



## **Survival Factors Attachment 11**

### **First Responder Interviews**

**Cranbury, NJ  
HWY14MH012**

(19 Pages)

## 1. Emergency Services Supervisor from the New Jersey Turnpike Authority

The Emergency Services Supervisor for the Turnpike Authority was interviewed by telephone. The supervisor first provided some information about contact points at the turnpike authority. He was asked about what information could be obtained from the Turnpike Authority and what resources they had on scene. He said that developing this was in process. He said that the Turnpike Authority is typically only involved with traffic control aspects of a crash. He was asked about how the responding agencies work out the boundaries for response. He described that in general, the turnpike is segmented by exits or mile posts and in some cases by the direction of travel. The details change as construction continues and is established on an individual basis for ramps or other features. The accident occurred in the segment of freeway from mile post 72.2, near exit 8A and Exit 7A in the southbound travel lanes. He stated that Hightstown Fire Department and Hightstown First Aid Squad served this portion of the turnpike, and that the northbound lanes of this portion were served by Robinsville Fire and First Aid Squad. The bordering turnpike segments were served by Cranbury Fire and First Aid Squad to the south (milepost 71.7 to 67.9 for both northbound southbound lanes), and Monroe Fire and First Aid Squad to the north (milepost 72.3 to 76.3 for both northbound and southbound lanes). Air medical evacuation services in the region of the accident were provided by North Star and South Star, which were both part of the aviation division of the New Jersey State Police. The primary response was conducted by Hightstown Fire and First Aid Squad, with mutual aid assistance from Monroe Fire and First Aid Squad, and air medevac from North Star. The mutual aid response also involved Cranbury Fire Department and First Aid Squad. Paramedics from the Robert Wood Johnson Medical Center, as dispatched by Medical Central also responded.

## 2. New Jersey State Police Trooper from Middlesex Station

The trooper was interviewed by telephone on July 16, 2014. The trooper was asked to describe his activity on scene. He said that when he was arriving on scene, there were some state police already there, controlling traffic. They let him through and he parked his vehicle facing north. He found the van on its side and climbed into the van from the front cab area. When he got into the back of the van he found a black male civilian, around 20 to 30 years old, already in the back, checking on the wounded. He found two black males and one white male who were wounded and moving, and one black male who was not moving and possibly deceased. He was unable to make a definitive determination on this victim because he was covered in debris, and in a portion of the vehicle that was difficult to access. This occupant appeared to have back injuries. He described contacting dispatch to call for a helicopter; called in a fatal accident scene, and called in a crime scene. He also confirmed that fire and EMS were already enroute. He informed dispatch that the fire and EMS may need to approach the scene from the north to get through traffic. He described going back out of the limobus to turn off the ignition and then going back in to monitor the victims. He did not want to move the victims for fear of making any neck injuries worse. He assisted with identifying the victims and communicating this information to headquarters. He also communicated information about the need for air EMS support and collected information about the limobus (registration and insurance information). He was asked about the incident commander or points of contact on scene. He responded that the police did not have anyone identified as an IC or single point of

contact. He identified the senior officer on scene. He was unaware of a contact point for triage or EMS, and was unsure of who was designated the IC for fire/rescue, but knew that there was a fire chief on scene. When asked if he knew who was conducting triage, he did not know, but noted that the fire chief was simultaneously in contact regarding air support.

He was asked to describe how the victims were extricated from the limobus and the treatment they received. He indicated that he had gone in and out of the vehicle, and once the fire/EMS were on scene, was not focused on the victims and did not see how they were extricated or treated. He noted that when outside the limobus, he saw two men standing there that did not appear injured. He asked who they were and was informed that it was the driver and front passenger of the limobus. He went back to his squad car and scanned them in. When he went back to the limobus, the victims had been extricated and most were on backboards. He was asked if he knew specifically how many or who was on a backboard and he said no. He thought that there was a mix and that they might have been short a backboard or two at that time. He said that he saw two firemen working on the victim who appeared possibly deceased. He said that they put a mask on him, and he saw blood come out of the victim's mouth. He also saw them performing CPR on him for approximately a half hour, and heard someone say that they might have had a faint heartbeat. He was asked how the victims were transported. He described how the helicopter landed at the police barracks nearby, and that it was safer for it to land there because it was so close by and they could avoid it landing on the freeway. He noted that if the helicopter lands on the freeway, they must close it in both directions due to the risk of debris flying across. He noted that it is safer to avoid stopping traffic in both directions due to the chance of accidents from stopped traffic. He noted that the victims were loaded into ambulances and driven the short distance to the helicopter, but did not see these operations in detail.

### 3. New Jersey State Troopers at Cranbury Station

A group of 3 state troopers, with a NJSP attorney present were interviewed in person by the NTSB Survival Factors Investigator at the NJSP Troop B headquarters in Cranbury NJ on September 30, 2014. They were all present, but interviewed one at a time. They were asked to state their name, badge number and duty the night of the crash. The interview notes are separated according to each trooper.

#### **a. First Trooper, 5911**

Trooper 5911 indicated that he is assigned to a K9 unit, but was working on a construction unit T618 that night. The interview started with trooper 1, and he was asked to describe what he remembers about the accident from the time he was dispatched. He responded that he heard about it on the radio, and was not specifically dispatched, but headed over to help out. He saw that there was a trooper already there, who was later identified as a trooper from the Middlesex Station. He saw the trooper already there helping with the victims. He indicated that traffic was backed up, and so he started working to manage traffic and coordinate. He said that he worked to clear a path with traffic on the shoulder to make room for arriving responders to get to the scene. He also described helping out with addressing the injured, communicating with Cranbury station, and calling for medivac. He was asked to describe what he meant by

addressing the injured. He responded that it was to identify them. He also noted that he did not treat them but he looked to determine who was a priority and needed to get to the helicopter. He radioed the information to dispatch and relayed information on how many helicopters were needed. He indicated that after that was taken care of, he then assisted with traffic which included putting down a flair line and assisting with getting medical services to the scene.

