

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: \*

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CPKC TRAIN DERAILMENT IN \*

BORDULAC, NORTH DAKOTA \*

Accident No.: RRD24LR012

ON JULY 5, 2024 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: DONALD MEKELAND, Director, Emergency Response  
Rybak Companies

via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday,  
July 31, 2024

APPEARANCES:

PAUL STANCIL, Senior Hazardous Materials Accident  
Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

DAVID CASACELI, Investigator-in-Charge  
National Transportation Safety Board

BENJAMIN STROT, Railroad Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

VERNON WALKER, Tank Car Quality Assurance Specialist  
Federal Railroad Administration

RAUL GONZALEZ, Accident Investigator  
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

ED DANKBAR, Director, Emergency Management and Hazmat  
Response, Northern Region  
Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC)

BEN LAWLER, Senior Director, Mechanical Services  
Trinity Industries

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:02 a.m.)

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2  
3 MR. STANCIL: Okay, the recording has started. Today is  
4 July 31st, 2024, it is 10:02 a.m. Eastern time. This is an  
5 interview that is being conducted in connection with the July 5th,  
6 2024 derailment of CPKC Train 242-03 in Bordulac, North Dakota.  
7 The NTSB number is RRD24LR012. My name is Paul Stancil, I'm a  
8 senior hazardous materials accident investigator with the NTSB,  
9 and I am also the hazardous materials group chairman for this  
10 investigation. This is an interview of Mr. Don Mekeland,  
11 M-e-k-e-l-a-n-d, an emergency response director for the Rybak  
12 Companies, that's R-y-b-a-k.

13 Mr. Mekeland, are you aware this conversation is being  
14 recorded?

15 MR. MEKELAND: Yes.

16 MR. STANCIL: And do we have your permission to record this  
17 conversation?

18 MR. MEKELAND: Yes.

19 MR. STANCIL: Thank you. We are conducting this interview  
20 via a Microsoft Teams conference call, so I'll now ask all of  
21 those attending this call to introduce themselves. Again, it's  
22 very important that the -- for the recording, that we all speak  
23 loudly and clearly. So let's start with the NTSB team,  
24 Mr. Casaceli.

25 MR. CASACELI: David Casaceli, C-a-s-a-c-e-l-i, Investigator-

1 in-Charge with the National Transportation Safety Board.

2 MR. STANCIL: Mr. Benjamin Strot.

3 MR. STROT: Ben Strot, S-t-r-o-t, NTSB operations group  
4 chairman.

5 MR. STANCIL: Thank you. Going now to the Federal Railroad  
6 Administration, Mr. Walker.

7 MR. WALKER: Yes, Vernon Walker, Tank Car Quality Assurance  
8 Specialist, FRA.

9 MR. STANCIL: And do we have Mr. Miller on the line?

10 (No response.)

11 MR. STANCIL: I don't see him on there, so I think it's just  
12 you today, Mr. Walker.

13 MR. WALKER: Yes. Yeah, he's doing that hazmat study.

14 MR. STANCIL: Okay. Going now to the Pipeline and Hazardous  
15 Materials Safety Administration, Mr. Gonzalez.

16 MR. GONZALEZ: Raul Gonzalez, G-o-n-z-a-l-e-z, Accident  
17 Investigator for PHMSA.

18 MR. STANCIL: Okay. The CPKC railroad, Mr. Dankbar.

19 MR. DANKBAR: Ed Dankbar, CPKC, Emergency Management and  
20 Hazmat Response Director for our Northern Region.

21 MR. STANCIL: Thank you. Mr. Lawler with Trinity Industries  
22 leasing company.

23 MR. LAWLER: Ben Lawler, L-a-w-l-e-r, Senior Director,  
24 Mechanical Services.

25 MR. STANCIL: Thank you. Is there anyone whose name I did

1 not call?

2 (No response.)

3 MR. STANCIL: Okay. Not hearing anything, we'll continue.  
4 Okay, Mr. Mekeland, if any of our questions are unclear and you  
5 don't understand the question, please ask the questioner to  
6 clarify or restate the question, and if you don't know the answer  
7 to any of the questions, it's okay to tell us that you don't know.  
8 And so what we don't want you to do is speculate if you don't know  
9 the answer to any questions, do you understand?

