



HUMAN PERFORMANCE FACTORS ATTACHMENT

FedEx Driver Interview Transcript

HWY20MH002

(42 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

MULTIVEHICLE CRASH ON I-70 WESTBOUND *
NEAR MOUNT PLEASANT, PENNSYLVANIA, *
ON JANUARY 5, 2020 *

Accident No.: HWY20MH002

* * * * *

Interview of: BRANDON STOWERS
FedEx Truck Driver

Pennsylvania Turnpike Headquarters
New Stanton, Pennsylvania

Tuesday,
January 7, 2020

APPEARANCES:

SHAWN CURRIE, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

JULIE KANG, Project Manager
National Transportation Safety Board

KENNETH BRAGG, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

RYAN SMITH, Project Manager
National Transportation Safety Board

BOB DAPPER, Attorney
Burns White, LLC

ROBERT LEIGHT, Attorney
Spilman Thomas & Battle, PLLC
(On behalf of Mr. Stowers)

MICHAEL SEAR, Safety Support Specialist
FedEx Ground

THAD WARNICK, Sergeant
New Stanton Station

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I N T E R V I E W

(12:00 p.m.)

1
2
3 MR. CURRIE: Okay. It is January 7, 2020, and it's
4 approximately noontime and we're in New Stanton, Pennsylvania, at
5 the Turnpike headquarters. And my name is Shawn, S-h-a-w-n,
6 Currie, C-u-r-r-i-e, and I'm conducting an investigation of a
7 motor coach commercial vehicle crash that occurred on the
8 Pennsylvania Turnpike on January 5 at about 3:30 in the morning,
9 Eastern Time. We're going to interview the driver, Mr. Stowers --

10 MR. STOWERS: Stowers.

11 MR. CURRIE: -- Stowers, who was operating a vehicle that --
12 the carrier was Federal Express. Mr. Stowers, can you state and
13 spell your name for me please?

14 MR. STOWERS: Brandon, B-r-a-n-d-o-n, Stowers, S-t-o-w-e-r-s.

15 MR. DAPPER: My name is Bob Dapper. I'm the attorney for
16 FedEx Ground, Sioux Trucking and Mr. Stowers.

17 MR. CURRIE: Can you spell your name, please?

18 MR. DAPPER: Yes, it's D-a-p-p-e-r.

19 MR. SEAR: Good morning. Michael Sear, S-e-a-r. I'm a
20 safety specialist with FedEx Ground out of their corporate
21 headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

22 MR. LEIGHT: My name is Robert Leight. I am private counsel
23 to Mr. Stowers.

24 MS. KANG: Julie Kang, NTSB, project manager for this crash.
25 Last name Kang, K-a-n-g.

1 MR. BRAGG: My name is Kenneth Bragg, B-r-a-g-g. I'm a human
2 performance investigator for this crash.

3 MR. WARNICK: My name is Thad Warnick. I'm the Sergeant at
4 New Stanton, Station Commander, and my last name is W-a-r-n-i-c-k.

5 MR. CURRIE: Thank you.

6 INTERVIEW OF BRANDON STOWERS

7 BY MR. CURRIE:

8 Q. Brandon, can I get your date of birth, please?

9 A. [REDACTED]

10 Q. And how old are you?

11 A. Thirty-five.

12 Q. And where do you live?

13 A. Hemet, California.

14 Q. Can you spell it?

15 A. Yeah. H-e-m-e-t.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. California.

18 Q. And what's your street address?

19 A. [REDACTED].

20 Q. Is that a house or apartment?

21 A. House.

22 Q. Okay. And you're a driver for Sioux Trucking?

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. Okay. How long have you worked there?

25 A. Roughly a year and a half.

1 Q. And how long have you had a CDL?

2 A. A long time. I don't remember exactly how long.

3 Q. Ten years?

4 A. Roughly, yeah. About 10 years.

5 Q. Where have you worked other than Sioux?

6 A. Snyder, National, Covenant, Hemet Unified School District,
7 and Soboba. I can't remember the rest right now.

8 Q. Okay. Was it a trucking company or a bus company?

9 A. Bus company.

10 Q. And school bus or --

11 A. Yeah, school bus. Correct.

12 Q. Was that kind of where you started driving?

13 A. No.

14 Q. No?

15 A. It was truck driving first.

16 Q. Okay. Do you remember how you got your CDL? Did you go to
17 CDL school?

18 A. I did.

19 Q. Okay. Do you remember where?

20 A. It was called United States Truck Driving School located in
21 Rialto, California. They no longer exist.

22 Q. Okay. And how long was your school year by the way?

23 A. I believe 2 months. I'm not accurate on that.

24 Q. Okay. No worries. After that who did you -- what did you
25 do? Did you go on to work for a company or --

1 A. Yeah, I worked for a company. I believe it was Covenant
2 Transport.

3 Q. Okay. And what did you do for Covenant?

4 A. Over-the-road.

5 Q. All over or --

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Okay. And do you remember how long, approximately, you
8 worked for Covenant?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. I believe it was less than a year.

