



Survival Factors Emergency Response and Communications
Attachment 7 : Interview with Deputy Director of JBLM's
Directorate of Emergency Services

DuPont, Washington

RRD18MR001

(11 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of:

*

*

AMTRAK DERAILMENT IN DUPONT,

*

WASHINGTON ON DECEMBER 18, 2017

*

Accident No.: RRD18MR001

*

* * * * *

Interview of: TED SOLONAR
Deputy Director
JBLM Services

Via Telephone

Thursday,
April 5, 2018

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Ted Solonar:		
By Ms. Harley		4

I N T E R V I E W

(1:02 p.m.)

1
2
3 MS. HARLEY: Today is Thursday, April the 5th 2018. It's
4 1:02 p.m., and I'm returning the call of Director Solonar from the
5 Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Dupont, Washington in regards to the
6 incident involving the Amtrak train derailment in Dupont,
7 Washington on December the 18th of 2017.

8 The number I'm calling back will be [REDACTED].

9 MR. SOLONAR: Director of Emergency Services, Ted Solonar.

10 MS. HARLEY: Yes, sir, how are you? This is Sheryl Harley
11 from the NTSB, sir.

12 MR. SOLONAR: Good morning, ma'am. How are you?

13 MS. HARLEY: I'm very, very sorry. I saw you called right on
14 time, and I, of course, was late.

15 MR. SOLONAR: You know, as a fellow government employee, I
16 firmly understand how that works. So what can I do for you,
17 ma'am?

INTERVIEW OF TED SOLONAR

18
19 BY MS. HARLEY:

20 Q. So, okay, let me explain why I'm calling and what I need. So
21 one of the things I was looking at was the arrangement that JBLM
22 personnel have with Pierce County as far as responding off-base
23 and being a part of the emergency response for Pierce County.

24 A. Sure.

25 Q. And one of the things I was looking at was how the agreement

1 was brought about and exactly how does it function?

2 A. Okay.

3 Q. Because one of the questions that I had was that the Pierce
4 County Fire Department, it can't actually communicate with JBLM
5 Fire Department on fire department channels.

6 A. Well, yes and no, but I can elaborate on what we're doing to
7 solve that problem.

8 Q. Great, I tell you what, why don't you go ahead and I'll stop
9 talking.

10 A. Okay, so let me kind of shape this whole thing just to kind
11 of frame it. The place where the accident occurred, that freeway
12 is actually joint jurisdiction between the state and the federal
13 government. So that kind of shapes that conversation. We have
14 actual authority to respond out there, whether it's law
15 enforcement or fire.

16 Now that said, we have a mutual aid agreement with multiple
17 jurisdictions for fire response and support between the federal
18 government, the state, and local entities where we can roll out to
19 their areas, whether it's Dupont, rural Pierce County, parts of
20 Thurston County, and they, in turn, can roll fire apparatus and
21 rescue equipment onto the installation in kind of an exchange. So
22 we do that rather routinely.

23 The communications aspect, you're correct at this specific
24 moment in time. The DoD is capped where we can operate from a
25 frequency standpoint under the FCC at 450 megahertz. The local

1 agencies all run 700 or 800 megahertz, and so the interoperability
2 between the current radio system makes that problematic.

3 Now let's fast forward to today. What I'm doing to resolve
4 that issue, and we're not quite there yet but we're very, very
5 close. In the last 2 years we started bringing on board the
6 Motorola APX 8000 radio, which is what they call -- I don't know
7 how familiar you are with radios. I don't want to insult your
8 intelligence. But it's a tri-band radio that allows us to not
9 only have the 450 megahertz frequencies, which we are required to
10 have for operating as a DoD entity, but I can also put the 700,
11 800 megahertz frequencies on that radio. And we're working in a
12 joint agreement with Pierce County currently to program those
13 radios. Once that's done -- and I expect that to be done
14 relatively quickly, within the next few months.

15 Q. Great.

16 A. When my firefighters roll out on a mutual aid call, they
17 simply flip over to the local fire frequencies and they're talking
18 on the same radio system now. So it resolves the issue long-term.

