

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

FIRE ABOARD SEPTA TRAIN NEAR THE *

CRUM LYNNE STATION IN RIDLEY PARK, * Accident No.: RRD25FR006

PENNSYLVANIA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025 *

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Interview of: DILLON BERWICK, Supervisor of Train Operations
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Tuesday,
July 29, 2025

APPEARANCES:

MICHAEL BACHMEIER, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

TODD KRAHOLIK, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

RICHARD SHERRY, Investigator-in-Charge
Federal Railroad Administration

DAVE GRAUBARD, Operating Practices Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration

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I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Dillon Berwick:	
By Mr. Bachmeier	5
By Ms. Williams	9
By Mr. Graubard	11
By Mr. Sherry	13
By Mr. Kraholik	15
By Mr. Bachmeier	26
By Mr. Graubard	27
By Mr. Sherry	29
By Mr. Bachmeier	32

I N T E R V I E W

(3:52 p.m.)

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2
3 MR. BACHMEIER: Good afternoon, my name is Mike Bachmeier and
4 I'm the NTSB IIC for this accident. We are here today on
5 July 29th at 3:52 in SEPTA headquarters to conduct an interview
6 with Dillon Berwick, who works for SEPTA. This interview is in
7 conjunction with the NTSB's investigation of the accident near
8 Paoli Station. The NTSB accident reference number is RRD25FR006.
9 Purpose of the investigation is to increase safety, not to assign
10 fault, blame, or liability.

11 Before we begin our interview and questions, let's go around
12 the table and introduce ourselves. Please spell your last name,
13 who you are representing, and your title. I'd like to remind
14 everyone to speak clearly so we can get an accurate recording.
15 I'll start off and then pass it off to my right.

16 Again, my name is Mike Bachmeier, spelling of my last name is
17 B-a-c-h-m-e-i-e-r, and I am the NTSB IIC for the accident.

18 MR. BERWICK: My name is Dillon Berwick, B-e-r-w-i-c-k, I'm
19 assistant director of the regional rail control center. I'm
20 representing, I guess, myself.

21 MS. WILLIAMS: Shandel (ph.) Williams, W-i-l-l-i-a-m-s,
22 Assistant Safety Operations Safety Officer.

23 MR. GRAUBARD: Dave Graubard, G-r-a-u-v-a-r-d, Operating
24 Practices Inspector with FRA.

25 MR. SHERRY: Richard Sherry, S-h-e-r-r-y, MP&E inspector with

1 the FRA and IIC on this accident investigation.

2 MR. KRAHOLIK: Todd Kraholik, K-r-a-h-o-l-i-k, NTSB and I'm
3 track.

4 MR. BACHMEIER: Okay, thank you.

5 Dillon, do we have your permission to record our discussion
6 with you today?

7 MR. BERWICK: Yes.

8 MR. BACHMEIER: Do you understand the transcripts will be
9 part of the public docket, as such we cannot guarantee any
10 confidentiality?

11 MR. BERWICK: Yes.

12 MR. BACHMEIER: As we discussed, you could've had a
13 representative with you today, you're representing yourself, is
14 that correct?

15 MR. BERWICK: Yes.

16 MR. BACHMEIER: Okay, I'd like to ask everyone to clearly
17 announce your name and title before questioning. With that, let's
18 proceed.

19 INTERVIEW OF DILLON BERWICK

20 BY MR. BACHMEIER:

21 Q. Dillon, could you give us a synopsis of your work experience
22 taking us up to your present job and how long you've been at your
23 current position?

24 A. Sure. I've been on the railroad for 13 years now, I did five
25 years with New Jersey Transit railroad line, I switched over to

1 SEPTA in 2016. I was a dispatcher at NJT, I was hired as a
2 dispatcher here at SEPTA. I backfilled the STO and chief STO
3 position, had both jobs, and I primarily switched to being an STO
4 and a chief STO right around the pandemic, so 2020, and I
5 officially took the job a little over a year and a half ago
6 upstairs.

7 Q. Okay, okay. Thank you. Can we go back to July 22nd, 3553
8 was coming southbound out of West Trenton, reported to the
9 dispatcher a slow acceleration, can you kind of give us a summary
10 of events with the 3553 until you went home that day?