He was asked about identifying the victims, if there were there any medical personnel on scene. He said that he did not remember, but that he knew that paramedics were enroute. He remembered that the fire chief had just gotten there and was also helping to coordinate. He was asked if the fire chief identified himself as the Incident Commander and responded that yes, the fire chief did. He was asked if he knew which victims he identified on scene. He said that he didn't know. He was asked if he was collecting names of the victims involved and if this included just those in the van or if it included everyone. He responded that it was everyone, and clarified that he was not taking names, but just making sure the troopers addressed everyone involved, meaning identifying which people were involved, who was injured, who was a priority, and who needed medivac support. He said that he relayed this information to Cranbury station. He was asked if he was doing that via radio to dispatch and responded affirmative. He was asked to describe his communications with the IC. He responded that they coordinated with each other, and noted items such as which lanes were open, where to park the engines, and how to move cars stuck in traffic.

He was asked if he remembered how many were injured, and responded that he did not remember how many, but knew the worst were in the van. He was asked if he called in or knew of the call for additional medical support. He said that he did not, but that other troopers must have done that. He was asked if the state police designed a commander or a point of contact (POC). He was unclear on the response, and asked what was meant by the question. He was provided with the example of a unified command that can have a designated POC from police which is separate from fire and EMS operations. He didn't provide a clear comment or answer. He was asked about anything noteworthy and if all went smooth. He responded yes, and indicated that the road was closed and that the ambulances were directed to go south in the northbound lanes to access the scene. He noted that everything was called in quickly and knew that there were updates for more medivac and medical support. He was asked if he knew who called for additional medivac and medical support and responded that he didn't know who.

**b. Second Trooper, 4975, construction unit T618.**

Trooper 2 was asked to describe what he remembered. He said that he heard that the trooper from Middlesex Station got their first, and started over to the scene. He indicated that he turned around at interchange 8, and that when he got there, the fire department was there treating injured. He said that he knew that the patrol supervisor was at another accident and that take a while before he got there. H indicated that for this reason, he made sure all the proper notifications were made. He said that he saw that injured were being treated, and so concentrated on the need for notifications such as the need for a CVI unit, a construction unit for a hard diversion, and that duty officer was notified. He directed the actions of troopers on scene, and assigned them to stay with each of the cars involved and directed them on where to go to make sure everyone was accounted for. He noted that he was the senior sergeant on scene

at the time and made sure the fatal accident unit was enroute. He described that he briefed the supervisor upon his arrival. He was asked to describe what treatment saw and said that he saw the injured in van, saw the trooper from Middlesex Station with the victims, noted that gave a trooper to each vehicle and make sure they didn't miss anyone. He was asked if he saw any troopers assist with the medical response, and gave the example that some victims were agitated, that they had medical personal with them, and that everyone was being attending to.

### **c. Third Trooper, 5907**

Trooper 3 was asked to describe what he remembered. He said that he was the last to arrive on scene in this group, and came in via Cranbury station, and backed up to the scene. When he arrived he saw that people were still working to get victims out of the van. He said that his duties were to assess traffic, such as determining how long they would be there, assess road closings that needed to be installed, and how much lighting was needed to process scene. He commented on the earlier discussion about victims being agitated, and said that he noticed in particular that one victim had only one medic with him, and that he was on a stretcher, but agitated and trying to get up. He told him to calm down and that they were there to help. He noted that the victim had his eyes closed and suggested that the victim was confused. He saw one medic struggling to secure this victim. He noted that he helped calm this victim. He was asked to describe how this victim was secured to stretcher and responded that his legs were strapped and that the victim had a neck brace, but that he kept trying to sit up and was moving around. He noted that he continued talking to the victim in an attempt to calm him down. He was asked if he saw any treatment of the fatality and said no, but commented that he must have gotten the best medical care that he could get. He saw leads on the fatality, so knew that someone had worked on him.

The trooper was told that there a few question on behalf of the NTSB Highway Factors Group Chairman. He was asked about his duties with the construction site. He said that he installed the closing. He was asked to describe this and was asked when he did the last drive around prior to the accident. He said that he can't remember when it was that he did the last drive around prior to the crash, but noted that the they go from closing to closing every 20 minutes if feasible. He clarified that due to traffic, it can be better to just stay where you are at. He was asked if he did slow down procedures and said yes. He did not elaborate. He was asked if he had any observations from that night, and indicated that nothing out of the ordinary came to mind. He noted that traffic was light, and that they would never install a closing if traffic was too heavy. He noted that this was no different from any other closing. He was asked where he was when he heard about the crash. He responded that he was at the southbound site, and so he was north of the accident, which was why he had to come south and then reverse to the scene from Cranbury station.

### **4. Hightstown Fire Department Chief and IC**

The Hightstown Fire Department fire chief was interviewed by telephone on June 25th. The Hightstown fire chief was the first fire responder on scene, and was the Incident Commander (IC) for fire and rescue operations. The IC was asked to describe what he remembered from the time he received the call. He responded that he was the first fire unit on

the scene and assumed incident command. He noted that the state police were already on scene, and he was unsure of how many units, approximately 4. Upon arrival on scene, he saw the damaged vehicles in the northbound lanes. The limo bus was on its side in the travel lanes, with the SUV next to it and in the left (fast) lane, and the tractor trailer with heavy front end damage in the left median. He assessed the scene and noted that there were 3 people trapped in the limo bus, and no others trapped in other vehicles.