10 MR. MEKELAND: Correct, yeah.

11 MR. STANCIL: Great. So the sole purpose of this  
12 investigation is to improve safety, it's not to assign any fault,  
13 blame, or liability. The NTSB's mission is to improve  
14 transportation safety and prevent accidents. As such, we cannot  
15 offer any guarantee of confidentiality and immunity from any legal  
16 proceeding by any other agency, whether it be local, state, or  
17 federal. A transcript of this interview will be placed in the  
18 public docket for this investigation, understood?

19 MR. MEKELAND: Yes.

20 MR. STANCIL: Okay, great.

21 INTERVIEW OF DONALD MEKELAND

22 BY MR. STANCIL:

23 Q. Mr. Mekeland, would you please begin by telling us about your  
24 background, your education and expertise, please?

25 A. I've been in the hazmat, I guess, industry for about 25

1 years, I've been to all the different tank car classes in Pueblo  
2 and other places. I've been a member of the (indiscernible) team  
3 for about the last 10, 10 years or so. Retired fireman, did that  
4 for 10 years. Otherwise I've been, I guess, just in the hazmat  
5 world for about the last 20-some years.

6 Q. And what positions have you had with the Rybak Companies?

7 A. I've only been here about four years and it's just been the  
8 director of the emergency response group.

9 Q. And how long have you served in that position?

10 A. About four years with Rybak Companies.

11 Q. Okay, could you describe your duties and who you report to?

12 A. I report to the owner, David Rybak. My duties are organizing  
13 and scheduling work and setting up, you know, managing the people  
14 under me.

15 Q. Okay. So I'll start by asking you to tell us, as completely  
16 as you can, what happened after you were notified of the incident,  
17 and so please walk us through the initial emergency response  
18 actions to this train derailment and you can do this  
19 chronologically, if you would, or give us the most complete  
20 accounting of your involvement in the incident response, what you  
21 did, what you saw, your communications with others or other  
22 organizations. Take all the time you need and feel free to refer  
23 to any notes or documentation that you might have.

24 A. I received a call at 4:00 a.m. from Mr. Dankbar with Canadian  
25 Pacific requesting that we mobilize all their equipment to

1 Bordulac, North Dakota. That equipment included their transfer  
2 trailer, command trailer, fire trailer, ATV trailer, and their air  
3 trailer. So from that point, I notified our staff and then our  
4 operations people within the company, letting them know that we've  
5 been notified of a derailment and we were mobilizing equipment.

6 At that point, everybody basically woke up, headed to the  
7 office and we started getting equipment hooked up and loaded as  
8 others arrived. We got in equipment and got in specific trucks  
9 and started mobilizing to the site. It's roughly a six-hour  
10 drive. Different people got here at different times, so as people  
11 got here, we just set equipment on the road and heading that way.

12 I got on site about -- right around 13:30, 14:00 and our task  
13 was to set up the Canadian Pacific's command trailer and kind of  
14 just get their equipment staged and set up and within that, we had  
15 to set up their tents and just kind of to help assist with any  
16 kind of getting things, I guess, initially just getting staged,  
17 where we were going to stage equipment as it came in and just  
18 helped set up the command.

19 After that, later on that day, we -- I was instructed to have  
20 two of the fire trailers brought down to the site. We assisted  
21 SRS with getting them set up. SRS manned them and did the  
22 operations with them and we just kind of assisted with them and we  
23 just provided support. And then, throughout the night, we  
24 continued to assist or support SRS in their fire operations.  
25 Around midnight, I think, that first night, we had sent a couple

1 out to pick up two more fire trailers from two different locations  
2 in North Dakota and they got back around -- I think right around  
3 1:00 in the morning with those and then it was just continue to  
4 assist with fire operations. Until the fire was out the next  
5 morning, we did -- I helped with setting up fire operations, a  
6 smaller operation, I guess, on the west, west end of the  
7 derailment and on the north side, to help flood some of the hopper  
8 cars that were on the backside on fire with plastic pellets, so I  
9 helped support that initiative. And then after that, it was just  
10 continue to support operations on site. That was pretty much the  
11 initial response.

