

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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CTA TRAIN COLLIDES WITH *

RAIL EQUIPMENT IN CHICAGO, * Accident No.: RRD24MR002

ILLINOIS ON NOVEMBER 16, 2023 *

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Interview of: CHRISTOPHER EDGERTON, Rail Instructor 1
Chicago Transit Authority

Chicago, Illinois

Saturday,
November 18, 2023

APPEARANCES:

MICHAEL BACHMEIER, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

SHANE RICHARDSON, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

DAVE BUCHER, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

ROVAUGHN GRAHAM, General Manager, Transit System Safety
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Chicago Transit Authority

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Chicago Transit Authority

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ANDRE ALLEN
State Safety Oversight Agency
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CYRELL McLEMORE, Senior Inspection Specialist
Federal Transit Administration

MARK WEEMS, 1st Vice President
Amalgamated Transit Union Local 308

PENNIE McCOACH, 2nd Vice President
Amalgamated Transit Union Local 308
Representing Mr. Edgerton

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I N T E R V I E W

(3:20 p.m.)

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3 MR. BACHMEIER: My name is Michael Bachmeier and I am the
4 NTSB operations group chairman for this accident. We're here
5 today on November 18th at 3:20 p.m. at the Residence Inn in
6 Chicago, Illinois, to conduct an interview with Christopher --

7 MR. EDGERTON: Edgerton.

8 MR. BACHMEIER: -- Edgerton, who works for CTA. This
9 interview is in conjunction with NTSB's investigation of the
10 accident near Howard tunnel. The accident reference number is
11 RRD24MR002. The purpose of the investigation is to increase
12 safety, not to assign fault, blame, or liability.

13 Before we begin our interview and questions, let's go around
14 the room and table and introduce ourselves. Please spell your
15 last name, who you are representing, and your title. I'd like to
16 remind everyone to speak clearly so we can get an accurate
17 recording. I'll start off and then pass it off to my left.
18 Again, my name is Michael Bachmeier, the spelling of my last name
19 is B-a-c-h-m-e-i-e-r, and I am the NTSB operations group chairman
20 for this accident.

21 MR. GRAHAM: My name is Rovaughn Graham, G-r-a-h-a-m, and I'm
22 here from the CTA safety department.

23 MR. WEEMS: Thank you for coming, Chris. I'm Mark Weems,
24 W-e-e-m-s, Vice President of ATU 308, Local 308.

25 MR. ALLEN: Good afternoon, Andre Allen with the Illinois

1 Department of Transportation State Safety Oversight Agency.

2 MR. RICHARDSON: Shane Richardson, R-i-c-h-a-r-d-s-o-n, with
3 the NTSB ops.

4 MS. McCOACH: Pennie McCoach, M-c-C-o-a-c-h, Vice President
5 for Local 308.

6 MR. EDGERTON: Chris Edgerton, last name, E-d-g-e-r-t-o-n,
7 Instructor 1 at CTA.

8 MR. BACHMEIER: And then we do have a couple observers in the
9 room.

10 MR. JASPER: Jhaun Jasper, J-a-s-p-e-r, CTA safety.

11 MR. CARNEY: Kevin Carney, C-a-r-n-e-y, CTA safety.

12 MS. ALEXANDER: Jeannie Alexander, A-l-e-x-a-n-d-e-r, CTA
13 rail operations.

14 MR. McLEMORE: Cyrell McLemore, M-c-L-e-m-o-r-e, Federal
15 Transit Administration, Office of Transit Safety and Oversight.

16 MR. BUCHER: Dave Bucher, B-u-c-h-e-r, NTSB Rail Division.

17 MS. ESTER: Geisha Ester, E-s-t-e-r, Chicago Transit
18 Authority Training and Workforce Development.

19 Instructor Edgerton, thank you for being here today,
20 appreciate it.

21 MR. BACHMEIER: Okay, thank you.

22 Christopher, do we have your permission to record our
23 discussion with you here today?

24 MR. EDGERTON: Yes.

25 MR. BACHMEIER: Do you understand the transcription will be

1 part of the public docket and as such, we cannot guarantee any
2 confidentiality?

3 MR. EDGERTON: Yes.

4 MR. BACHMEIER: As discussed, you have a representative with
5 you, Pennie, is that correct?

6 MR. EDGERTON: Yes.

7 MR. BACHMEIER: I'd like to ask everyone to clearly announce
8 your name and title before questioning. With that, let's proceed.

9 INTERVIEW OF CHRISTOPHER EDGERTON

10 BY MR. BACHMEIER:

11 Q. Chris, could you give us a synopsis of your work experience,
12 taking us up to your present job?

13 A. I started out in 2015 as a CSA. Within my first year I moved
14 up to a flagger, then RTO operator. Within probably a year and a
15 half, 2 years, I qualified for my second qualification, which was
16 switchman, throw switchman, and then went into rail instruction
17 and I've been a rail instructor for a little bit over a year now.

