



## **Survival Factors Attachment 12**

### **Victim Interviews**

**Cranbury, NJ  
HWY14MH012**

(6 Pages)

1. Driver of the Mercedes Sprinter, Male, Age 44

**a. Police Statement**

The driver made a statement to the New Jersey State Police on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The statement was reviewed, and the points pertinent to the survival factors investigation were that he noted that he kicked out the window to help the passengers. He also stated that he and others were able to rip the divider apart and people helped get two victims out.

**b. Interview with Motor Carrier Investigator**

The NTSB Motor Carrier Group investigator interviewed the driver on June 11, 2014. The points pertinent to the survival factors investigation were as follows. The driver stated that he was wearing his seatbelt, and the driver stated that he did not conduct a safety briefing. The driver was asked how he was sitting in the vehicle just prior to impact. He stated that he was sitting up straight because he was looking up at the vehicles in front of him. He was asked about the locations of the passengers. He noted that based on the last time they stopped, which was 15 to 20 minutes prior to the accident, that the 46 year old male was sitting at the door, he was behind the front seat passenger, back to back. He believed that the 45 year old male was behind him (driver) back to back. He thought that facing the 45 year old male was the 37 year old male. He drew a diagram and said he was not sure of was the location of the 62 year old male who was fatally injured. He thought that the 62 year old male and the 35 year old male were in the two seats just forward of the sofa. He said no one was on the sofa, and it had had a lot of clothing on it. He stated that he was pretty sure the two in the most forward seats never moved based on the conversation they were having.

He described the trip up to the point of getting hit by the truck. He said it felt like hitting a bomb or something. He described reaching up and trying to figure out which way was up or down. He said there was a lot of smoke, and he thought they might be on fire. He said that he started to panic and took his seat belt off. He heard the other front seat passenger next to him rustling around. He broke out the window and helped the front seat passenger out. He noticed that the vehicle was on its side. He ran around the vehicle and saw fluid leaking but no flames. He heard screaming inside and climbed into the limobus. He climbed up onto the bus and tried to get the door open but could not. He yelled to the other front passenger to hit the door unlock button. He described that the emergency window was blown out, so he went back to this window and asked someone to give him a phone with a flashlight. Someone handed him a small light and he looked in the limobus, but everyone inside was down at the bottom and too far away, out of reach. He said he had glass all over him. He could not reach anyone and thought that he might further injure someone by trying to pull them out of this hole. The front seat passenger suggested getting to the passengers through the divider. They went through the space where the windshield was (the window he broke out), and attempted to get through the divider, but were unable. Someone came up with an axe, and they worked on the divider, and broke some of it away, but were only able to make a small hole.

Then a large man came over to help. The driver backed off because his hands were hurting. He saw the man and the front seat passenger pull passenger the 45 year old man out of the vehicle.

He saw facial and leg injuries on this passenger. The passenger was partially unconscious and he thought that a woman helping was a nurse. He said she told them to keep calling his name.

Others were still working on gaining better access to the back of the limobus and he wondered where the first responders were at. He then saw another back passenger, the 37 year old male, exit the limo bus and lay down. He had no obvious injuries. He then saw the other victim (the 45 year old male) shaking, and saw others go to help him, and believed there were now first responders on scene.

He saw the EMT's go the vehicle and start to look for access. He told them which area was not accessible due to a wall blocking the way and bench seat and a refrigerator under the seat. The responders said they were going to cut it to gain access. He stated that he knew that even after cutting the doors off the back, there was still a wall blocking access. He and others remained up at the front. Responders then came up to the front with cutting equipment and gained better access through the front. He sees another passenger, the 46 year old male, come out, and sees that they were holding a compress to the back of his head, and was relieved to see that the passenger was moving. Then he saw another passenger come out (the 35 year old male), and saw that this passenger's arm was injured. He thought he saw a compound fracture.

He saw the responders go back into the vehicle. He then saw the responders take out another passenger (the 62 year old male), and does not see this passenger moving. He sees that he had a neck injury and hopes that like the other passenger (the 45 year old male), that this passenger will come around to consciousness. He saw the first responder put a mask on passenger this passenger, and then saw blood come out of his mouth. He saw that this passenger had not moved and realized that he may be deceased.