19 Q. Great. So that's actually pretty good, because I know
20 that -- first of all, let me explain. The operation really is no
21 issue, you got the stuff, you got it done, and that was amazing.
22 It was just one of the questions that several of the fire
23 departments had had --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- about communications and being able to communicate. So

1 you're actually working on that right now?

2 A. We are, I have APX 8000 radios, not enough for the entire
3 organization, so the Army's -- we're doing what they call
4 lifecycle replacement. They're replacing them, you know, sections
5 at a time. So we're working on the radios now.

6 The other thing that we do because we know we have these
7 radio communications challenges, when we establish unified command
8 with another agency, which is what my battalion chief did when he
9 arrived on scene, we bring that primary leader from that agency,
10 and we basically climb in the same vehicle together.

11 So, and I do this on the law enforcement side of the house as
12 well. So we're all sitting in the same vehicle together. I may
13 not be able to call you on your radio, but you can call your
14 people, and you and I are sitting face to face as a way to kind of
15 bridge that, and that's what they were doing on the ground that
16 day.

17 Q. Yes. And absolutely, and that was one of the things that the
18 chiefs did say that they were actually face to face so they could
19 see and talk to one another.

20 A. Yeah, that's fundamental in our incident management training
21 with at least my leaders and I'm certain OPUS (ph.) does the same
22 thing as -- you know, when you run an incident get the leaders in
23 one place at one time and get them talking.

24 Q. Yeah, great. And one of the things that we had talked, that
25 I was talking to them about, and I know that they had at one

1 point, I guess during a drill a couple of weeks before this
2 incident, had tried to see if they could patch the radios, which a
3 lot of agencies do and have a --

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. -- yeah, kind of varied success with that.

6 A. Yeah. Patching -- and you're right, and that's exactly a
7 true statement. You know, we have the ability, but the success
8 rate hasn't been stellar. And I don't know if it's a frequency
9 issue, but even the outpost agencies patching just doesn't seem to
10 be great. The whole South Sound 911 communications construct was
11 partially designed to eliminate the need to do that, and so we're
12 about to tie into that so that we don't have to play with it
13 either.

14 Q. Great. Awesome. Well, actually that was the question I
15 have, and clearly, you guys have got it all in hand and don't have
16 any issues.

17 A. I am blessed with some of the best professionals in the
18 business, and it makes my job pretty easy.

19 Q. Well, again, congratulations. You guys did a great job --

20 A. Thank you.

21 Q. -- and like I said, this was just one of the questions that
22 had come up --

23 A. Sure.

24 Q. -- from a couple of the fire chiefs from the various agencies
25 about trying to get communications.

1 A. Right.

2 Q. The other question is that one of the fire guys from JBLM had
3 brought up you guys don't have a repeater on this southern portion
4 of your base. Is that something that is ultimately is going to be
5 taken care of by basically having these radios?

6 A. So, yes, it will. So as I get further south, I cross county
7 lines.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. And so he is correct in the sense that I don't have a
10 repeater currently down there that will do that using -- being
11 able to use his radio system. Once we do a mutual aid response
12 call and we switch to the 700 megahertz, all that basically goes
13 away because we're all able to patch and communicate on the same
14 frequency.

15 Q. Great. Okay. All right.

16 A. Anything else I can do for you?

17 Q. You know what, sir, you absolutely did everything I needed.

18 A. Great.

19 Q. Thank you very much for contacting me.

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. And you have a wonderful day, sir.

22 A. You too. If you need anything else, give me a call.

23 Q. Thank you, sir. Bye-bye.

24 A. All right, bye-bye.

25 (Whereupon, at 1:11 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

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


IN THE MATTER OF: AMTRAK DERAILMENT IN DUPONT,
WASHINGTON ON DECEMBER 18, 2017
Interview of Ted Solonar

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD18MR001

PLACE: Via Telephone

DATE: April 5, 2018

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.


Nancy Sackett
Transcriber