He was asked if he knew the status of any other victims. He stated that he was focused on the 3 trapped victims and did not know the status of others on the scene. He described looking for access to the limo bus, starting with the rear of the vehicle. They cut the rear doors off the limo bus, but found that there was a secondary wall and seats blocking access from the rear. They then went to the front of the bus and found the windshield missing, and had to remove material to gain better access to the back from the cab. He sent an EMT into the back to assess the victims. One victim was noted as deceased, and the other two were injured. He sent in a fire fighter and 3 backboards to evacuate the victims. The two injured victims were loaded into ambulances and taken to the transport helicopters, which were at the NJSP barracks nearby. He was asked if he knew how the two victims or others were transported from the scene. He said that he believed the two went in separate ambulances to the police barracks, and did not know other details. The deceased was placed on the ground and covered at the scene. He stated that they then secured the vehicles and the scene, such as disconnecting batteries and cleaned up vehicle fluids on the ground. They then stayed on scene to provide lighting.

The IC was asked about the decision to position the helicopters at the NJSP barracks. He explained that the state police recommended that the helicopters land at the barracks because it was close to the scene and that it was safer than landing on the roadway. He was asked who had made the recommendation and about communication at the scene. He stated that he did not know in particular who decided to route the helicopters to the NJSP barracks. He noted that there are separate radio communication channels for police, fire, and EMS. The normal method is to establish an incident command post at the fire chief vehicle, and that there are 3 incident commanders with state police for the overall scene, the FD for fire and rescue operations, and an ALS medic for triage and EMS. He said that this accident did not work that way because there was too much going on. There were state police all around, and he was able to ask one of them directly for information. He did not recall who, but said there was one of the ALS medics from Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in charge of the EMS. He used a radio channel, TAC 1, to be in contact with Mercer County Central Dispatch.

The IC was asked about the equipment on scene. He stated that he arrived first in his command vehicle, and that Hightstown FD also had Engine 41, Rescue 41, and a ladder truck on scene, plus engine 46 was at the helipad. He noted that there is an automatic mutual aid for accidents on the turnpike. There was a simultaneous dispatch of Hightstown approaching the accident northbound in the northbound lanes from exit 8 and with Cranbury approaching the accident from the north, driving south in the northbound lanes.

The IC was asked about after action reports. He said that there will be a report to the Turnpike Authority, which must be requested from them. There is also a Hightstown FD after

action report, and he provided contact information for the information officer to process a request.

5. EMS supervisor of the Cranbury First Aid Squad

The EMS supervisor of the Cranbury First Aid Squad provided background information about the operations via telephone on June 18, 2014.. He noted that there is a dual dispatch from Mercer County for Hightstown and Cranbury. The Fire and EMS call centers were co-located on June 1, 2014, but the CAD logs remained separate for fire and EMS at the time of the crash. The Cranbury First Aid CAD Number was 2014-0025048. According to Mercer County CAD Number 2014-0025048, Cranbury First Aid had one EMS unit (Unit 4815) responded to the scene with two EMT's aboard. The call was received at 1:06 a.m., the unit was dispatched and enroute at 1:13 a.m., was on scene at 1:15 a.m., left the scene at 1:56 a.m., and arrived at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick at 2:17 a.m.

6. Cranbury First Aid Squad Primary EMT

The primary EMT from Cranbury Unit 4815 was interviewed by telephone on June 18, 2014. He stated that Cranbury FAS received one call out tone, and accordingly dispatched one ambulance. He described the process used upon receiving a page from Mercer County Central Dispatch. The EMT on duty gets the page and then signs onto a separate Cranbury FAS repeater, so that the other EMTs know who is going on the dispatched unit. Once in the unit, they switch frequencies back to the Mercer County Central system. Upon review of the event times listed on the Mercer County CAD Number 2014-0025048, he noted that the times only reflect the events as Mercer County is able to track them. He noted that the system changed recently from a Lifecom system to the Mercer County central operations.

The primary EMT described the trip from where he accessed the ambulance to the scene as an approximate 1.5 mile trip to the Cranbury Police Station, and then negotiating the overpass and driving southbound in the northbound lanes. Once on scene, he saw that Hightstown FAS had one ambulance on scene, and was not sure what other equipment was already on scene. He said that the CAD log has details, and that he saw 3 victims on the ground and was told to attend to one of them by the incident commander. This patient was assessed, loaded onto a backboard and cot, and loading into Unit 4815. While attending to this patient in the ambulance, an assistant fire chief from Cranbury knocked on the doors and informed him that they were to remove this patient from the ambulance. The patient was removed from the ambulance and the cot, and placed back on the ground (on the backboard). Another more critically injured patient was then loaded onto the cot and into the unit 4815. He described the patient having a suspected brain injury due to asymmetric stare in one eye. There were two paramedics on scene from Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital with their vehicle parked behind Unit 4815. He explained that ambulances in NJ are registered as either a Basic Life Support (BLS) or a Advanced Life Support (ALS). The paramedics from an ALS will often ride in the BLS ambulance to care for a victim in transport. In this case, both of the paramedics decided to ride in Unit 4815, and the EMT drove the paramedic unit behind them onroute to the hospital.

#### 7. Cranbury First Aid Squad Driver EMT

The driver of EMT unit 4815 was also a FF for the Cranbury FD. He provided information about the response via telephone on June 18, 2014. He described that upon arriving on scene, there were some victims already outside the limo bus, and three still inside the back. He noted that one of the Cranbury FF on scene was not trained in extrication, while he was, so they effectively switched roles. He went to assist with extrication while the FF assisted with patient care. He went to the back of the limo bus and assisted in cutting the rear doors off the bus. They then found that there was another wall, TV, and electrical equipment that blocked access to the interior of the limo bus. He went around to the front and an access point had been created from the cab, and an EMT and a FF were inside the limo bus. He assisted in getting two people removed from the back of the limo bus via backboards, and noted that there was a third victim was in the limo bus who had sustained fatal injuries. They loaded a critical patient into Unit 4815 and transported him to Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. He noted that two other victims were transported from the scene by helicopter.