The driver was asked if he was injured in the accident. He indicated that he was limping and sustained some cuts and bruises. He was asked if he was transported to the hospital and responded no. He indicated that he was checked on and then taken to the police station. At the police station he was looking to use a phone, and not finding one inside, went outside. He believed the police thought he was a bystander rather than one of the drivers involved in the accident. He told an officer that he was the driver of the limo. The officer asked if anyone had checked on him and he said no. The officer sent him back inside, he used a phone, and then an EMT comes in to check on him and the front seat passenger. He said that the EMT found glass and debris in his hair, cuts on his hands, and that he was limping. He also indicated that the back of his calf was sore.

### **c. Follow Up Interview by Survival Factors Investigator**

The NTSB Survival Factors Investigator conducted a follow up interview on July 21, 2014.. He was asked to describe what he remembered in more detail. He described climbing on top and trying a door, which was the sliding side door. He was asked what he meant by what he previously described an emergency window. He said this was the aft window on the passenger side. He was asked to describe the forward divider. He said it had a small opening, maybe 6 inches high. He said it was difficult to break through it. He said that because it was dark and the limobus was on its side made it very hard. He was asked about fabric at the divider, but did not recall seeing it. He was asked about the person who came with the axe and said this was not a first responder, it was another motorist. He described the axe as small, with a handle like a

hammer, maybe 8 inches long. He said it was just an axe or hatchet from someone's car, not a fire fighter's axe, and said that there were no responders there at the time.

He was asked to describe the man who came to help get people out. He said this was a large Latino man and that he was a big help in breaking through the divider. He thought the Latino man was from the Nissan that was involved in the accident.

The driver was asked to describe how he and the others got out. He said that the 45 year old male was lifted out first. He described him as moving, but dazed. There were cuts and blood around his eyes. He could see his eyes moving around under the eyelids, and someone said he was in shock. The driver said that the 37 year old male climbed out second. The driver said that this man may have had help from the inside but was mobile on his own. The EMT's then arrived. At first they went to the back of the limobus, even though they were urging the responders to access the van from the front, telling them that the back was not accessible. An EMT climbed into the back (through the forward divider) and the 46 year old male was brought out. Then he believed that the 35 year old male was brought out. He said that the 62 year old male was the last to come out.

He was asked to describe how they got them out and what treatment they received upon getting out. He said he was not entirely sure regarding the 46 year old and the 35 year old, because he was not right at the front of the van. After they were taken out, he remembers them on stretchers and maybe backboards on top of the stretchers, he was not sure. When asked if there was a victim sitting on the ground he indicated that it was probably him, the co-driver, or maybe the 37 year old male. At one point he remembered the 37 year old sitting next to the vehicle. When they took out the 62 year old, he remembered him on a backboard, and after they pulled him out, an EMT put a pump mask on him and blood coming out of his mouth. He did not remember seeing signs of movement or life. He said that the EMT's worked on him a bit and then shook their heads no, and brought out a blanket to cover him from onlookers.

He was asked to describe the tool that the EMT's used to cut through the divider. He was not sure what it was, but said that it cut the whole window out and made the access easy. He was asked about his statement that he saw a compress being held to someone's head. He said that it was an EMT holding a compress to the back of the 46 year old male's head. He was asked about his treatment at scene. Initially he told the police who he was and about the passengers in the van. He and the co-driver were not checked on at the scene and it appeared that the responders did not know he was in an accident vehicle. Later he was taken to the police barracks in a police car and after they discovered that he was involved in the accident (as described in the Motor Carrier Investigator's interview), he was checked on by an EMT. He was asked about his statement about a sore calf. He said that it was injured in the accident, and that he didn't notice it much at first, but his leg got stiffer and sore as time went on. He said he was limping at the scene.

## 2. Driver and Passenger of the 2011 Buick Enclave

The driver and passenger of the Buick Enclave were interviewed by phone on June 12, 2014. The driver and passenger provided their dates of birth and approximate height and weight. They were asked how they were seated at the time of the crash. The passenger said he was sleeping, reclined in the passenger front seat, with the seat down maybe 20 to 30 degrees from normal. The driver was sitting in the driver seat in a normal position. The driver noted that the vehicle was stopped at time of the accident. They were asked if they were wearing seatbelts at the time of the crash. Both indicated that they were.