12 Q. Okay. What is the size of your company?

13 A. We're about 50 employees.

14 Q. And where are you based from?

15 A. I am based out of the -- our Blaine location, which is 9174  
16 Isanti Street Northeast in Blaine, Minnesota.

17 Q. Okay. And where did your assets deploy from?

18 A. That address.

19 Q. Okay. And how many employees were engaged in this response?

20 A. There was, I think, five of us.

21 Q. So it was just the five of you, and you mentioned -- you  
22 listed some equipment that were -- was brought to the scene, was  
23 that your company equipment?

24 A. No, Canadian Pacific's equipment.

25 Q. What assets from Rybak did you bring to the scene?

1 A. On that initial day, just -- it was just our trucks and  
2 tractor that pulled their equipment.

3 Q. Okay. Could you describe what other services you provided to  
4 CPKC in response to this incident?

5 A. That was -- I mean, that was basically bring their --  
6 mobilize their equipment and then provide support wherever needed.  
7 I mean, we -- again, we set up command, we helped, I mean, just  
8 with some logistics stuff. During that initial response it was  
9 more just helping set up logistics and getting the initial command  
10 area set up, was our main role.

11 Q. When you say you provide support as needed, could you give me  
12 a little more detail about that?

13 A. If somebody asked for some hose, we go down to where the  
14 transfer trailer was located and we'd get the hose and bring it  
15 back to the site. If somebody needed another fitting, one of our  
16 guys would run down and pick up another fitting and bring it back  
17 to support whatever fire operations were going on.

18 Q. You mentioned you assisted with fire operations, can you tell  
19 us a little bit more about how that's done, what you did there?

20 A. We brought the trailers in, again, we backed the two trailers  
21 in from the west, I'm thinking, right? Yeah, from the west we  
22 backed the two trailers in, set the trailers, kind of got the  
23 covers removed from them, got them set up to be operational, and  
24 then it was just if somebody needed a specific piece or another  
25 section of hose or a different nozzle type fitting, we just

1 assisted in getting that for them, acquiring those pieces for  
2 them.

3 Q. Did you have any role in mitigating the hazardous materials  
4 releases from any of the tank cars?

5 A. Not at that point, no.

6 Q. At any point?

7 A. Later on, as the week went on, we did assist with -- I think  
8 the second day we assisted with tarping one of the leaking cars on  
9 the north side and beyond that, our role was generally nighttime  
10 operation and that was monitoring the water curtains and the  
11 flaring of the leaking cars, we just kind of monitored the pumps  
12 and maintained them and made sure they're operational, fueling  
13 them, keeping everything running.

14 Q. Okay. We probably all understand this, but just for the  
15 record, could you describe the purpose for the water curtains and  
16 the tarping and those other activities you participated in?

17 A. It was just for vapor suppression, so the water -- the water  
18 is used to help capture the vapors from, I guess, disseminating  
19 throughout the site. So we just typically -- you know, I was just  
20 using water, spraying like a water mist over the leaking areas to  
21 capture the vapors.

22 Q. And what type of vapors were they?

23 A. Ammonia vapors, anhydrous ammonia vapors.

24 Q. Okay. And what does the tarping do?

25 A. Just to help try to control the leak.

1 Q. And how does that control the leak?

2 A. By attempting to put pressure on a hole and just to slow --  
3 slow the leak down as best as possible.

4 Q. So your personnel or you, personally, did you participate in  
5 physically doing that?

6 A. No. I didn't, personally, we had staff that did help other  
7 staff with bringing tarps over to the north side.

8 Q. Okay. And how did you get access to that area, what sort of  
9 protective equipment was needed? Can you tell us a little bit  
10 more about how that worked?

11 A. I wasn't involved in it, I'm not sure how they got over  
12 there.

13 Q. Okay. Where were you during the course of all of this?

14 A. During that operation, I was probably down in command. I  
15 wasn't down on site at that point.

16 Q. I see. What role did you play in the incident command?

17 A. Really didn't play any role in the command system, I was just  
18 taking direction from them, on where I was needed.