12 Q. Okay. And why did you leave Covenant? Do you remember?

13 A. It was a bad place.

14 Q. Bad place. I'm good with that.

15 A. Right.

16 Q. And after there where did you go?

17 A. I believe I went to Snyder. I'm not really sure.

18 Q. Okay. And do you remember how long you worked for them?

19 A. I don't remember exactly how long.

20 Q. Okay. And then after Snyder?

21 A. The school bus driving.

22 Q. Was that just taking a break from over-the-road or --

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Okay. And then you said you've been with Sioux for about a
25 year and a half.

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. Okay. So a year and a half --

3 A. It'll be 2 years May 5.

4 Q. Oh, okay. So there we go. May of, like, 2018 you started.
5 Ish.

6 A. Possibly.

7 Q. Okay. Do you remember how you got the job, the hiring
8 process or how you applied?

9 A. Yeah, I actually applied for a online job fair. I believe
10 that's what it is. Sierra called me and asked me if I would like
11 a job with her company, and I said yes.

12 Q. Okay. And that would be with Sioux.

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. Can you explain your hiring process?

15 A. I know it was interview, road test, background check,
16 fingerprinting, drug test, all sorts of everything else in the
17 middle.

18 Q. And do you work a dedicated run?

19 A. We switch runs. We're not on any given run for a long period
20 of time.

21 Q. How long have you been on this run?

22 A. Just this week.

23 Q. Okay. This is your first --

24 A. I've been here previously over the year and a half, but I
25 haven't done this run in quite some time.

1 Q. Okay. So in the year and a half, you've come from Rialto to
2 Woodbridge before.

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. Okay. Can you estimate how many times? Just ballpark it for
5 me: ten, 20 --

6 A. Less than a dozen times.

7 Q. Okay. Are you familiar with the route?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Pretty much.

11 Q. And it's always the same way, right?

12 A. Yeah. Yeah.

13 Q. All right. How many times have you driven this truck?

14 A. Oh, gosh --

15 Q. Do you always have the same truck? I should probably ask
16 that first.

17 A. I did when I -- when the other driver left I took over his --
18 and this is the truck I got.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. It was broke down for a while. It had a issue with the
21 exhaust, but that got fixed and I got it back.

22 Q. Okay. So how long has this been your primary truck?

23 A. Oh, man.

24 Q. Like I said, you can just ballpark it for me.

25 A. Roughly 2 months.

- 1 Q. Two months?
- 2 A. Yeah.
- 3 Q. And that's 2 months since it's come out of the shop or
4 included in that 2 months?
- 5 A. Included.
- 6 Q. Okay. So how long has it been out of the shop?
- 7 A. About 2 weeks I believe.
- 8 Q. Okay. And in that 2 weeks, what have you done with it?
- 9 A. Drove.
- 10 Q. Yeah. Where have you gone?
- 11 A. I went to Colorado.
- 12 Q. Okay.
- 13 A. And back to Rialto and Jersey and back.
- 14 Q. Okay.
- 15 A. Or Jersey and here, sorry.
- 16 Q. So any issues with the truck?
- 17 A. No.
- 18 Q. No. Everything works?
- 19 A. Perfect.
- 20 Q. Okay. What year is it?
- 21 A. I don't know.
- 22 Q. Okay. Do you know how many -- about how many miles on it?
- 23 A. Yeah, I have 460,000 miles on it.
- 24 Q. Okay. So it's not that old.
- 25 A. No, it's not. It's still a baby. It's just breaking it in.

1 That's what they call it.

2 Q. Okay. So this trip started in Rialto.

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. And came out to Woodbridge.

5 A. Correct.

6 Q. And then made it as far as here.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Can you go back from leaving Rialto, just go through the
9 steps of where you went and what you did?

10 A. I can.

11 Q. And tell me the story.

12 A. Sure. We arrived in Rialto. We tried to get our load; they
13 didn't have it. They gave us an empty to go to Los Angeles. I
14 think it -- I don't remember the town. You know, the small towns
15 and a big city. We had to pick up a loaded trailer that -- this
16 was on Nathan's time but I had to watch him to make sure he did
17 everything okay. So he dropped the empty, picked up the loaded,
18 which was great. We took off from Rialto. I went to sleep. We
19 switch in Courtside, Arizona. I gave him that as a reference for
20 a switching point. I don't remember if he fueled or not. I don't
21 care.

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. We switched. I proceeded to drive. I took my half an hour
24 break before my 8 hours. We switched in -- hold on please.

25 Q. Yep.

1 A. We switched back in -- oh, man. I'm trying to think of the
2 town. I know that town; it's a weird name.

3 Q. How about the state? I can work with that.

4 A. Yeah, New Mexico.

5 Q. Okay. And so you drove to this town in New Mexico.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Then his turn?