#### 8. New Jersey Turnpike Authority Emergency Services Supervisor

The Emergency Services Supervisor for the Turnpike Authority noted that typically the Turnpike Authority will only be involved with traffic control aspects of a crash. The Emergency Services Supervisor indicated that the responding agencies work out the boundaries for the response. In general, the turnpike is segmented by exits or mile posts and in some cases by the direction of travel. The details change as construction continues and is established on an individual basis for ramps or other features.

The accident occurred in the segment of freeway from mile post 72.2, near exit 8A, to Exit 7A in the southbound travel lanes. Hightstown Fire Department and Hightstown First Aid Squad serve this portion of the turnpike. The northbound lanes of this portion are served by Robinsville Fire and First Aid Squad. The bordering turnpike segments are served by Cranbury Fire and First Aid Squad to the south (milepost 71.7 to 67.9 for both northbound southbound lanes), and Monroe Fire and First Aid Squad to the north (milepost 72.3 to 76.3 for both northbound and southbound lanes). Air medical evacuation services in the region of the accident are provided by North Star and South Star, which are both part of the aviation division of the New Jersey State Police.

The primary response was conducted by Hightstown Fire and First Aid Squad, with mutual aid assistance from Monroe Fire and First Aid Squad, and air medevac from North Star. The mutual aid response also involved Cranbury Fire Department and First Aid Squad. Paramedics from the Robert Wood Johnson Medical Center, as dispatched by Medical Central also responded. The EMS supervisor noted that there was a report of an issue regarding one of the Cranbury EMS responders who is also a fireman. The EMS responder reportedly left the ambulance unit to assist in the fire response, causing a delay in the ambulance response.



9. Hightstown First Aid Squad Unit 4112 Driver

The 4112 Hightstown Driver was interviewed by phone on September 16, 2014. He was asked to describe the response. He said that this was very first BLS on scene. They got the tone for the accident on the northbound New Jersey Turnpike. As they were leaving the bay, they heard their call sign and that there was an overturned vehicle with entrapment. They went to the accident scene, switched over to the channel allowing communication with fire. He wrote a statement in the EMS Chart, and did an addendum. They split up. His partner went into ambulance, he went to assist a patient. They indicated to the IC that air medivac was needed. There were 3 trapped and 2 in roadway, and they needed more BLS, he tried to key it up, but his radio mic would not work, so he relayed his request to the IC. He was directed to care for a patient on the roadway. He was not sure who it was, paramedics got there a couple of minutes later, and he released the patient to the paramedic.

He then went to resupply his partner who was in the van. He could not fit, and his partner was smaller and fit through the tight space and into the van. A FF was also in the van. Patients were handed out, and the first was the most critical, and needed the medivac. They put this patient on a stretcher to depart for LZ (landing zone) and tended to patient while waiting. The patient was loaded into medivac and transported. They were cleared from landing zone.

The driver was asked about the organization and communication at the scene, and he responded that he believed the IC did all he could do, to the best of his knowledge. He noted that they normally don't see things this severe and it was a very big scene and lots going on. He said that maybe others thought the IC could have done better because maybe they have experienced this stuff. He was asked about if the direction from the IC was clear and responded yes, that he was told directly what to do and the directions were clear. He was asked if the IC was involved with rescue operations and responded no, that the IC split his time between different things. At times the IC was at the van, other times over at the apparatus or over to paramedics. The IC was checking out the different situations. The driver noted that he's worked with the IC before and thought he did well and that he understands him. The driver was asked how he's long been an EMT and responded a about a year. He was asked about training or drills at the FAS or other experience with mass casualty and responded that MCI has been covered at EMT school and drills were done in school. He was asked if any drills involved other agencies and responded no, just with their squad.

10. Hightstown First Aid Squad Unit 4112 Primary EMT

The Hightstown FAS unit 4112 primary EMT was interviewed by phone on September 16, 2014. He was asked to describe the event. He responded that he didn't remember much, as it was a couple months ago. He was asked if anything stuck out in his mind or if there was anything noteworthy. He responded by asking if there were any specific areas to comment about. He was asked if this was the only BLS unit dispatched from Hightstown. He responded that yes, they were the only one, and that there are no paramedics that stage at this station. He was asked about other BLS or troopers that were on scene when they arrived. He responded that there were troopers and a fire company on scene.

He was asked if he saw any victims already being attended to when he arrived. He responded that when he arrived on scene, the driver of the limo van was walking towards them. He approached the driver and asked if he was OK. He noted that the driver seemed OK. He then saw two other victims lying on the ground and went to them. One of them was doing poorly. He informed his partner. At that time a fire fighter pulled him aside and asked him to crawl into the van. He was asked because he had a smaller stature than the others, and was most able to fit into the van through the small access route. He was asked how he got in, and responded that he went in through the windshield. He responded that he didn't see anyone else in van. Based on hearing reports that someone had gone in through the back, he responded that he didn't see how someone else would be able to get in through the back.

He was asked to describe what he saw in the back of the van and described seeing 3 patients and that they were not responsive to voice, touch or pain stimulus. He was asked to elaborate and responded that 2 were moving around but not attentive, and 1 was totally unresponsive. He noted that he thought it was best to get them out, and that he did not know if van was stabilized. He asked for another fire fighter to crawl in and help. He said that he and a fire fighter were given some backboards and they proceeded to hand out the victims out. He was asked to describe what order they were extricated. He noted that the first was African American who was found on his back, the second was Caucasian who was furthest back in the van, and the third was an African American who was the most severely injured, the one whose pulse he had checked and did not find one. He was asked about what happened next. He said that other EMT's and paramedics attended to the victims who had been extricated from the van, and that his next job was to run supplies for those who needed them. He noted that he had been separated from his partner, who he believed had now left the scene to transport a patient. He stayed on scene and ran supplies.