11 A. Sure. So the 1 and 2 desk dispatcher received a report. I'm
12 assuming -- I don't know particularly where the train reported it
13 initially to the dispatcher, I know they put it in the ATDS chat
14 system, that the train reported slow to accelerate.

15 I did not see it until the train was going past K
16 interlocking, going out to Amtrak, but with the report of slow
17 acceleration, it's not abnormal, especially on GEs, considering
18 their age and it was going into Frazer Yard, scheduled to go into
19 Frazer Yard, so no further action was taken on my part in terms of
20 a mechanical response there at K.

21 The train continued through with no issues, they were on time
22 until they got to Villanova Station, at which point the train
23 contacted SEPTA 6 desk, who reported they didn't have enough speed
24 to get up the hill just outside Villanova, so a slight incline
25 there. And it was at that point I was in contact with C tech, the

1 chief, Amtrak chief and our mechanical desk, to troubleshoot. The
2 crew reset a fault, I don't recall which fault it was off my --
3 from memory, but they reset it, they were able to get enough speed
4 to clear the hill and they continued out to Paoli and when they
5 got to Paoli, I had actually -- I had actually given my transfer
6 to the third shift STO by this point and I was just more or less
7 in the process of leaving when they reported that they were slow
8 coming from the rear car of the consist, and then I ended up
9 staying, assisting the third shift STO by answering phones and
10 helping him out as much as I can because there was only one of us
11 for -- one for second and one for third, so with both phones
12 ringing it can get pretty hectic.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. So I was helping him with crew issues or service, you know,
15 passenger service, you know, anybody who was calling, just kind of
16 helping field phone calls, you know, and trying to solve the
17 issue.

18 Q. Okay. I just have one question for you. So like, after the
19 February fire --

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. -- they put out an EOP for mechanical, EOP for fire and
22 smoke --

23 A. Um-hum.

24 Q. -- on the RROCC. Did this slow acceleration, does that
25 trigger anything, was that part of this -- would this be part of

1 the -- would that have been part of this mechanical?

2 A. Slow acceleration, on its own, no, but we have trains that
3 report, you know, there was sluggish equipment or, you know, slow
4 to get up to speed for as long as I've been at SEPTA. It's not --
5 like I said, it's not abnormal to get a report of slow
6 acceleration. They're not saying like they can't -- you know, if
7 they're supposed to be doing 50, they're not saying they can't get
8 to 50, like, you know, it's not like if they're limited to 20
9 miles an hour, because then it's obviously something more. But
10 slow to get up to 50 or whatever the speed may be, has never been
11 a -- you know, cause for, you know, a red flag.

12 Q. When the dispatcher put -- if there still would've been a
13 mechanical defect and they put this into the chat --

14 A. Um-hum.

15 Q. -- is the normal that they would get a hold of you verbally
16 or call you or talk to you face to face and say this train had a
17 defect, and did any of that take place because they did put it in
18 the chat, but did the dispatcher contact you and let you know that
19 they put this in the chat?

20 A. So they put it in the chat, I think it was right around 9
21 o'clock-ish was when it was put into the chat, but there was no
22 verbal discussion of the defect. And again, I mean, I'm just
23 assuming in their mind said it was the same thing of slow
24 acceleration is not abnormal, you know, and there's multiple
25 groups that monitor that chat, so like the mechanical desk and C&S

1 desk, they all monitor the same chat. So, you know, that -- we
2 more or less will put things in there, not only to notify each
3 other, but the other departments, as well. So for example, prior
4 to coming down here today, we had a train that -- you know, a
5 pantograph dropped on it, so that gets put into the chat and the
6 mechanical desk then knows that, you know, MU X-Y-Z had a pan drop
7 and they report it for their mechanical aspect of it.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. But there was no verbal discussion or, you know, decision
10 making based on slow acceleration.

11 MR. BACHMEIER: Okay, thank you.

12 Shandel.

13 BY MS. WILLIAMS:

14 Q. Shandel Williams, Assistant Safety. Dillon, you in your
15 position as an STO or chief dispatcher, what information are you
16 responsible for then, to put into the chat?