8 A. Yeah. Correct.

9 Q. And then where did you start after that?

10 A. Springfield, Illinois.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Or Ohio? Springfield --

13 Q. Springfield, we'll go with that.

14 A. Okay. Springfield. It's on my logs.

15 Q. Yeah. It all is, and I don't expect you to remember the
16 exact spots but if you know, you know. If you don't, you --

17 A. Yeah. Tucumcari, New Mexico. That's where we switched.

18 Sorry.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Because I remember getting Arby's there.

21 Q. Oh, there you go. So you keep switching back and forth.

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. And when you're in the sleeper, he's driving.

24 A. Right.

25 Q. How do you sleep in the sleeper?

1 A. Good.

2 Q. Yeah. No issues?

3 A. No.

4 Q. No. Are you one of those guys that goes in the sleeper and
5 sleeps or are you messing with your phone, watching TV?

6 A. I mess with my phone. I take one sleeping pill before bed.
7 It helps me relax and calm down.

8 Q. Okay. We'll get back to that in a little bit.

9 A. Sure.

10 Q. So you guys go to Woodbridge.

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. And drop it up there.

13 A. Uh-huh.

14 Q. Who does that?

15 A. He drops. I believe he had hooked and then we switched.

16 Q. Okay. So let's stop from there because that should be fairly
17 correct. Right?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. So now you guys tagged out there in Woodbridge and he's
20 dropped. You switched. You're coming on to -- go through from
21 that point until the crash point, if you can.

22 A. Sure. I went on duty. I got in the driver's seat. Well, I
23 went on duty and I did my pre-trip. Everything was fine. It was
24 a empty trailer, made sure it was empty. Report was fine. Tires
25 were fine. Some time passed. I got into the driver's seat and

1 took off. Went to -- oh, man. What's that town? It's a town, I
2 have it on the paperwork, 7 miles away and it's a little, small --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Hutchins. They call it the Hutchins Hub. That's where we
5 had to pick up our loaded trailer.

6 Q. Okay. So you swapped trailers at Hutchins?

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. And what did you do then?

9 A. I went on duty, did my post-trip, dropped the trailer, went
10 up to the line hub to get my paperwork. I grabbed the paperwork
11 and then I went and grabbed the trailer. I pre-tripped it, found
12 out there was no registration card in it. I went back inside to
13 get it, and they said it would have to wait about 10 minutes. At
14 first he told me he would have to look and see if he had it. I
15 said, no, you've got to call the company and get it faxed for me
16 now. So he did, and he got it to me. I made sure it was correct
17 with the trailer. I put it in the pouch in the back of the
18 trailer. I got done with that and I proceeded out.

19 Q. Okay. So when you left Hutchins, what route do you take or
20 what route did you take? Do you know the routes or you rely on a
21 GPS or how do you do it?

22 A. I rely on a GPS.

23 Q. Okay. Do you remember what route your GPS took you?

24 A. I don't remember exactly the numbers of the route.

25 Q. Okay. But somehow you ended up on the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

1 A. Correct. That's the route I was supposed to take.

2 Q. So now you're on the Pike and you're driving westbound.

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. Okay. What's going on? What are you seeing? What are you
5 doing?

6 A. Before the first tunnel I remember it started snowing. I
7 couldn't see on the road any snow or ice or anything. It just --
8 I saw it through the headlights and I slowed down, and I saw a
9 couple ice trucks, I guess that's what you call them. Snowplows.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Sorry. Yeah, I saw a couple snowplows before the first
12 tunnel, so I slowed down. I went through the first tunnel. It
13 was fine. I came out. The temperature on my dash said 27 degrees
14 the whole way through. I mean, from the time I started the first
15 tunnel until the accident, it said 27.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I slowed my roll.

18 Q. So how were the roads? It was 27 and you saw the ice trucks.

19 A. It was okay. I drove in worse. It wasn't dangerous; it
20 wasn't that I had to pull over and put chains on. It was -- I
21 don't know how to explain.

22 Q. Okay. Just wet.

23 A. Yeah. Yeah, just --

24 Q. Did you feel the spray coming up or --

25 A. I could see it on my rear tires.

1 Q. Okay. So it was spraying. It wasn't that -- because you
2 know when it's not spraying that's when it's bad.

3 A. Right. Yeah.

4 Q. So you said you slowed down. Do you remember how fast you
5 were going, roughly?

6 A. I thought it was 40, 45 I was going.

7 Q. Okay. You don't -- you didn't look at the speedometer and
8 go, oh, I'm going 40.

9 A. No. I was watching the road.

10 Q. Okay. Okay. Go on.

11 A. A couple people passed me, and I was still continuing slow
12 but not slow enough where I had to turn my hazards, and I wasn't a
13 hazard to anybody else. Anytime that there was a third lane --
14 the right lane, I'd get over and get out of everybody's way. I
15 noticed this bus coming -- flying by me and --

16 Q. Do you remember where you were when that was?

17 A. I do not.

18 Q. Okay. Sorry to interrupt. Go ahead.

19 A. That's all right. A few minutes passed that the bus passes
20 me, I saw the black wall in front of me and I tried my best to not
21 hit it. I managed to hit it but at the same time I was yelling at
22 my co-driver as I was pressing on the brake, you know, hey, hold
23 on. I don't remember what I said.