He was asked about the need for additional BLS units on scene and the timing. He responded that he did not really have knowledge of this due to him being in the back of the van. He was asked if he had any concerns about the response, and responded that nothing came to mind. He was asked about his experience and said that he's been an EMT for 1 year, all in New Jersey. He was asked about his experience with MCI events and said that this was his first one. He noted that he has had some training, and when asked about these, responded that they were from school coursework. He was asked how he got off scene and said that he got a ride in a fire truck back to his station.

#### 11. Monroe Township First Aid Squad Supervisor

The supervisor of Monroe Township FAS was interviewed by phone on September 14, 2014. He was asked to describe how he was involved with the accident. He said that the paramedics who were stationed at the Monroe FAS had already been dispatched sometime earlier. They paramedics later requested an ambulance, and then a second ambulance was requested, and a third a few minutes later. He noted that when multiple units get dispatched, they will generally send out a supervisor to assist, which is why he dispatched to the scene in a supervisor vehicle. He was asked who requested the ambulances, and he responded that they were dispatched by mutual aid. He noted that he went out right after the second BLS ambulance in a role to help the BLS units. He said that when he arrived on scene the first unit

had been there for about 5 or 10 min before the second arrived, and that he arrived right after the second unit. He noted that when he arrived he saw that the first unit already had their patient packaged and loaded, and the second unit was in the process of getting loaded.

He was asked how many patients were in each of the units and described what he saw about victims treatment. He said that he didn't see any activities with the patient loaded into the first unit, since he was loaded by the time he arrived. He said that the patient for the second unit was already on a backboard and they finished loading him into unit right after. Unit 501 was the first unit that left, and the second unit went to the helicopter landing zone. He noted that he did not have direct contact with the patients because he was coordinating with the IC. He said he was working to arrange the second helicopter, but that it had an eta of a several more minutes, and it led to the decision to revert to ground transport rather than medivac. He was then asked if he could describe the situation and approximate time for expected timeframes comparing the two modes of transport, by ground or by air. He said that the timeframe for ground from the scene to delivery at the hospital is around 15 to 20 minutes by ground. He said that by air, from the landing zone (which does not include the minutes to get them to the landing zone), is about 2 or 3 minutes. He said that after the second ambulance left the scene, he then left the scene.

He was asked about his experience as an EMT, and responded that he's been an EMT for 23 years, all in NJ. He was asked about training or recent mass casualty drills. He responded that they have classes for continuing education, but has not done any recent drills. He was asked his impression of how things went at the scene. He responded that it was chaotic things and things didn't go as quickly as you'd like. He indicated that when he arrived so late into the event, he was surprised that so many victims were still on scene. He was asked if there was a clearly defined incident command. He responded that he knew the fire chief was the IC, but felt that it was not as clearly established as would be normal. He noted that he would have expected someone to approach when they arrived and indicate who was in charge and other aspects of the scene organization.

He was asked if he could give a sense of how long the victim who had been planned as the second helicopter transport candidate was out of the van before being transported from the scene. He said he did not know as he was not involved directly with this victim. He was asked to describe concerns or aspects that he would have liked to go differently. He responded that it would have been better to have the mutual aid support called in quicker and would have liked to see more defined roles and organization on scene. He was asked if communication was an issue. He noted that agencies operate on different frequency from different counties, and this made things more difficult because he could not contact the Mercer County frequencies, and had to relay through verbal communication. He was asked if this is a common problem. He responded that it does not occur very often, maybe a couple of times a year, because it's not common to have agencies from other counties responding to the same call. He said that most calls are in county, and that only larger calls requiring mutual aid from other counties have this issue, and that the various agencies are aware of it.

## 12. Monroe Township First Aid Squad Unit 508 Driver

The driver from Monroe Township FAS Unit 508 was interviewed by phone on September 10, 2014. He was asked about his role and said that he was the driver and an EMT on Monroe Township FAS, and he is also a volunteer fire fighter. He was asked to describe his activities and responded that he was dispatched by Monroe police department and approached the scene through the state police barracks, and drove southbound in the northbound truck lanes to access the scene. He was asked to describe what happened on scene. He responded that they approached the scene and they saw multiple fire trucks on scene. He dropped off his partner and positioned the ambulance north of the accident and stood by until he could be brought in to pick up the patient. He was then backed into a position to pick up the victim.

He was asked if he saw any other ambulances or what order victims were transported, and responded that he didn't have visibility to that. He said that they picked up a patient and that there was a paramedic treating that patient. He said that this patient was packaged and ready to go with a c-spine and all. He was asked about the patient and the patient's injuries. He stated that the patient was Caucasian, and that he helped get him loaded. The paramedics came into the BLS unit and helped cut his clothes off. He said the patient had a severe laceration on his head and that he was not making sense, not responsive to questions, just babbling, and saying the same thing over and over. He noted that the patient had a possible pelvis fracture and possible leg and wrist fractures.

He was asked how the decision was made to transport and noted that because BLS and ALS are in separate rigs, the paramedics get in the back and so there is no room to take more than one patient. He said they grabbed extra equipment out of the paramedic vehicle. There was an EMT and 2 paramedics in back. With the severity of injuries, he warranted medivac. One they had him stabilized they moved him to the landing zone, and there was a helicopter there. He stated that the helicopter was capable of taking 2 patients, but they only took 1. He said that because it was unclear when the second helo would arrive and because it was late and the roads were clear, they decided not to wait for the second helicopter. They left for the hospital.