17 A. It's a wide variety of information. I'll put out, obviously,
18 like service instructions, so line suspensions, annulments,
19 emergency situations, and that's -- those are the big ones I can
20 think of offhand, but like as a dispatcher, like the track changes
21 and, you know, all that type of stuff. As an STO, I don't really
22 deal with, like, the --

23 Q. The mundane issues.

24 A. -- the mundane --

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. -- in-and-out of railroad operation. I'm more of the overall
2 emergency kind of response. Big picture.

3 Q. Okay. And were there any significant events happening that
4 night besides --

5 A. There was a gentleman in the vicinity of 20th Street
6 interlocking, there's a pretty high retaining wall there, it was a
7 trespasser who fell from the retaining wall into the track area on
8 the 1 track side at 20th Street and then he -- I don't know if he
9 -- I don't know officially if he broke his leg, but he couldn't
10 stand, so we were dealing with -- I was dealing with the response
11 to that.

12 Q. You were dealing with -- oh, you were dealing with that --

13 A. That trespasser that fell.

14 Q. Around what time, at the same time?

15 A. It was very close to this incident, I'm not sure of exactly
16 when, but it was late, you know, later at night. So I was dealing
17 with it, I was talking to the train crew directly to confirm,
18 because I asked, I got on the radio and asked if he was clear of
19 the track, that was my first concern, he was laying with a busted
20 leg on -- in the track area and they said he was clear and he was
21 sitting against the retaining wall. And then I was dealing with
22 SEPTA police and getting them from Suburban out to 20th Street,
23 which is in between the two, 20th Street and 30th Street Station.

24 Q. Okay. And then did you have a chief working with you?

25 A. I did not.

1 Q. So it was just you?

2 A. I was by myself.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And that's because we're short on people.

5 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay, that's it.

6 BY MR. GRAUBARD:

7 Q. Dave Graubard, FRA. That chat that you folks use --

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. -- how busy is that, like, how frequently is somebody putting
10 something in there?

11 A. It depends on the day, some days it's -- there's, you know,
12 75-plus entries in an eight-hour shift and other days, if it's
13 quiet, you'll have one or two.

14 Q. Is there -- who's overall -- like, is there any party that's
15 overall responsible for monitoring that, ensuring whoever is
16 responsible for that particular problem is following up with it?

17 A. So the STO and the chief STO and then the six dispatchers are
18 all supposed to monitor the chat, you know what I mean? Like I
19 said, I'll put something in there and then I'll verbally tell
20 somebody, so -- because it's a lot of people that that chat goes
21 to, it's stations, it's C&S desk, it's mechanical desk, it's the
22 yardmasters, you know, it's kind of just like an internal
23 communication system. But in terms of specifics, like, we all
24 monitor it, but I don't know if there's a designated person that's
25 like in charge of monitoring it.

1 Q. Is there any way in there to -- is there some way to
2 designate like a message that might have priority over something
3 else or is it all just --

4 A. No, it's just -- it's all just normal.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. There's no, like -- like you said, like priority messaging or
7 anything like that, no color changes or nothing, just normal --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- black and white text.

10 Q. Okay. Do you have any regular meetings or briefings with the
11 mechanical department, for example, during which they might say
12 hey, this is something we're keeping an eye on or these are
13 symptoms, indicators of a problem that you might want to keep an
14 eye out for?

15 A. I do not.

16 Q. When you start your duties as an STO, a dispatcher, is there
17 any kind of training where they go over anything like that,
18 anything additional?

19 A. In terms of mechanical?

20 Q. Mechanical or, you know, hey, these are indicators of a
21 problem that we -- that we're -- you know, we want to make sure we
22 follow up on versus the (indiscernible).

23 A. No. No training towards any, like, mechanical issues.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Like, they'll put -- you know, like, they have a policy now

1 upstairs about if a train reports dynamic braking faults, for
2 example, they want the train pulled, but that came out yesterday.

3 Q. Can you give me an example of what a dynamic braking fault
4 is? Like, what's one that would bump it up to the next level?

5 A. So be a hundred percent honest with you -- excuse me -- to be
6 a hundred percent honest with you, I don't know what a dynamic
7 braking fault is. I'm not an engineer. You know, if you tell me
8 to go and check the breaker box for a fault light, I couldn't tell
9 you how to do that.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. You know, we have -- we have a -- I guess around the start of
12 this year they brought the mechanical desk back, which we never
13 had, or we had for a while, then they took it away and then they
14 brought it back and that's a person that's on the desk that's a
15 mechanic and that's now staffed, I think, around the clock with
16 the exception of Friday and Saturdays, but we call them and then
17 they kind of handle the mechanical responsibility. Like I said,
18 if it's a dynamic fault or a motor overload fault, you know, I
19 couldn't tell you what the difference is. I've never taken a
20 mechanical class.