19 Q. Did you provide any technical expertise or assist them with  
20 any questions about the material?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Okay. Did you have any contact or interaction with the  
23 hazardous material shippers?

24 A. No.

25 Q. The tank car owners?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Okay, just whom did you interact with most of all out there?

3 A. The CP personnel in charge.

4 Q. Okay. Did you participate or have any involvement in  
5 locating and identifying what hazardous materials were involved in  
6 the incident?

7 A. No.

8 Q. By the time you got there, was that determined or was there  
9 still a question?

10 A. We knew what was involved, yes.

11 Q. Tell us how you knew that.

12 A. I was informed by Canadian Pacific that we had -- that the  
13 cars involved were containing methanol, anhydrous ammonia, and  
14 plastic pellets.

15 Q. Okay. Did your company or did you participate in any of the  
16 tank car -- the preliminary damage assessments on the tank cars?

17 A. No.

18 Q. You mentioned that you had been trained at Pueblo, are you a  
19 tank car specialist?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. What experience does your company have as a tank car  
22 specialist, what services do you normally provide in that area?

23 A. NARs. I mean, over the years on derailments, it's been  
24 transfers, leak mitigation, day-to-day is more just respond to  
25 non-accidental releasing, releases, nonconforming packages.

1 Q. And for the record, tell us what an N-A-R is?

2 A. A non-accidental release.

3 Q. Okay. How effective were those techniques that you  
4 mentioned, the vapor suppression and tarping, how effective were  
5 those at controlling the releases?

6 A. It was probably as good as could be.

7 Q. Have you used those --

8 A. I mean, it wasn't -- did it a hundred, a hundred percent  
9 solve the issue? No.

10 Q. Okay. Have you used those techniques before?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Trained on that, as well?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. Were you involved in any of the subsequent flaring of  
15 the material?

16 A. Yeah, later on I was on the night shift and we monitored the  
17 flaring on the north side of the derailment.

18 Q. Tell us a little bit more about what involvement your company  
19 had in the transloading, flaring, or any other actions to recover  
20 the materials.

21 A. We were not involved in any transloading. We were only  
22 involved in the nighttime flaring operations, just more the  
23 monitoring of them.

24 Q. Can you describe that process for us?

25 A. They had -- and again, this was set up during the day, so I

1 don't know exactly how it was set up, but I believe it was just a  
2 line was coming out from underneath the tarps and then when --  
3 there's a jet pump, there was what we call a jet pump, to suck the  
4 vapors from underneath the tarps and send it to a flare, where we  
5 had propane burning so that the ammonia then would be burned up as  
6 it came through the flare.

7 Q. So can you tell us how that process with propane -- why is  
8 the propane used?

9 A. Anhydrous has a very small flammability range, so we use  
10 propane to be the main source of ignition and then the anhydrous  
11 is injected up through the center of the propane.

12 Q. Okay. And how long did that process require and how many  
13 cars was this done for?

14 A. We were in charge of monitoring the two cars on the north  
15 side and that went on during the duration of our time there.

16 Q. And how long was that?

17 A. What day did I come back? The 19th I came back -- no, I came  
18 back on the -- on the 21st, so that went on until then. After  
19 that, I don't know what was going on, I wasn't there.

20 Q. And when did that begin with the flaring?

21 A. I want to say the -- we started with it the night of the 8th.

22 Q. Okay. So you mentioned that you were basically assisting  
23 with the flaring, you did not set up the flare?

24 A. No, that was -- the setting up was done during the day.

25 Q. And who primarily was involved with that?

1 A. I have no idea, I wasn't there.

2 Q. What other contractors would've been on scene doing that sort  
3 of work?

4 A. I'm not sure who Canadian Pacific had doing it.

5 Q. Okay, but your role in this was just to assist in monitoring,  
6 is that what I'm hearing, is that correct?

7 A. Yes, and -- yes, our shift was from 7:00 at night until 7:00  
8 in the morning.

9 Q. Do you know how the decision was made to conduct flaring as  
10 opposed to other ways to empty the tank cars?

11 A. I was not involved in any of that.

12 Q. How about access to valves and fittings, was there any  
13 difficulty there?

14 A. Again, I wasn't involved with ever getting on them to deal  
15 with it, so I mean, there was water and difficult derailments, I  
16 -- I mean, they're piled on top of each other and, you know,  
17 initially things were on fire and once the fire was controlled,  
18 then they had better access to it, but I was never involved with  
19 actually going up and looking at any of them or doing any kind of  
20 assessment on them.