24 Q. Okay. If you were to estimate a time, by the time that bus
25 flew by you and you saw the black wall, what would you give it?

1 A. Five minutes before I hit it. That's roughly what I think it
2 was.

3 Q. So the bus went flying by you. Did you -- how long did you
4 see it before it was out of sight or was it --

5 A. Oh, it was quick. I lost sight of it. It was quick.

6 Q. Was it curvy road, straight road when it passed you?

7 A. I believe it was straight and then it curved.

8 Q. Okay. Was it just -- he was just speeding by you? Did he --

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Was he weaving or anything or just driving?

11 A. I noticed he was pulling up behind me, and then as he was
12 getting closer he turned on his blinker and got over, but after
13 that I just saw him pass by me.

14 Q. Okay. And what were you -- I know you were driving, but do
15 you listen to music, do you --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I listen to music.

19 Q. On the radio or headphones or --

20 A. Amazon Music, and I do have headphones.

21 Q. Okay. And is that through your -- you stream it on your app
22 or --

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Yeah. I turn that on before I drive.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And I turn on my GPS before I go anywhere to make sure I know
3 the route.

4 Q. Okay. And I'm going to go back in a little bit. You said
5 you take a sleeping pill before you sleep.

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. What do you take?

8 A. It's called Equate, E-q-u-a-t-e.

9 Q. And is that --

10 A. Sleeping.

11 Q. Is it like a over the counter thing --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. -- or is it prescribed?

14 A. No. It's over the counter.

15 Q. Okay. When was the last one of those you took?

16 A. When we switched -- in London, Ohio, when we switched. I
17 went in the sleeper.

18 Q. So estimate amount of time like --

19 A. At least 9 hours prior.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Maybe more than that.

22 Q. Okay. No worries. That's all the -- oh, so you see the
23 black wall, you start to react. It all happens quick I'm sure.

24 A. Oh, yeah.

25 Q. Do you remember what you were thinking or what you were doing

1 or --

2 A. I know I was -- I kept my head close to the windshield trying
3 to see if any deer -- I don't know why I was probably looking for
4 deer, but I saw the black wall and I know I jerked back, like,
5 what the hell is that? And then I noticed it was all the way
6 across the road. So what I did was I didn't jerk my wheel; I just
7 kind of guided my wheel towards the center divider because I saw
8 the concrete pillar or the concrete center --

9 Q. Barrier.

10 A. Yeah. I thought that was the best way to go and I slowed
11 down. I thought I barely tapped the bus.

12 Q. So on your brakes.

13 A. On my brakes but I wasn't -- they weren't skidding. I was
14 pumping my brakes.

15 Q. Okay. So the ABS wasn't chattering or --

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. -- anything like that.

18 A. Yeah. It was just trying to slow down.

19 Q. Do you know if your truck has any collision avoidance stuff
20 or --

21 A. It does.

22 Q. Okay. Was that active?

23 A. I don't remember.

24 Q. Okay. Do you know what it has for collision avoidance
25 equipment on it?

1 A. I don't know what it's called.

2 Q. Okay. Do you know what it's supposed to do?

3 A. Pretty much hit the brakes when you don't.

4 Q. Okay. So it's basically a braking system that, if you don't
5 react, then it'll react for you.

6 A. Correct. Yes.

7 Q. So what was faster, you or it?

8 A. I think it was me. I don't really think it noticed.

9 Q. Okay. I think that's all I have for right now.

10 A. Okay.

11 MR. CURRIE: I might come back to you but I'm going to pass
12 it off to Ken Bragg.

13 MR. STOWERS: Sure.

14 MR. BRAGG: Okay. I'm going to pick up -- I got a few
15 questions about your routes up to the crash site, a few questions
16 about the crash site then I'll talk -- I'll discuss some of your
17 background stuff.

18 BY MR. BRAGG:

19 Q. If I recall you said you worked for Sioux Trucking for about
20 a year and a half.

21 A. Yes, I did.

22 Q. And you've always driven the same type of truck when you're
23 truck driving?

24 A. No.

25 Q. What have you driven?

1 A. Manual -- I mean, same as in Freightliner fleet, yes.

2 Q. So are they all the same -- your companies are the same make
3 truck?

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. Okay. And they're all Freightliners.

6 A. As far as I know.

7 Q. As far as you know. Are they all manual transmission?

8 A. This one was an automatic.

9 Q. This one's automatic.

10 A. I've driven other automatics with our company.

11 Q. Does this truck have an engine retarder on it?

12 A. Correct. Yes.

13 Q. And was it active?

14 A. No.

15 Q. It was not. Why wasn't it? I'm just curious.

16 A. I don't believe in using engine retarders in winter weather
17 conditions.

18 Q. Okay. Makes sense.

19 A. If that makes sense to you. Right.

20 MR. CURRIE: So just to let you know, Ryan Smith, project
21 manager with the NTSB, has also joined. I'm sorry, Bob.

22 MR. DAPPER: No, I was -- do you mind clarifying at least for
23 me what you mean by engine retarder? Do you mind?

24 MR. CURRIE: It's a Jake brake. It's -- fits on the exhaust.
25 It uses the exhaust pressure to slow the rig down. Right?