21 Q. Does that mechanical desk person have access to that chat?

22 A. Yes. Yeah, they're monitoring it, as well.

23 MR. GRAUBARD: Okay. That's all I have for now, thank you.

24 MR. BERWICK: Um-hum.

25 BY MR. SHERRY:

1 Q. Rick Sherry, FRA. Dillon, where is K interlock?

2 A. K interlocking is just south of 30th Street Station.

3 Q. Just south.

4 A. That's kind of the last point between SEPTA and to when they
5 would switch over to Amtrak dispatching.

6 Q. At that time is when you said you noticed that train, 3553,
7 was in the chat?

8 A. Yes. Yeah, right roughly around as they were going through
9 the K.

10 Q. It was in that section.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Was that -- did you notice before that chat or after Miguel
13 notified you that there was an issue with the train sluggish?

14 A. I'm sorry, could you repeat the question?

15 Q. Let's go this route. Did Ken and/or Miguel ever notify you
16 verbally that this train was running sluggish?

17 A. No. The only indication I had of it was in the chat.

18 Q. In the chat.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And I looked up, when I read that, to see where that train
22 was and I pulled it up on the ATDS and saw he was clear of K and
23 en route towards Frazer Yard.

24 Q. Okay. Now, you said this train was running on time?

25 A. Correct, it was three minutes early to Suburban.

1 Q. All right. It wasn't late at all going into Suburban and it
2 wasn't late getting into Villanova?

3 A. It was not late at Suburban, I can't -- I don't know what
4 time it got to Villanova, offhand.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. I don't know if they lost time between 30th Street and -- or
7 excuse me, Suburban and Villanova.

8 Q. Were you on your current position when the first crew had it
9 coming from West Trenton to Suburban?

10 A. Yes, I was still on shift.

11 Q. Okay. And when did they bring the mechanical desk back and
12 is it in the same location as you showed us at?

13 A. I believe it was around January of this year, January or
14 February, and they are not on the 19th floor with us, they are
15 down, I believe, on either 13 or 14.

16 Q. Did they used to be on the 19th floor?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. In your opinion and your opinion only, would it be beneficial
19 to SEPTA to have the mechanical desk back on the 19th floor?

20 A. Yes, it would -- it would alleviate a lot of the phone tag of
21 going back and forth and it would enable a faster kind of response
22 to whatever the problem was.

23 MR. SHERRY: I have no further questions.

24 BY MR. KRAHOLIK:

25 Q. Todd Kraholik with the NTSB. What does STO stand for?

1 A. Supervisor or superintendent of train operations.

2 Q. And what is your duties, what do you typically do during the
3 day? What are your responsibilities?

4 A. I kind of juggle two different tasks, so we're shorthanded,
5 for example, so sometimes I'm playing chief STO and STO and then
6 -- but in terms of a day-to-day, I have administrative work that I
7 have to keep on top of, as well as operational requirements. So
8 the operational requirements would be I monitor train delays for
9 service and making sure that the CCIM, which is the -- like, I'd
10 say like the social media aspect of SEPTA is updated so that
11 people can check Twitter or whatever and see what their trains are
12 looking like, so I got to make sure they stay informed. I have to
13 inform rail announcers who are up there with us of, you know,
14 service disruption, track delays, whatever.

15 I'm communicating with passenger services down on the
16 station, they call us looking for people leaving phones on trains
17 or, you know, lost backpacks or, you know, I'm dealing -- I deal
18 with SEPTA police, I deal with the track department, with the ET
19 department, the signal department, the yardmasters and trying to
20 get trains made up to be the correct consist so that they can
21 quit. I monitor every outlying point, yard quits for the night,
22 so I got to make sure if it's a five-car train that's supposed to
23 go to Doylestown, that he has five cars so that they have five
24 cars in the morning. And then I keep a UOR, which is like the
25 written log of all the events, abnormal events that happen, I'm

1 sending out HIP (ph.) links, things like -- so that's kind of like
2 the operational side of it, but then then administrative side of
3 it is I'm responsible for ensuring timesheets are correct, I'm
4 responsible for ensuring there's no sick abuse patterns, so log in
5 like when people are marking off. We have to do, like, compliance
6 checks on dispatchers themselves, there's a -- I don't know what
7 the official name of it is, but there's like an internal control
8 center compliance check that has to be done every day. So I just
9 kind of -- those are the two things, kind of an operational and an
10 administrative.