18 Q. Okay. So just about a year in your present position?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. On the day of the incident, can you just kind of
21 describe what you were called to do, what your -- what your work
22 activities were going to be that day and --

23 A. Okay, so the day of the activity, my job was to basically
24 brief what will be briefed on the diesel, S500. Instructor Spells
25 was the lead there. We went to Skokie yard, there at Skokie yard

1 we interviewed and met up with all parties that were going to be
2 on the train, which happened to be a manager, a machinist, and two
3 students. Instructor Spells went about the day as far as calling
4 control, calling the tower and letting all parties know that we
5 will be departing Skokie yard, and departing Skokie yard you want
6 to make sure that -- that the right-of-way would be clear for us
7 and also that we wouldn't have to wait at the signal was the whole
8 purpose of letting everyone know.

9 When we finally decided to move the train, the machinist --
10 well, I'll say not we, but when the machinist moved the train, we
11 got onto the train, moved it around Skokie yard. I then proceeded
12 -- the two students that was there for the machinist, I then
13 showed them the proper way to throw the switches so therefore the
14 diesel train wouldn't derail, make sure that they had a facing and
15 trailing switch so we wouldn't have any type of complications in
16 the future and that was whenever they were moving the train, that
17 they won't have to worry about being derailed.

18 From there we moved the train, the machinist moved the train
19 and we got lined up to going to the line of road. Instructor
20 Spells, he radioed control and told control that we're ready to go
21 on the line of road. Control gave him the okay. The radio
22 reception out there is kind of bad, so once he moved the train,
23 once we started going, I'm in the back while Instructor Spells is
24 up there with the two students and the machinist, the train got to
25 moving, we were going about 15, 20 miles per hour southbound,

1 Skokie -- Skokie line or Yellow Line, got up, came up approaching
2 towards Howard Yard, went up the incline, stopped, the train moved
3 back a little bit, I take it that they put on the emergency brake
4 because we only moved like probably about maybe a half a foot, two
5 feet, if that. Sat there and then just waited. Me and, I guess,
6 the manager, I guess that's who he was, the manager, was sitting
7 there on the train waiting on everything and then all of a sudden,
8 around the curve came the Skokie Swift and there was nothing that
9 we can do.

10 It looked like the operator tried to brake the train, the
11 train I guess slid and the train -- the train hit us and the
12 manager flew out the window and I tried to grab him, but I
13 couldn't get to him and he flew out the window. I hit my head, I
14 was unconscious for about two, three seconds and finally came to
15 and just went down and stepped off the train and went down and
16 checked on him and was praying that he was still alive. I could
17 hear him screaming down there on the right-of-way.

18 When I finally got down there to him, his right hand was
19 severely cut up, he was telling me that he needed help.
20 Instructor Spells was on the radio with control. I stayed down
21 there to keep him calm as long as I could until a couple people, I
22 guess the two students and Instructor Spells was down there
23 checking on him. And from there, I proceeded to go on to the
24 train to check on the operator and the customers, to check and
25 make sure that they were okay. When I got there, the operator was

1 severely injured with an extremely large, lacerated cut on his
2 right leg, he was actually laying on top of a customer, and I just
3 asked the customers were they okay and when I checked on the
4 second, I checked on everyone, a couple people were injured and
5 just wait there and the other instructor was saying to keep them
6 calm and to keep the passengers calm and let them know that
7 everything was going to be okay until CFD and CPD arrived at the
8 scene.

9 Q. Okay, thank you. You doing all right there, guy? You doing
10 all right? Do you want a break?

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If you need to stop, it's okay.

12 MR. EDGERTON: No, I'm okay.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

14 MR. BACHMEIER: Okay. I do not have any further questions,
15 I'm going to pass it on to Ro.

16 BY MR. GRAHAM:

17 Q. In terms of -- again, I just want to say thanks for
18 everything that you did before, during, and after the collision.
19 We know that the lead instructor for this was (indiscernible), so
20 in the section that you were in with the manager, were there seats
21 in that section?

22 A. Yes. I was sitting in one seat and the manager was sitting
23 in the seat right next to me. It was extremely tight in there, so
24 it was really not any way you can pretty much go. Yeah, so by me
25 being tall, it kind of hurt my knees being right there by the

1 dashboard because the dashboard was pressing down on my knees.

2 Q. Upon the approach of the train, you guys knew they were not
3 going to be able to stop, I'm assuming you were probably
4 expecting --

5 A. I was praying and hoping that it would stop, but the speed
6 that the train was coming, I already knew that it wasn't going to
7 stop.

8 Q. Did you hear the operator activate the horn?

9 A. I can't remember. I just saw it, I just saw it coming.

10 Q. And for the manager's actions, did he try -- was he trying to
11 escape the vehicle?

12 A. He jumped up so fast, he said oh, my God, oh, my God, and
13 when he jumped out of his seat, he was standing straight up and
14 the next thing I know, the impact came and all I saw him do was
15 fly out the window and I tried to grab him, but I couldn't get to
16 him.

17 Q. Did you -- because you guys were on two different pieces or
18 portions of the vehicle, did you communicate with the other
19 instructor via radio, shortwave?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Did you have a radio?