He was asked if he had any concerns or comments about the response. He said they were at the station, and when heard the job went out, they were wondering why they were also not dispatched. He said it's hard to know where things are on turnpike, but it was frustrating that it took so long for them to get called out. He was asked how the communication was on scene. He noted that they can't talk with Mercer County, so their internal communications were good, but that they had to do some verbal communication to relay the radio transmissions. He noted that if communications were better with the other counties it could help in these situations.

He was asked about his experience as a responder. He said that he was a fire fighter for 28 years and is now retired, and that he's been an EMT since 1988. He was asked about training exercises and noted that he is a retired federal fire fighter so did a lot of army base training and regular drills as a fire fighter. He said that in EMS there has not been much as far

as drills. He said there is continuing education, and that he works in a busy area so the staff is proficient.

The driver was asked about the mutual aid response and if he felt this was a typical case. He noted that having a fire fighter background probably gives him an approach with a bit of overkill, and that he feels that with EMS in this area, people are skeptical or reluctant to call for more mutual aid. He felt that enough support is not always dispatched and that the response can be quickly overwhelmed. He also noted that there is no protocol set up and that they don't have complete communication across all agencies due to a lack of equipment.

He was asked it was turned around and he was the primary agency instead of mutual aid, what protocol would he follow, and what would he have done differently. He responded that in Monore the first on scene would become a triage unit with a patient collection point. In this accident they didn't see one except for what ALS did. The ALS had packaged the patients that would normally have been done by the BLS which were not there. He would have staged more units and take the approach that he would be sure to get as much or more than he needed on the way, knowing he could always call them off.

### 13. Monroe Township First Aid Squad Unit 501 Driver

The driver from Monroe Township FAS Unit 501 was interviewed by phone on September 10, 2014. He was asked about his credentials and stated that he was an EMT B and a certified fire fighter in state of NJ, but was not acting in the fire fighter capacity for this event. He was asked to describe how they got dispatched and got to the scene. He responded that he was dispatched by mutual aid for a neighboring EMS agency, and they got there by going through the rest area and took the turnpike authority overpass to access scene.

He was asked to describe his actions on scene, and responded that once they arrived on scene, they grabbed equipment and walked towards a patient who was on the ground. When they arrived there was a paramedic there with the patient and basically introduced them to the patient who they were to transport. The paramedic had already assessed and prepped the patient. He was already collared and boarded. Since he was assessed by the paramedic, and given the nature of the injuries, he did not require a paramedic to ride with them during transport. So after they got there, they did their assessment and loaded the patient up, got him onto a stretcher, put him in the rig, and left. He was asked about what he remembered regarding the patient's condition or injuries. He responded that any of the patient injuries would be given in their report. He knew the patient had some sort of injury involving his left leg or left foot, but he didn't have a lot of time with the patient because he was the driver, so didn't remember specifically what his injuries were.

The driver was asked if he recalled anything about the scene itself or how it was organized or saw any other rescue operations. The driver responded that from what he saw on scene, there was a large presence of emergency vehicles, and regarding the accident vehicles, he only saw the limo and the tractor trailer. He was asked what responders were already on scene, and responded that yes there were multiple agencies on scene, a couple of BLS and one BLS that had already left the scene. The driver was asked about his experience in EMS and

responded that he has been in Ems 9.5 years and has been a fire fighter since 2006, so about 8.5 years. He was asked if he worked alternately as a fire fighter and responded yes, that he works as a volunteer fire fighter in a different town.

#### 14. Monroe Township First Aid Squad Unit 501 Primary EMT

The primary EMT from Monroe Township FAS Unit 501 was interviewed by phone on September 10, 2014. She was asked about the dispatch and what they found on arrival to the scene. She described being dispatched and that upon arrival on scene it was chaotic and didn't really have a clear IC. A paramedic approached and his patient was already packaged and ready, so they loaded the patient and left.

She was asked if they saw other patients or EMS units. She responded that when they arrived, they knew one unit had already taken one patient and they saw another patient that was ready and waiting. She noted that there was no mass communications between the responders because they don't have the same radio frequency. The paramedic gave them their patient and they did what they had to do. She was asked to describe the patient and any injuries. She responded that they transported an African American patient and that he was a BLS patient and did not need paramedic to ride along. She said he had a left ankle injury and a left wrist injury. She was asked if he was conscious and alert and responded yes, that the patient was stable and with left side pain.

The primary EMT was asked about her experience in EMS and responded that she's been an EMT for 3 years, all in NJ. She was asked if there were things she thought could have gone better, or if she had any other comments about the response. She said that the scene needed to be more organized and that there should have been an IC rather than a paramedic controlling scene. She was asked about MCI drills or training and responded that they do basic training that includes information about mass casualty, but has not done any MCI drills. She was asked how many times she has done a mass casualty mutual aid run and responded that this was her first big multiple care incident.

#### 15. Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Paramedic 1 on MR03

Paramedic 1 from RWJUH Unit MR03 was interviewed by phone on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014. He was asked about his position and stated that he is a hospital based career paramedic, medical rescue unit MR03. He was asked how many RWJUH had on scene and said they had 2, because he had requested an additional unit when he got on scene. He was asked to describe the event and noted that they were dispatched to the northbound truck lanes of the New Jersey Turnpike. He thought that the location was in Mercer County, which is the next county over, but the accident was pretty close since the border is not far away. He thought that they were going to assist another ALS from other Mercer County, but dispatch said that they were the only unit going to an accident with 3 reported injured people. He asked dispatch if another ALS had been dispatched and they said no. It took a bit longer to get on scene because they had to go over overpass. A state trooper was in front of them and they backed up to scene.