1 MR. STOWERS: Correct.

2 MR. DAPPER: Okay. I just want to be sure we're on the same
3 page. Thank you.

4 MR. STOWERS: Yeah, I don't believe in using that in winter
5 weather conditions.

6 BY MR. BRAGG:

7 Q. Okay. So when the crash occurred, where did you start
8 driving?

9 A. Where?

10 Q. Yeah, where?

11 Q. New Jersey.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. And do you remember what city?

14 A. I believe it's Keasbey, but they call it Woodbridge.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Woodbridge Terminal.

17 Q. And about how long had you been driving when the crash
18 happened?

19 A. I don't --

20 Q. You don't know. Okay.

21 A. I don't know. I was doing good too.

22 Q. And you stated that at some point the bus passed you.

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. And I believe you said you were in a straight section of
25 roadway. Do you remember?

1 A. I believe so, yeah.

2 Q. Do you know if there was an incline or down -- on a
3 downgrade?

4 A. I don't remember.

5 Q. Don't remember. Anything else unusual that you noticed about
6 the motor coach as it passed you?

7 A. It was dark inside.

8 Q. It was dark inside.

9 A. It's really not unusual. Usually it's dark inside if there
10 are no passengers.

11 Q. And you said you were going about 45 miles per hour. If you
12 had to guess, how fast was the motor coach traveling?

13 A. A hell of a lot faster than me.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Sorry, but I can't guess on what the speed he was doing. I'm
16 not a radar.

17 Q. Okay. That's fine. And when the motor coach passed you, I
18 believe you said it was -- it had started snowing. Correct?

19 A. It was already snowing.

20 Q. It was already snowing?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. How long had you noticed it was snowing? Do you remember
23 that?

24 A. I'm sorry?

25 Q. How long had it been snowing? Hours?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Minutes?

3 A. I honestly don't know. It was just because of tunnels, it
4 wasn't snowing in the tunnels.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. It was snowing outside the tunnels so it was on and off for
7 me.

8 Q. And had you noticed that -- had you noticed any reduced
9 traction? Like had you felt the truck slipping or --

10 A. No.

11 Q. No. Okay.

12 A. No. If I did I would have pulled it over.

13 Q. And you said as the motor coach approached you from the rear
14 you saw, at some point, he put a turn signal on.

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. Correct? And after it passed you, did you notice that the
17 turn signal turned off?

18 A. No.

19 Q. You didn't. So this sleeping pill, Equate. Is that what
20 you --

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. You get that over the counter?

23 A. Uh-huh. At Walmart.

24 Q. Walmart. How often -- do you take it every time before
25 you --

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. -- when you lay down?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. How many do you take?

5 A. Just one.

6 Q. Do you take it when you're off -- do you feel like you need
7 to take it when you're not in the truck, when you're at home?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Yeah. Are you married?

10 A. No.

11 Q. No. Do you live by yourself? Live with a roommate?

12 A. I live with my girlfriend.

13 Q. With your girlfriend. You guys have any kids?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Okay. So how would you describe how you sleep, generally
16 speaking?

17 A. On my side. Laying down.

18 Q. On your side.

19 A. In a fetal position. I do. I do.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. I can't lay on my back. I can't lay on my stomach.

22 Q. Do you snore?

23 A. No, I talk.

24 Q. You talk in your sleep.

25 A. I always talk.

1 Q. Okay. Have you ever been to a physician about your sleep?

2 A. No.

3 Q. So what made you start taking the sleep aids?

4 A. Rare occasions my mind races. It's just I can't stop
5 going -- if I'm thinking about something is that -- so it does
6 help me a lot to calm down.

7 Q. So how do you determine who drives and who sleeps so -- when
8 you drive and you sleep? Do you guys have a pattern or --

9 A. I prefer nights. I love driving nights.

10 Q. Love driving nights.

11 A. That is my wake up time.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. I'm a night owl and that's it.

14 Q. And again, what time did you start driving that night, do you
15 know?

16 A. I don't remember.

17 Q. Don't remember.

18 A. I know it was dark when we started driving.

19 Q. And when you started driving had you been asleep? Did you
20 wake up and say, okay, I'm ready to drive? Or had you been awake
21 for a few minutes when you started to drive?

22 A. I woke up as soon as he took the exit to get to the yard.

23 Q. Okay. In New Jersey.

24 A. Correct. Yeah. So I'd been up for a few minutes --

25 Q. A few minutes. Okay.

1 A. -- but not that long.

2 Q. What's your height and weight?

3 A. Six-two -- 6-foot, 2-inch. My weight, I got yo-yo weights.

4 I don't really know. The last time I weighed myself was at a DOT
5 physical.

6 Q. And how much did you weigh then?

7 A. I believe it was 245.

8 Q. 245.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Okay. And has your weight -- your weight maintains
11 consistency or does it go up and down or how's your weight?