22 A. Yes, I did.

23 Q. Did you at any time communicate with the control center or
24 the tower?

25 A. No, I did not.

1 MR. GRAHAM: That's all I have.

2 BY MR. WEEMS:

3 Q. Mark Weems, W-e-e-m-s. First, Chris, thank you for
4 everything you did in this incident, especially taking an action
5 to help our customers and other individuals that were injured.
6 Really, just one question. After the collision, how long would
7 you say it took for first responders to get to the scene?

8 A. It took quite some time.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. I can't be specific as far as the amount of minutes. If I
11 had to take an educated guess, I would say about -- I can't even
12 tell you because, like I said, there was so much going on. I know
13 that they got to the manager first --

14 Q. Right.

15 A. -- because I could see that looking out through the train.
16 When they were at him, I was already at the operator and on the
17 first car with the rest of the passengers. So I couldn't tell you
18 exactly what time they exactly got to him or who it was that got
19 to him, because I believe that it may have been people from the
20 yard or the manager or someone of that nature, CTA employees that
21 got to him first before CPD or CFD did.

22 MR. WEEMS: Thanks, that's all I had.

23 BY MR. ALLEN:

24 Q. Andre Allen, A-l-l-e-n, IDOT SSO. I also just want to echo
25 everything everyone is saying about you rushing to help everyone

1 else, I really appreciate that. Had things gone according to that
2 plan for the day, what would your role have been, I guess, for the
3 remainder of the training?

4 A. The remainder of the training was basically to following the
5 -- I mean, not following the lead, but follow everything that
6 Instructor Spells was doing.

7 Q. And do you know what the role of the manager was?

8 A. No, I do not. I do not know what his role was.

9 MR. ALLEN: All right, that's all I have for now.

10 BY MR. RICHARDSON:

11 Q. Shane Richardson, NTSB. Just, I know that it was a split
12 second, so -- but I have to ask, did you see anything unusual on
13 the train as it was coming toward you?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Like anything that seemed out of the ordinary?

16 A. No.

17 MR. RICHARDSON: Okay. That's all I had.

18 MR. EDGERTON: Outside of it just heading towards our way.

19 MR. RICHARDSON: Okay.

20 BY MR. BACHMEIER:

21 Q. Mike Bachmeier, NTSB. So Christopher, coming up to Howard,
22 the plan was for you guys just to go right into the Howard --

23 A. Exactly.

24 Q. -- terminal?

25 A. Yes, that was the plan.

1 Q. Clare (ph.) had let the train come in behind you?

2 A. I don't know if it was for the train, I just knew what our
3 job assignment was, was for us to come straight in and I don't
4 know about as far as what was going on with the train and, you
5 know, what control gave or whatnot.

6 Q. Okay. On your end of the equipment where there were six
7 total, you and the manager were on one end, the other four were on
8 the -- what would've been the south end, you were on the north
9 end, could you operate out of your end or --

10 A. I don't know anything about that equipment.

11 MR. BACHMEIER: Okay. That's all I've got.

12 BY MR. GRAHAM:

13 Q. A couple follow-ups. Graham, G-r-a-h-a-m. I think my
14 question is how familiar -- how familiar were you with the S500,
15 was this your first time?

16 A. This was my first time.

17 Q. And in terms of your role, was it more supportive of the lead
18 instructor or were you kind of in the training capacity?

19 A. I'm in the training capacity.

20 Q. So he was kind of showing the ropes?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. I might mess this up, but as the train was approaching,
23 there's a -- I think that there's a -- on bypasses there are
24 lights that illuminate.

25 A. Um-hum.

1 Q. Did you see that light at all?

2 A. No.

3 MR. GRAHAM: That's all I have.

4 MR. RICHARDSON: I have none.

5 BY MR. BACHMEIER:

6 Q. Okay. Christopher, would you -- do you have anything you
7 would like to add today?

8 A. Other than the operator, Johnny Smith, is the real hero
9 because if Johnny didn't slow down that train, I probably wouldn't
10 be here with you guys right now.

11 Q. And Johnny was -- when we talked to him earlier, he couldn't
12 say nothing about you being you were the first one he saw. If we
13 have any follow-up questions, would we be able to contact you?

14 A. Yeah.

15 MR. BACHMEIER: On behalf of the NTSB, our entire team here,
16 thank you for your time.

17 (Whereupon, at 3:38 p.m., the interview concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

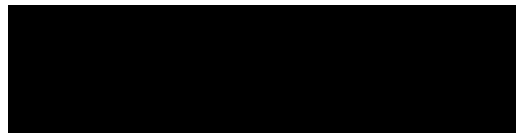
IN THE MATTER OF: CTA TRAIN COLLIDES WITH
RAIL EQUIPMENT IN CHICAGO,
ILLINOIS ON NOVEMBER 16, 2023
Interview of Christopher Edgerton

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD24MR002

PLACE: Chicago, Illinois

DATE: November 18, 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.



David A. Martini
Transcriber