21 Q. Okay. So was there any issue getting access through normal  
22 means with valves and fittings or did you have to take other  
23 actions to get into the car?

24 A. I wasn't involved in it, I'm not sure what they did.

25 Q. Okay. Were you involved at all in moving any of the derailed

1 equipment subsequently to the flaring?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Okay. Did you make any notes or observations regarding  
4 breaching damages to any of the tank cars?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Do you have any knowledge about any of it?

7 A. I know there were breaches in them, I was never close enough  
8 to any of them to see what -- what was breached or how it was.

9 Q. Tell us what you know about the breaching damage.

10 A. There was some type of -- I was -- again, I wasn't involved  
11 in it, I never got close and looked at any of them to know how big  
12 a size or where the holes were.

13 Q. So your -- the five other employees that you deployed with,  
14 they were -- were they up in the -- in the yard or in the  
15 derailment scene, itself?

16 A. No, two of them were mainly doing air support, meaning  
17 working with the air crew or filling air bottles and cleaning air  
18 equipment as needed, and it was just one other gentleman and I  
19 that were working the night. Again, most operations -- most  
20 moving and other operations happen during the day. Nighttime  
21 operations, we're just maintaining and -- maintaining and  
22 monitoring the equipment.

23 Q. Okay. What sort of records did you maintain while on site?

24 A. Just the daily logs of what we -- what we did.

25 Q. And can you tell us how extensive that is?

1 A. Pretty much just documented that we assisted with what we  
2 assisted with or what we did throughout the day or during our work  
3 shift.

4 Q. Did you provide those to CPKC?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And who was your primary point of contact with CP?

7 A. It depended on who was on shift and they had different  
8 managers that would come in, so it depended on what manager was in  
9 charge of the night shift those days.

10 Q. No one in particular?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Okay. Did you collect any photography while out there?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Not involved in that?

15 A. No.

16 MR. STANCIL: All right, I'm going to -- at this time I'm  
17 going to pass it off to my colleagues, we'll go around the virtual  
18 room and have them -- give them an opportunity to ask you some  
19 additional questions, okay? I'm going to begin with Mr. Strot.

20 MR. STROT: I have no questions.

21 MR. STANCIL: Okay. Mr. Walker, FRA.

22 MR. WALKER: I have no questions.

23 MR. STANCIL: Mr. Gonzalez, PHMSA.

24 MR. GONZALEZ: No questions.

25 MR. STANCIL: Okay. Mr. Dankbar.

1 BY MR. DANKBAR:

2 Q. I just got a couple of brief ones. Mr. Mekeland, as part of  
3 your guys' assignment supporting fire operations, suppression  
4 operations, did your crews help staff or man any suppression lines  
5 or monitors?

6 A. No, that was primarily done with SRS and their staff.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. The first evening, for about an hour, we helped with the one  
9 fire pump, just manning, you know, RPMs and stuff with that, but  
10 then we were sent off and SRS took over.

11 MR. DANKBAR: Thank you. Do I have time for one more quick  
12 one, Paul?

13 MR. STANCIL: Certainly.

14 BY MR. DANKBAR:

15 Q. I have one more question for you, Mr. Mekeland. Can you  
16 briefly describe the geographic features that were on site there,  
17 was there standing water and anything to that effect that created  
18 any challenges getting access to the cars in the initial response?