12 A. It goes up and down.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Depending on the season.

15 Q. All right. And this is your -- what season is this?

16 A. Winter, my fat weather.

17 Q. Your fat season. You got to bulk up.

18 A. Yeah. I like to eat.

19 Q. What's your general health like? Do you see a doctor
20 regularly?

21 A. No.

22 Q. No?

23 A. No.

24 Q. So do you go to a doctor for something other than your DOT
25 physical?

1 A. I haven't been to a doctor in a while.

2 MR. LEIGHT: That's not true. Why don't you talk about this
3 oral surgery you had.

4 MR. STOWERS: That's with my dentist.

5 MR. LEIGHT: Okay.

6 MR. STOWERS: Oh, it's a doctor. I'm sorry.

7 MR. LEIGHT: It's a doctor.

8 MR. STOWERS: Oh, I didn't know that. It was an oral
9 surgeon.

10 MR. BRAGG: And your name, sir.

11 MR. LEIGHT: Bob. It's on the record. Bob Leight.

12 MR. BRAGG: Yeah, well the transcriptionist is going to
13 wonder who said it.

14 MR. STOWERS: Sorry.

15 MR. BRAGG: That's all right.

16 BY MR. BRAGG:

17 Q. So what did you see the dentist for?

18 A. It was at the beginning of December. I don't know the exact
19 date. [REDACTED]

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. [REDACTED]

1

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. That's about it.

5 Q. After -- what kind of medications were you on after the
6 surgeries then?

7 A. I was on -- he prescribed me, I believe it was [REDACTED].

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And I don't remember what the [REDACTED] was, but I was
10 taking the antibiotics. I was not taking the [REDACTED] or any -- I
11 wasn't in that much pain.

12 Q. What state did you go to the doctor in?

13 A. California.

14 Q. California. And what's your doctor's name?

15 A. It's [REDACTED] (ph.). Sorry.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. It's kind of hard to pronounce.

18 Q. Where did you get the prescription filled?

19 A. At Walgreens --

20 Q. Walgreens.

21 A. -- in Hemet.

22 MR. CURRIE: So I'm going to jump in here real quick, Kenny.
23 You said you didn't take any [REDACTED]. Did you fill that script?

24 MR. STOWERS: Yeah.

25 MR. CURRIE: Okay.

1 MR. STOWERS: I believe it was [REDACTED]. I don't know it
2 might have been --

3 MR. CURRIE: Okay. Something similar to [REDACTED] --

4 MR. STOWERS: Yeah. It was --

5 BY MR. BRAGG:

6 Q. But you -- you filled it, but you didn't take it?

7 A. No.

8 Q. No. And -- but you did take the antibiotic.

9 A. Correct.

10 Q. How long were you out of work for that?

11 A. I don't remember.

12 Q. Okay. So other than the dentist, you said you hadn't gone to
13 a regular physician.

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. For a while. When was the last time?

16 A. My physical.

17 Q. Just your DOT physical?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. Now, is that just -- is that someone the company sends you to
20 or do you go to your own physician?

21 A. I go to my own.

22 Q. Yeah. What's his name?

23 A. I have his card in my wallet. You want me to get it?

24 Q. We can get it off the --

25 A. Okay.

1 Q. So you don't have any chronic conditions; you don't take
2 medications on a regular basis. Is that correct?

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. Okay. And so we're going to start from the day of the crash
5 and we're going to walk back, and I'm going to ask you what you
6 did for the preceding days leading up to. So you started driving
7 in New Jersey the morning of the crash. All right?

8 MR. LEIGHT: Night before.

9 MR. BRAGG: The night before?

10 MR. DAPPER: Well, I'm sorry. Are you starting from the
11 beginning of the trip or the --

12 MR. BRAGG: No, the crash. The day of the crash.

13 MR. DAPPER: Okay.

14 MR. BRAGG: The morning of the crash.

15 MR. DAPPER: Well, I think you said starting in the evening,
16 and he said it was dark, so I wasn't sure where you were picking
17 up.

18 MR. BRAGG: Yeah.

19 MR. DAPPER: I apologize.

20 BY MR. BRAGG:

21 Q. So you started driving in New Jersey before the crash
22 occurred.

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. And before that, what time did you wake up? Do you know what
25 time you woke up?

1 A. No.

2 Q. What did you do when you woke up? Did you text anybody? Did
3 you call anybody?

4 A. I know I had to pee. I mean, seriously. I always got to pee
5 when I wake up.

6 Q. Okay. And how long did you sleep?

7 A. I don't know. I know I slept good.

8 Q. And did you -- so the entire time that you were asleep, you
9 were in the sleeping berth? Is that correct?

10 A. Yes. Uh-huh.

11 Q. And Nathan, which is your co-driver, he drove then all that
12 time.

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. Okay. And so prior to going to sleep, you drove. Correct?