They were asked to describe what they remembered about the accident. The passenger said he was sleeping, and was woken up by a loud bang. He could smell the residue of the airbag and see the airbag. He yelled to his wife, asking what happened. They both exited the vehicle and saw the overturned limo bus right next to their car. They checked to make sure they were OK. Then they heard people in limo bus moaning. The passenger went over to try and get them out. He said that a man from the limo bus and he ripped out the windshield of the limo bus and tried to get through to the back. They were not able, so he went to the top (passenger side) of the overturned limo bus. He was able to get on top by straddling the Buick and the limo bus and climb up. He said there was another man on top as well, described as a younger, heavy set Hispanic male. They went to a small window near the back, and found it too crushed to access the interior. He said that he could not see anyone at that location in the limo bus. He was told that someone pulled a TV out of the bus, and was told that a couple of people were pulled out before the first responders arrived.

The Buick driver indicated that the limo bus driver and someone else kicked out the partition and pulled people out. They were carried out by holding them under the arms and were put on the ground. She described the people taken out of the limo bus as two African American males, one was tall and skinny with badly broken legs, the right leg in particular. The other was sitting with his legs pulled up. Both were late 30's to early 40's. She thought that the tall man was the comic from Jersey City based on news reports she saw after the crash. She saw another man who had been in the back of the van walking around and appeared dazed, like he was in shock. She did not see how he got out. She noted putting a bandage on the finger of the limo bus front seat passenger (co-driver). She did not recall which hand.

They were asked how they had any difficulty getting out of the vehicle, if they were injured or treated on the scene, and if they knew what caused their injuries. The passenger noted that his door was damaged, but was able to get it open enough to exit. He described his injuries as neck pain and whiplash, but nothing major. He noted that something hit him on the right bottom side, just above waistline, back-side, near kidney. He described it as an internal soreness, with nothing visible. The driver noted that she was sore in general, with neck and lower back pain. She also indicated that her shoulder was in pain, possibly where the seatbelt was in contact. She went to the doctor two days later for a check up. They both said they did not require treatment at the scene and taken to the police station.

### 3. Driver of the 2005 Nissan Altima, Male, Age 28

#### **a. Police Statement**

In his statement to the New Jersey State Police on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014, he stated that he ran back to the limobus and saw people trying to get into the vehicle. He climbed to the top side of the overturned limobus and tried to get in, but could not fit through the window. He started pulling stuff out of the window so he could get in. He then used a knife to cut a seat belt. He said that he got into the limo bus and helped get 2 people out with help from the limobus driver. He then stayed in the car for about 10 minutes, and spoke to two of them, and tried to keep them calm. He was then told to get out because first responders were going to cut the back of the limobus.

#### **b. NTSB Survival Factors Investigator Interview**

The Nissan driver was interviewed by phone on July 22, 2014. At the start of the interview he stated that his cell phone may run out of batteries. He was asked to describe what happened. He described that he went to the top of the limobus and moved some debris from the window, then called for a knife to cut the seatbelt which was blocking access. He cut the belt and then was able to crawl in. He was the first person to get into the limobus after the crash, and the only civilian inside prior to the first responders. When he got into the limobus, he was a black man lying on his back, not moving. He heard people moaning and calling for help. Then further towards the front, he saw a black man standing, leaning up against the car, coughing blood, near the window that the driver was trying to open into the cab. He thought that the man standing there was the guy from Jersey City. He moved some things out of the way and carried the man a few steps, through the opening into the cab, and handed his upper body to people at the windshield. He thought it was the driver on the other side. He helped pass the man's legs through the windshield and returned to the back of the limobus. In the back he saw a man underneath another black man who was laying face down, not moving or talking. The man underneath was saying "help me, get (the 46 year old male) off me, I can't breath". He flipped the 46 year old male over and moved him to the side. The Nissan driver was asked if the 46 year old male was unconscious, and responded that he thought he was. He didn't see him moving or talking, so thought he was dead. The man underneath had a broken arm, so he helped him up with the other arm and helped limp out. At this point in the interview, the phone went dead. The driver was contacted later, but didn't recall more information.