11 Q. So are train delays a big deal at SEPTA?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Is there an acceptable amount that a train can be delayed or
14 is any delay bad?

15 A. So officially, anything over six minutes is considered
16 delayed. We have software called TrainView and it just kind of
17 lists all of the trains and as they become over six minutes, they
18 turn yellow, which lets us know okay, this train is delayed and
19 then we have to look into it, as to why and input, you know,
20 remarks and things like that, so it's a -- it's a pretty big deal.

21 Q. So if mechanical gets sent out to look at a train, does that
22 delay the train at all?

23 A. Yes. The length of the delay can vary depending on what the
24 cause of the mechanical issue is. Sometimes it can be they're on
25 -- they're in and out within a couple minutes and then sometimes,

1 you know, 10-plus minutes.

2 Q. So has anybody ever told you let's keep the trains running
3 and not send mechanical because of the delays, have you ever heard
4 that from anybody before?

5 A. No.

6 Q. So there's not a push to keep the trains running and not be
7 inspected? There's not -- is there a push for that or not?

8 A. From within the control center, no.

9 Q. What about external on the control center?

10 A. I've spoken with yardmasters who are being pressured to send
11 out proper consists, that normally I don't know if they would run
12 them. I've heard of trains, for example, let's say it's a six-car
13 train, you know, you have a good car on the south end and a good
14 car on the north end and they may put some bad cars that aren't a
15 hundred percent mechanically up to speed, to make the required
16 consist level.

17 Q. Consist level being if it's supposed to be a four-car train,
18 make sure they have four cars.

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. Does that happen often?

21 A. It's happened a lot recently.

22 Q. Gotcha, gotcha. So --

23 A. So -- sorry, go ahead.

24 Q. No, go ahead.

25 A. I was going to say, from an STO perspective, you know, I work

1 all three shifts and sometimes I'm on overnight and the overnight
2 guy, we put out an e-mail usually around 4:00 a.m. of what cars or
3 what trains are short at outlying points and how many cars and
4 what we did to remedy that shortage and that started within, I'd
5 say, a year or so at most now, that particular e-mail of trying to
6 make sure that if it's a five-car train out of Doylestown, that
7 it's five cars.

8 Q. So the number of cars is more important than the mechanical
9 soundness of the cars?

10 A. I can't fully attest to that from a company perspective, but
11 from my perspective, that's how it seems at times.

12 Q. Right, right.

13 A. You know, because we have trains that leave the yard, get to
14 16th Street interlocking and are breaking down.

15 Q. And 16th's right out of the yard, I'm assuming?

16 A. It's not even a mile --

17 Q. Right.

18 A. -- down the railroad.

19 Q. Gotcha.

20 A. You know, and like I've been -- I personally have been there
21 when -- you know, we'll shop a train at 9:00 p.m., you know, for
22 whatever mechanical issue, it comes back out at 6:00 a.m. with the
23 same mechanical issue the next day, you know, and -- so my
24 schedule is I work Sunday to Thursdays, primarily second shift,
25 and there's no mechanical support at, like, Powelton Yard, for

1 example, you know, they don't come in until 10:00 p.m. and so like
2 from 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., if I have a mechanical issue, I have
3 usually eight spare cars and that's it for the entire -- and
4 that's not just for me, that's first shift, second shift and third
5 shift, we keep it at eight, we keep eight spare cars down at
6 Suburban Station to swap any mechanical issues out during that
7 16-hour period, from first to essentially third.

8 Q. So, in talking to crews and everybody, sometimes equipment
9 gets swapped out, sometimes it doesn't, so that would be depending
10 on if the eight cars are sitting there or the eight cars are not.