15 A. I'm sorry, what?

16 Q. Prior to going to sleep. Prior to going to sleep -- into the
17 sleeping berth, you drove.

18 A. Correct. Yes.

19 Q. Where was that at?

20 A. Are you talking before New Jersey?

21 Q. Yes. Before New Jersey. Before you got in the bed, before
22 you drove. I'm going backwards.

23 A. Okay. You're going backwards. I -- we switch in London,
24 Ohio. So I made it to London, Ohio. We switched, I believe, in
25 Springfield, Illinois. No, Missouri. In Springfield, Missouri.

1 There's another Springfield.

2 Q. What time of day was it when you switched? Was it morning?
3 Was it night?

4 A. I don't know.

5 Q. So let me ask this: when was your last day off?

6 A. I believe it was New Year's Day.

7 Q. New Year's Day.

8 A. I had New Year's Day off. I had New Year's Eve off. I had a
9 couple days off prior to that.

10 Q. And did you spend that time at home?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Okay. Do you have another job? Do you work just for the
13 trucking company?

14 A. No. Just Sioux Trucking.

15 Q. Okay.

16 BY MR. CURRIE:

17 Q. Do they pay you by the mile or the trip?

18 A. As far as I know, mileage and hourly. If we're stuck
19 somewhere we get paid by the hour.

20 Q. Okay. About how much do you make for a trip up and back?

21 A. About 1,000 bucks. Maybe a little more.

22 Q. How long does it usually take you to come up and back?

23 A. 2½ days out, 2½ days back.

24 MR. CURRIE: Okay.

25 BY MR. BRAGG:

1 Q. What type of cell phone do you have?

2 A. I'm sorry?

3 Q. What type of cell phone do you have?

4 A. I got a --

5 MR. DAPPER: Today or the one at the time of the accident?

6 BY MR. BRAGG:

7 Q. Yeah, sorry.

8 A. This one's a 4. The other one's a 3.

9 Q. But it's Apple?

10 A. No, it's a Motorola.

11 Q. Motorola.

12 A. Moto z3 is my one in the truck.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Moto z4 is the one I just recently got.

15 Q. And is that the same phone number that I --

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. -- that you gave me on Sunday? Who's your carrier?

18 A. Verizon.

19 Q. Verizon. So let's talk about your phone. You said you use
20 the phone when you're off.

21 A. Uh-huh.

22 Q. Are you a heavy phone user? Are you a light phone user? I
23 mean, how would you classify your phone use? Are you like my
24 teenage daughter who's always on the phone when you're off?

25 A. At home I am. I'm like a little girl on social media, okay.

1 But when I'm on the road I talk to my girlfriend on the phone or
2 play music. That's where I play at.

3 Q. And when you talk to her on the phone, how do you
4 communicate? Text or do you voice?

5 A. Sometimes when I wake up out of the sleeper I text.

6 Q. Uh-huh.

7 A. But usually it's talk on the phone when she gets up or when
8 she's going to work or before she goes to bed. Before she goes to
9 bed is when I start driving. When she wakes up for work is when
10 I'm done driving. So it's usually how it works that way.

11 Q. Do you use any apps to communicate? Do you like Facebook
12 Messenger or WhatsApp or anything like that?

13 A. To what?

14 Q. To communicate. Like, do you use an app when you talk to
15 someone? Like you can text somebody through the Facebook
16 platform.

17 A. Yeah, I don't.

18 MR. DAPPER: You just use your phone number --

19 MR. STOWERS: Correct. Yeah.

20 MR. DAPPER: -- on your phone, so you don't use any --

21 MR. STOWERS: It's just Message+ or whatever it is. I do
22 have Hangouts on my phone, but I don't use it.

23 BY MR. BRAGG:

24 Q. Okay. Only other question I got, and I meant to ask this
25 earlier: when you first saw the bus in the roadway, and you got

1 heavy on the brakes at some point, right?

2 A. I was light the whole time on the brakes.

3 Q. You were light. Did you feel the truck slide?

4 A. No.

5 Q. No. And the only reason I'm asking, I'm trying to get some
6 sense for, you know, how ice -- how much ice was on the roadway.
7 That's the reason I'm asking.

8 A. I had traction the whole time.

9 Q. Traction the whole time. Okay.

10 A. From the point of impact until I got rear ended, that's when
11 I lost -- it lost traction. I can hear the skids. I can hear
12 some of the metal crashing.

13 Q. Is there anything else that stood out about the crash, do you
14 think, that you thought to you unusual? Anything you just thought
15 about -- keep playing in your mind -- any noise, anything and I'm
16 just --

17 A. I'm sorry. I know. I understand your question it's just --
18 it plays a lot in my mind. I wish I could have done something
19 different, but I'm glad I did what I did. I'm sorry. It
20 happened. I don't know what you want to hear from me.