He was asked when he requested the 2<sup>nd</sup> ALS unit. He said that they got on scene and saw victims on roadway, and he asked the fire chief if there were other victims. The fire chief said there were, and that they were in the bus (van). He began triage and saw that they had more than 3 victims, and then requested another ALS as well as more ambulances, because there was only one BLS on scene. He was asked about his duties on scene. He noted that he was with his partner, and their job is to focus on treatment. He said that their job is not to take command, and there was a fire chief on scene who said he was in command, and there were also EMTs and fire rescue there, so their intended role was treatment. But he said that triage has to be done before treatment to determine who needs the help. He said that despite the fire/rescue responders on scene, triage was not being done. He also noted that they usually do not beat the EMS to the scene and had if there had been triage, he didn't see any evidence of it. He noted that he did not see any triage tags, which you would normally see in a situation like this. There were 2 victims on roadway and more in a vehicle, and didn't know the extent of other vehicles involved or if they also had patients. He was first just trying to determine how many victims there were and determine the extent of their injuries. He noted that he knew there was a medivac on the way, but did not know who requested it.

He was asked about requesting resources and noted that he requested another ALS from RWJUH and also spoke to the IC about the lack of BLS. He said that he got asked the IC where the BLS units were at and found they had not yet been requested. He got into a verbal altercation with the IC over the lack of BLS units and so called in for more BLS resources himself. The paramedic was asked to describe his next actions on scene. He said that when he and his partner got there, they walked past Walmart truck and saw a guy who looked to be the driver of the truck. His partner asked if he was and he said yes, so she asked if he was OK and he said yes. They then went further down to the crowd of people. His partner began assessing a patient on the ground who was combative. There was another patient next to that patient as well. He told his partner that he was going to go look and see how many patients there were. He walked to the windshield area of the van and described that a young man came out with a florescent vest. The paramedic said he saw the IC yell at the young man not to go in there and was to stay in the truck. The young man had been in the van so he asked what was happening in there. The young man said that he didn't know, and that a guy in there looks dead. The paramedic asked the young man what he meant, and asked if he had checked for a pulse. The young man said no, and so the paramedic asked if he could go in and feel for a pulse and let him know who else was in there, because the young man was smaller and could fit into the van. The paramedic as asked if this young man was a fire fighter and responded that he was unsure, but that the IC seemed to know the young man. The paramedic then checked the status for getting the patients out of the van. He found that fire fighters were trying to cut into the back of the van, and were having trouble. At this point the paramedic asked the IC about ambulances, noting that he saw 1 on scene at that time. The paramedic described a discussion with the IC where the IC said he could not snap his fingers and make ambulance appear, the paramedic told

the IC that should have been 4 ambulances here before he even arrived, and now that they had patients on the ground with no place to put them. The paramedic then called his dispatch directly for more resources.

The paramedic was then asked what happened next. He said that he got some EMTs to start handing people out of the van, and said that the person who they said had no pulse did have a pulse. At that point, the other ALS unit showed up, and he turned the treatment of that patient over to them. The paramedic told the arriving paramedics that when he first checked the patient, he had a pulse, but now did not. The arriving paramedics initiated CPR, but ended up pronouncing him on scene. The paramedic was asked about the criteria for pronouncing a patient on scene and responded that a patient who has no pulse and in a triage situation, you have to put your efforts towards the living. He was asked about the what happened next and said that his partner was having trouble with her combative patient and trying to get him secured to the backboard. Then another patient appeared and he asked the EMTs where this patient had come from, and was told that he was in the back of the ambulance, but they pulled him out because others were more severely injured, so they were making room to put them. About this time, 2 additional BLS arrived and they were able to load patients. He said that one ambulance went to the LZ and he went with another patient to the hospital. His partner went with another patient. The paramedic said that scene was especially disorganized even considering that these events are never easy. .

The paramedic was asked if there was only one patient in the ambulance he rode with and said yes. He was asked if the patient was suffering a head injury and said yes, they expected everyone had suffered a head injury as they had symptoms for that. He was asked if he treated the fatality and responded that he did initially feel a pulse right when the patient was taken out, but that one of the others there, an EMT or fire fighter, said that he did not feel a pulse. So he told the responder to CPR, and this was when the ALS showed up. He told the other paramedic that this patient apparently no longer had a pulse, but did a minute ago. He asked the arriving paramedic if he could take over care of this patient and he did. He heard that paramedic say a few minutes later that was nothing on the monitor.

The paramedic was asked if they did an after action report or briefing. He responded on, and that he thought they did not have a debriefing because the event did not involve that many people and said he didn't think the county did one either. He was asked if there were any issues with the transport to the hospital and said no, it was good because it was a straight shot up the turnpike. He said they had a trauma team at the hospital waiting for the patients. He noted that he saw the flight crew at the hospital who had just transported a patient.

The paramedic was asked how long he's been in working in EMS. He said that he started as with first aid and then got his EMT in 1977 and became a paramedic in 1990. He was asked about training and mass casualty drills. He said that he was a supervisor for 8 years and he has set them up in the past, and that they do them because they are a requirement for the hospital. He also said they do computer and table top drills and continuing education, but they were recently talking about how they have not had a real hands on outdoors drill for a while. He said that NJ is strict about requiring MCI training. He was asked if the training ever was cooperative with BLS units. He said the volunteer squads are not regulated, but the hospital has



ALS, BLS and critical transport, but we don't do a lot with the volunteer BLS. He was asked if there was anything we forgot to ask, or any comments he'd like to make. He responded that the investigation should access his patient report, that he described his issues with the response there. He said that it bothered him that there was a fatality that possibly could have been avoided under other circumstances. He was asked to describe any obvious injuries for the fatal patient and didn't remember anything obvious.

16. Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Paramedic 2 on MR03 (rhodes)

Paramedic 2 from RWJUH Unit MR03 was interviewed by phone on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014. She was asked about her position and stated that she is a hospital based career paramedic on MR03. She was asked to describe what she remembered about the incident. She stated that they were stationed at Monroe FAS and were dispatched to the scene. She noted that they have a SUV, and accessed through the police barracks. She said that several medic units are spread out in the county at FAS, and they were housed in Monroe with BLS units. She said the BLS units did not get toned out, that they run on a separate system. She described that their dispatch system is joined with a mapping system and a touch book connected to the internet. The notes from the CAD indicated they had 3 entrapped patients on scene. She said they were a boundary unit. Knowing that the BLS did not get dispatched, and being on the border, she figured they were probably the second ALS dispatched because there were 3 entrapped patients. She said they got to the scene pretty quickly.

She said that once on scene, she grabbed her primary equipment, and they walked toward scene and saw a tractor trailer in a barrier. They saw the driver standing next to his truck, and he was fine. She said there were floodlights and walking wounded unattended. She saw a van with 9 to 10 fire fighters there working on it. She saw a man on a backboard with a scared young man standing next to him with a bright yellow shirt. She said the young man was frantic. There was another victim on the ground and so she approached the first patient. Her partner said that he's going up to see what's going on, and she lost track of him for quite a while, for about 5 to 7 minutes. She described being by herself, with a combative male with no help and no equipment, no c-spine. There were several responders around with vests on, so she grabbed one and asked him for help with her patient. She described fire fighters pulling people out of the van, putting them on backboards and sliding them out of the way. She said that the fire fighter started helping her, but then someone said that they needed him over at the van and took him away from helping her. They pulled another guy out of the van who was much worse and put him next to the other two. She said she was trying to hold a manual C-spine on one while trying to calm down the other at the same time. At that point the IC approached and asked where the ambulances were. She responded that she didn't understand how she could have been sent to the scene a while ago knowing there were at least 3 entrapped patients and now there were still not 3 ambulances on scene. She asked him to get some ambulances. She saw her partner discussing the issue with the IC.

She was frustrated that there were so many wounded and several state troopers and other responders not doing much. She told a trooper to attend to a victim that needed to be secured. She told her partner that she needs equipment and that the patients need to be intubated. He responded that he's trying to get more ambulances on scene. She looked again and saw an unattended patient on a backboard and on a stretcher in an elevated position lying next to the center divider. So she grabbed a responder and told him to help get these people secured. Her and her partner discussed that there were patients that needed to be intubated, but did not have equipment. She learned later that there was another patient in the one ambulances that she did not know about, and found out when they took him out of the ambulance to put her more serious patient in that ambulance. The two additional medics came about the time that the last guy was pulled out from the van. They attended to him and determined that he was a fatality. They then came over and helped C-spine the other patients. She recommended that her most serious patient be air transported along with the first patient to arrive in the landing zone. She heard later that the first patient to the landing zone arrived in disarray and that due to the work required to prepare him for transport, that they did not want to take 2 patients in the helicopter, and that patient was sent by ground. She transferred patient care for her patient (the second one she attended) to the two ALS and went back to her initial patient and went with him to the hospital.

She was asked how long have she has been in EMS and responded that she was a EMT in California for 6 years and went to paramedic school in CA and then moved out to NJ and got a job with RWJUH, and has been a paramedic there for 15 years. She was asked about what she noticed different in the two systems (California versus New Jersey). She commented that the biggest difference was the volunteer system. She felt there was a lot more centralized training out in the field in California. She felt like the system in New Jersey is not as connected and the volunteers don't have the call volume and training. She said that training and drills happen, but it doesn't incorporate the paid with the volunteer. She said that not having integrated training makes no sense because that's who they are working with on the roadway.

#### 17. Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Paramedic 1 on MR06

Paramedic 1 from RWJUH Unit MR06 was interviewed by phone on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The paramedic was asked about how he got dispatched and what occurred on scene. He said that he got dispatched around 2 am by the hospital CAD system because their first ALS unit on scene had requested additional help. He was stationed in South Brunswick. As they were arriving on scene he saw one BLS ambulance leaving the scene, presumably going to the landing zone for the helicopter. They approached the scene and saw the vehicles, responders, and the other paramedics, and no other ambulances. The first thing they did was ask the other paramedics how many patients there were, and if there were any other ambulances. They were told that there were no other EMTs available at the time. We saw one paramedic trying to hold down 2 patients on backboards, another patient on a backboard, and another who was not on a

backboard, and told that he was a black tag in cardiac arrest. He then called in for another ambulance. He was not sure if or who from Mercer County had called for more BLS. One of the paramedics on scene then asked if he could attend the black tag, and he did while his partner went to another patient. He went to that patient and found a responder next to him. He asked the responder if the patient was dead or alive and the responder was not sure. The paramedic checked for a manual pulse and found none, he then put the patient on the monitor and got a flat line. At that time there were no other transport means and no EMT's on scene, so he pronounced the patient deceased.

He then went to attend to a live victim that was in an ambulance. They initially took that patient to the LZ and waited for the helicopter, and the ETA was another 10 min, so they decided to go by ground to the hospital. He was asked about the condition of the patient and said that the patient appeared to have a head injury, was agitated and just saying something over and over again. He would not answer any questions or follow any commands, and would not keep his hands down. He believed this was the patient that the woman paramedic had been trying to secure. This patient was Caucasian. He was asked about the decisions of how to transport. He said that they just decided among the ALS who were there, that there was not an established EMS command.

The paramedic was asked about his experience as an EMT and training. He said that he has been an EMT/paramedic 7 years, all in New Jersey. He said that there is command system training to keep up the certification, but that he's not been on a mass casualty drill for several years. He said that there is no cooperative training with the BLS. He was asked about any issues or concerns. He said that a problem is that the fire/BLS dispatch is separate from the ALS dispatch. He had heard that the first ALS were trying to get more ambulances on scene, but when he called his dispatch, they were still unaware that more BLS was needed. He was confused about why he needed to ask for more because there were several agencies there for probably 15 minutes prior. He said that he asked for BLS units from Monroe because they are a paid service and he knows that they will come out.