11 A. Yeah, so ideally, if I have something -- because I got to
12 steal it, that's the thing, so if I -- if I have a train that is
13 having a mechanical issue and I have another train that's here
14 that's going to Roberts Yard, I can steal that Roberts Yard quit
15 to swap trains, essentially, to send to the Roberts quit to
16 Doylestown and then send the other car into Roberts. That's the
17 ideal situation, but we're so short on consists or on cars
18 anymore, you know, that that Roberts train that I just stole, is
19 supposed to spin back out as another revenue train and now they
20 don't have the cars to do it because I took them.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. You know what I mean?

23 Q. Gotcha.

24 A. And like it's a -- it's not an argument, but like it's a big
25 thing back and forth with the control center and the particular

1 yards because we -- like a hot car for example, you know, a
2 hundred degrees today, you can't have people running around, you
3 know, no air condition in the cars, so we'll take them and then
4 the yardmasters will think well, that was supposed to be my next
5 airport train, so now I'm short four cars and then they got to
6 talk to mechanical within the yard to try to scrounge equipment to
7 make a four-car draft to come back out.

8 Q. I gotcha. I gotcha. So some of these new SOPs that we've
9 seen that have come out, it ways the STO or chief has to get
10 notified, what does that mean to you, what does notify mean?
11 You're the one that has to get notified, what does it mean to be
12 notified?

13 A. In terms of from the dispatchers?

14 Q. Correct.

15 A. So the dispatchers will take an initial report of whatever's
16 going on. The majority of them will turn around and say hey, you
17 know, I have, you know, X, Y, and Z going on out here and we'll
18 talk about it and formulate a plan and then I'll tell them all
19 right, let's do this, put that in the chat and then I go and do
20 whatever response I need to do for the problem.

21 Q. Okay. So notify would be turning around and having a
22 discussion with you?

23 A. Yes. Because, you know, if it's a major service disruption
24 or, you know, whatever, like yesterday was a mess, you know, and I
25 was by myself, you know, I'm answering two phone -- or six phone

1 lines, you know, I'm dealing with all the other departments
2 directly, I don't necessarily see every single thing that's put in
3 the chat. I try to, you know, I try to keep on top of it, but
4 sometimes it's just not possible, you know. And for the most
5 part, everyone I work with is pretty good of if it's a major
6 thing, you know, hey, this is what's going on, you know, to keep
7 you in the loop but, you know, it can get overwhelming.

8 Q. That was going to be where I was going to go next, how do you
9 monitor the chat with everything going on, but -- but talk to me
10 about -- you just said that a major thing, you know what I mean,
11 they try and keep you updated on major things, how does a
12 dispatcher know what a major thing is if they don't have any
13 mechanical background, how are they supposed to know what's
14 important and what's not? Is there any -- do you have a sheet
15 that sits there and says, you know, if you hear this, this and
16 this, it's a major issue and this is minor, or how does anybody
17 know what it is?

18 A. There's no, like, mechanical cheat sheet of like if you get,
19 you know, this issue, do this or if you get this issue, do that,
20 there's none of that. It's just kind of case by case, you know.
21 Some of the mechanical aspects we're very familiar with, like oh,
22 I'm having a door issue, like, we can lock doors out, you know
23 what I mean, like the basic mechanical things, you know, everyone
24 kind of has a solid grasp on but, you know, like I said, you know,
25 you tell me to go reset such and such breaker in such and such

1 panel, you know, I have no idea what that means, you know. And
2 the thing is, is sometimes the mechanical desk, which has a radio
3 and has a phone, can't communicate directly with the trains. So
4 they're relaying, I got the phone to my ear, you know, tell them
5 to reset the G-12 breaker and I got to get on the radio and say
6 reset the G-12 breaker and the crew will ask me a question and I
7 got to turn and ask them, you know, it's -- it's messy.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. Can be messy.

10 Q. Right. So you're in charge of the dispatchers, right, you
11 would be their supervisor.

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. So when -- or on the day of -- let's just talk about the day
14 this fire happened, the train dispatch had leaned over your
15 shoulder and said hey, you know, the train's running sluggish or
16 whatever, it appears the message didn't get back to you because
17 you said you didn't get notified, but if someone turned around to
18 you and said hey, we got a sluggish train and you actually
19 acknowledged it, does that mean anything to you, a sluggish train?
20 Does that mean, really, anything?