21 MR. BRAGG: You got anything?

22 BY MR. CURRIE:

23 Q. How long have you worked with Nathan?

24 A. Two weeks.

25 Q. Two weeks. And are you kind of like his field trainer or --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. -- he's your co -- obviously, he is your co-pilot, but how's
3 he turning out? Pretty good?

4 A. I'm glad he listens. That's all I got to say.

5 Q. Have you had others that haven't?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. Other than this incident that we're here talking
8 about, was there anything in this trip that was out of the
9 ordinary?

10 A. Yeah, that we had to go to L.A. to pick up our load. It was
11 kind of out of the blue but --

12 Q. But that's --

13 A. -- sometimes it happens. You can't control where your load
14 comes from, you know. It's just --

15 Q. Right. But once you got your load it was --

16 A. Smooth sailing.

17 Q. -- business as usual.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. And you said you were doing good on the trip back. What's
20 that -- what do you mean by that? That it was -- everything
21 was --

22 A. Just the way it worked. Smooth sailing, I guess.

23 Q. Okay. Do you have anything you want to ask us?

24 A. No.

25 MR. CURRIE: Okay.

1 MR. BRAGG: How about the attorney? Anything that you
2 want -- any points you want to bring up for the record?

3 MR. LEIGHT: Before we begin, Sergeant, do you have any
4 questions for him? We're more than willing to make him available
5 to the Pennsylvania State Police, but we'd like to do it in one
6 setting if possible. So if you have any questions, this would be
7 a good opportunity.

8 SGT. WARNICK: Would you like to do that now, or you're
9 talking about in the future or right --

10 MR. LEIGHT: Well, we'd like to right now -- we'd like to if
11 you have questions --

12 MR. BRAGG: How would -- because we have two different
13 operating procedures, we can step out of the room and let the
14 state police have the room. Maybe we should do that.

15 MR. CURRIE: Or are you --

16 SGT. WARNICK: Whenever we're done -- whenever we're
17 finished, if I could ask a few questions that would be fine.

18 MR. BRAGG: I think that's fine. Bob?

19 MR. DAPPER: If -- I think the -- your question, Bob, is kind
20 of like if there are follow up -- we just don't want to --
21 Mr. Stowers to have to do -- give two different statements --

22 MR. LEIGHT: Right. He's going back to California tomorrow
23 and we'd like to get -- if you have any questions, do it today.

24 SGT. WARNICK: Yes, sir. We can do that.

25 MR. LEIGHT: Okay.

1 SGT. WARNICK: We can do that whenever we're done in here if
2 you want to do that. I have several questions that came to mind.

3 MR. LEIGHT: Of course you do, you're --

4 SGT. WARNICK: Other than that I could supplement the crash
5 report to put those answers on there, so that's no problem.

6 MR. LEIGHT: And your questions will not be recorded then?

7 SGT. WARNICK: Yes, sir. I wouldn't be taking any recordings
8 of them.

9 MR. LEIGHT: Right. Okay.

10 MR. CURRIE: So if none of the attorneys or FedEx safety rep
11 has anything --

12 MR. LEIGHT: Well, for the record then, we've made a video of
13 the crash available to the National Transportation Safety Board,
14 correct? And you've received that?

15 MR. CURRIE: Through FedEx --

16 MR. LEIGHT: Through FedEx, yeah.

17 MR. CURRIE: -- yes, we have. Because they're a party
18 member, yes.

19 MR. LEIGHT: Right. Okay. I just wanted to verify that
20 you've watched that and you understand --

21 MR. CURRIE: Well, I --

22 MR. BRAGG: How we treat videos is a little different from
23 the police, so we have a laboratory in -- that will analyze that.
24 They will do a video study of the report and then we'll issue that
25 and we'll make that available to FedEx as part of the process.

1 MR. LEIGHT: So you're going to take the video that they gave
2 you, enhance it, then return it to FedEx. Is that the --

3 MR. CURRIE: No. We can -- do you want this on the record or
4 do you want to explain the -- I think it would be easier for the
5 transcriptionist if we just explain the process after.

6 MR. LEIGHT: Okay. That's fine.

7 MR. CURRIE: So if you're okay with that.

8 MR. LEIGHT: Bob?

9 MR. DAPPER: I'm fine with that.

10 MR. CURRIE: Okay. So I'm going to end the interview at
11 12:40, and thank you for your time. And if you have any questions
12 and you want to put anything else on it, just let me know. Okay?

13 MR. STOWERS: Okay.

14 MR. CURRIE: Okay.

15 (Whereupon, at 12:40 p.m., the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

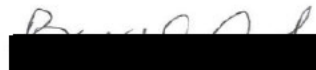

IN THE MATTER OF: MULTIVEHICLE CRASH ON I-70 WESTBOUND
NEAR MOUNT PLEASANT, PENNSYLVANIA,
ON JANUARY 5, 2020
Interview of Brandon Stowers

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY20MH002

PLACE: New Stanton, Pennsylvania

DATE: January 7, 2020

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.



Beverly A. Lano
Transcriber