19 A. Yes, between the -- I think it was a permanent access road  
20 and the track, there was standing water. It looked to be, I don't  
21 know, two to four feet deep, depending on the area. But the  
22 entire area where the cars -- where the cars were laying, I guess,  
23 was water on both sides. So, I mean, it wasn't -- you weren't  
24 able to walk right up to them from the access road.

25 MR. DANKBAR: Thank you, that's all I've got.

1 MR. STANCIL: Okay, thank you, Mr. Dankbar.

2 Mr. Lawler.

3 MR. LAWLER: No questions, no.

4 MR. STANCIL: Thank you, sir.

5 Mr. Casaceli.

6 BY MR. CASACELI:

7 Q. Good morning, Don. David Casaceli, NTSB. I do have a couple  
8 questions for you, can you hear me all right? I see you're  
9 bending your ear down.

10 A. Yeah, I'm just listening.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. My computer speakers are weak.

13 Q. Okay. I want to go back to when your team first arrived on  
14 scene or just before, can you give me a little breakdown on what  
15 kind of communications you guys had as you arrived on scene with  
16 the folks that were already there?

17 A. When we were -- as equipment was coming in, again, just  
18 travel speeds, we were kind of standard coming in, but I was the  
19 first to arrive, I talked with Mr. Dankbar and asked what  
20 equipment he wanted where and so the only equipment that came up  
21 initially was their command trailer. They asked where they wanted  
22 it staged, or I asked where we wanted it staged, so we -- where  
23 they wanted it and then from there it's unloading all the  
24 equipment that's within it and getting that set up. And then fire  
25 pumps were brought in next, the fire pumps came on up by the -- I

1 guess, staging area and they were staged and ready to go for  
2 deployment when that was needed. The air trailer was brought up  
3 and set up in the staging area and their transfer trailer was kept  
4 out of Cardwell (ph.) down the road, out on the highway, that  
5 initial night.

6 Q. Okay. How about with any -- regarding hazard communications  
7 and safety on site and the incident command and those types of  
8 things?

9 A. In regards to were we notified of the hazards?

10 Q. Yeah. And then what care were you guys taking as you were  
11 doing that work and stuff like that.

12 A. I mean, as we were setting stuff up, due to the -- we didn't  
13 have a whole lot of ammonia issues at that point, mostly because  
14 the fire was helping consume that. So again, we were, I guess,  
15 downwind in the command area so that wasn't an issue, so we just  
16 assisted with getting equipment and stuff together for people that  
17 were going to be down in that area working.

18 Q. When you say downwind in the command area, do you want to  
19 correct that to upwind?

20 A. Or upwind.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Thanks for that, great. I understand you guys played a  
24 fairly big supporting role, what role did other -- or excuse me,  
25 mainly a supporting role. What role did other entities on scene

1 play, if you kind of just give me a rundown of who was there while  
2 you were and what roles they were filling?

3 A. SRS was there and again, I was -- being we're mostly night,  
4 the initial -- the initial events, they were -- I think SRS was  
5 primarily involved with fire suppression, and other companies,  
6 SET, Beltrami were, again, more logistical support and that was, I  
7 think, that initial -- that initial response, they were the  
8 primary ones there.

9 Q. Got it. And were you around -- I understand, if I have my  
10 timeline correct, the evening of the 6th there was a fairly --  
11 there was a release of some kind, were you around the evening of  
12 the 6th when the site and/or command center was evacuated?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Can you talk to me a little bit through how that happened,  
15 where you were and kind of get a little granular through that part  
16 of the operation, if you can?

17 A. We were on -- I was -- myself and one other gentleman from my  
18 company, we were kind of more right in the middle of the site and  
19 when that, I don't know, cloud or bigger event happened, we just  
20 mobilized to -- I guess it would be the east, up the road, and so  
21 we just all evacuated to the east and then kind of just continued  
22 to come around the site, come back around via the normal roads  
23 back around to the site. By the time we got back on the command,  
24 you know, there was nothing, it was clear down there and we had  
25 radio communications with CP staff that was telling us whether it

1 was clear, you know, what areas were clear to come back in.

