MR. STROT: All right. Anybody have any further questions.

6 MR. BROSKI: I'd like to do a follow-up to --

7 MR. STROT: Yes --

8 MR. BROSKI: -- Tim's question.

9 MR. STROT: -- go right ahead, Chad.

10 MR. BROSKI: Thank you.

11 BY MR. BROSKI:

12 Q. Paul, what Tim had asked if the coordinator had then follow-
13 up with you to let you know that the signal maintainer had been
14 contacted and was thus in route. Is there then an updated Asset
15 Pro email indicating that the signal maintainer was contacted?
16 Because if I understand correctly, there is initial Asset Pro
17 email that you would get, that you then respond back to the
18 coordinator. So it would have all this information filled in
19 initially?

20 A. Yes, I think that's -- they kind of -- as far as I know, the
21 way -- I'm not entirely up to speed on how they handle the
22 tickets, but I believe they kind of open them and then fill them
23 in as piecemeal as each person is notified with the correct
24 timestamps. And then in the note section, they'll note, for
25 instance, who was called. So the Asset Pro ticket should

1 basically track the notification time when the maintainer was
2 notified.

3 Q. So each time this goes back and forth, there's a new email, I
4 guess multiple emails with one --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. -- Asset Pro?

7 A. Yes, I think they only -- on the Asset Pro ticket, I think
8 they only timestamp the initial notification when the maintainer's
9 first notified.

10 Q. Along with law enforcement?

11 A. Correct, yes.

12 Q. Thank you. Thanks, Paul. I appreciate it.

13 MR. BROSKI: That's all.

14 MR. STROT: All right. Any other follow-up questions? All
15 right. Tim, do you have any?

16 MR. SLUSSER: I don't.

17 MR. STROT: Okay.

18 BY MR. STROT:

19 Q. All right, Paul. Well, we appreciate you meeting with us.
20 One last question we ask everybody, is there anything that we
21 forgot to ask you or anything that you would like to add that you
22 think would be helpful?

23 A. No, I don't think I would have anything to add.

24 Q. Okay. And if we have any follow-up questions with -- for
25 you, do you mind if we call you at that number that you gave us?

1 A. No, that's fine or you could reach me here, if that's okay.

2 Q. Okay. That'll work.

3 MR. STROT: And last thing is just on behalf of the NTSB, we
4 appreciate all your cooperation, your thoroughness and information
5 that you've given us today. So we really appreciate it. Have a
6 great day, thank you.

7 MR. MARTELL: Thank you, bye.

8 MR. STROT: Thank you.

9 (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: RAILWAY WORKER FATALITY INVOLVING
 WHEELING & LAKE ERIE RAILWAY
 NEAR JEWETT, OHIO ON JANUARY 15, 2024
 Interview of Paul Martell

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD24LR006

PLACE: Coshocton, Ohio & via Microsoft Teams

DATE: January 17, 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.



Marisu Abellar
Transcriber