2 Q. How long did that last, that type of event where you guys  
3 were trying to stay out and avoid the ammonia?

4 A. I mean, it was -- again, the drive going around side by side  
5 wasn't a quick one by any stretch of the imagination, it probably  
6 takes 20 minutes to go around and so within that 20 minutes, by  
7 the time we got back around, it was clear up there.

8 MR. CASACELI: Okay. I appreciate it, that's what I have for  
9 now. Thank you, Don.

10 Go ahead, Paul.

11 BY MR. STANCIL:

12 Q. Yes, just a couple of follow-ups, sir, just to continue with  
13 this incident that occurred, you said, on the night of the 6th?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Yeah. Tell me a little bit more about that incident, can you  
16 describe what -- what actually happened?

17 A. I don't know what -- why -- I think just the weather, I guess  
18 the atmospheric conditions had changed and dew points were heavy,  
19 so the ammonia just laid down and the breezes or the wind that we  
20 did have just became very still, so the ammonia just laid down and  
21 it looks for water and being a bunch of water there, that's -- I  
22 mean, that's -- you know, and especially with the dew point being  
23 as high as it was, it just kind of laid down and just kind of  
24 stayed, with no wind, it just stayed in that area.

25 Q. Okay. Was this associated with any particular event that

1 occurred with the tank cars themselves?

2 A. No, I don't think, nothing with the tank cars or anything had  
3 changed at that point, it's just weather conditions changed what  
4 was -- where the ammonia was going.

5 Q. Understood. Were you all involved in any of the plume  
6 modeling or air monitoring?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Okay. Okay, I think that's all I have. Are there any other  
9 issues that you're aware of that you think we haven't asked you  
10 about, that you think we should know?

11 A. No, we did -- I mean, again, we were more of a supporting  
12 role in this event, so you know, we were just kind of there  
13 supporting others.

14 MR. STANCIL: Okay. Well, Mr. Mekeland, I appreciate your  
15 time today. You have my contact information. If anything else  
16 comes to mind, you can feel free to reach back out to us and let  
17 us know. I do appreciate your time and your assistance with us on  
18 this investigation.

19 Before we go, is there anyone else that has a question that  
20 they would like to ask before we conclude the interview?

21 (No response.)

22 MR. STANCIL: Okay, seeing none, it is 10:40 a.m. and I will  
23 stop the recording now.

24 (Whereupon, at 10:40 a.m., the interview concluded.)

25

CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: CPKC TRAIN DERAILMENT IN BORDULAC,  
NORTH DAKOTA ON JULY 5, 2024  
Interview of Donald Mekeland

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD24LR012

PLACE: via Microsoft Teams

DATE: July 31, 2024

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.



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David A. Martini  
Transcriber



# National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

## Transcript Errata

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Subj: Transcript Review Request for: Derailment of CPKC Freight Train 242-03 with Hazardous Materials Release in Bordulac, North Dakota, on July 5, 2024.

Accident No.: RRD24LR012

To: Mr. Donald Mekeland

Dear Mr. Mekeland,

The enclosed transcript of your interview on July 31, 2024, is provided for your review and comment to ensure its accuracy. It is not for public release.

The transcript is investigative information of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) created as part of the NTSB's investigation into the derailment of CPKC freight train 242-03 with hazardous materials release in Bordulac, North Dakota, on July 5, 2024. (NTSB Accident No. RRD24LR012).

NTSB regulations prohibit the public release of investigative information prior to release by the NTSB without the permission of the NTSB Investigator in Charge (IIC). See 49 C.F.R. § 831.13(b). The IIC has not approved public release of this information at this time. Therefore, we request that you refrain from any further dissemination of this transcript.

Kindly review this transcript for accuracy and provide corrections, if any, in the attached table. Please print, sign, and return it to me via email by **September 6, 2024**. Please return or destroy the transcript after providing your comments.

Comments must be returned no later than September 6, 2024. Requests for an extension of this deadline must be in writing and received prior to the due date. If comments are not received by the due date, we will consider the transcript to be final without comment.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. If you have any question regarding the process, please feel free to contact me.

**Paul L. Stancil, CHMM**

*Senior Hazardous Materials Accident Investigator*

National Transportation Safety Board

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