21 A. No.

22 Q. So is there anybody talking to these dispatchers and say hey,
23 we got start clarifying what sluggish means or we just --
24 everybody's used the word sluggish, but it doesn't seem like
25 anybody has an answer of what sluggish necessarily is, so is

1 anybody defining what -- or trying to get the dispatchers to come
2 up with more detail, is that an SOP for the dispatchers to try and
3 figure out what these problems mean? Or are you guys just so
4 slammed back there, you just take what you can and run with it, is
5 that what's kind of going on?

6 A. So prior to Monday, that kind of was the standard procedure
7 because like I said, slow equipment, sluggish equipment, these
8 cars are 50 years old, like, it's not abnormal but it's not
9 affecting their movement, you know, and there's -- they're not
10 reporting any other fault lights or, you know, issues. We'll get
11 it looked at when we can get it, but you know, keep rolling at
12 that point.

13 And like I said, this particular train in question was going
14 into Frazer Yard and it was done for the night, you know, so like
15 I said, it wouldn't be a red flag prior to Monday. Now they want
16 to -- they gave us kind of like four categories of things to stop
17 the train right where it is.

18 Q. Right. And I was kind of reading the new SOP and I feel like
19 I don't know if this would've necessarily caught in any of those
20 four categories. Just being reported as sluggish, I still don't
21 see how it would get caught in there unless the dispatcher probes
22 them and says hey, you know, how many times did you reset that
23 fault, you know, because there's a thing there if it's multiple
24 faults.

25 A. Right.

1 Q. But no one is telling dispatchers to do that, I don't
2 understand how the dispatchers are going to know to start getting
3 more information from them, it --

4 A. My assumption would be because this would -- sluggish would
5 potentially fall under propulsion, which is one of the things now
6 that we would, you know, have to stop it -- we'll, you know, kind
7 of get more information. But as far as I know for this particular
8 train in question, I don't think there were reported any fault
9 lights, it was just slow, you know --

10 Q. Right.

11 A. -- and like I said, prior to Monday, that wouldn't have been
12 an issue and I don't necessarily know if this new policy is going
13 to solve all the problems because I don't really know what
14 happened with the train in question. I still don't really know
15 why it caught fire, you know.

16 Q. Right.

17 A. I couldn't tell you.

18 Q. Right.

19 A. But it's kind of -- I think this new policy's kind of like a
20 catchall and as I dealt with yesterday, it's just we're annulling
21 trains like crazy. Probably be the same thing today.

22 Q. Right. When the new policy came out, did anybody brief with
23 you on it or did you just get handed an e-mail and you read it
24 and --

25 A. So it came out either late Friday night or early Saturday

1 morning, which was my day off, so I actually saw it at home and I
2 had questions, I actually called right then, I called that night
3 my acting director because we're vacant right now, I called him to
4 inquire, I'm like, well, what does this -- is this every fault
5 light or is it certain fault lights and he said I'm not sure, so
6 he had to call to check and, you know, it kind of went from there.
7 And then when I came in yesterday afternoon, I actually had called
8 in to the floor chief's office and they were writing a revision to
9 the policy already to specify more specifically what type of
10 faults they're looking for.

11 Q. I gotcha.

12 A. Which I don't know if you guys got the second updated one or
13 not.

14 MR. SHERRY: Have you guys gotten it?

15 MR. BERWICK: I got it yesterday, yeah.

16 MR. SHERRY: The revision yesterday?

17 MR. BERWICK: Yeah, I can send it to you. Actually, I have
18 it on my phone.

19 MR. KRAHOLIK: Yeah, we can get it later, but I don't have
20 any further questions.

21 BY MR. BACHMEIER:

22 Q. Okay. With the revision, because on the Silverliner Iv's --

23 A. Um-hum.

24 Q. -- they just got a general fault light, so I'd be curious to
25 see what this new one says, but -- and then next question is how

1 many cars is supposed to be on, like, that 3553?

2 A. I don't remember offhand, I would have to double-check, but I
3 believe it's typically a five-car set to Thorndale.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. But I'm not a hundred percent on that.

6 Q. Four to five cars. And then -- so that's just kind of like
7 they had extra cars, you would just -- is that the yardmaster that
8 adds the cars there or is that --

9 A. So the yardmasters make the -- make them up --

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. -- in, you know, morning or overnight for each day and send
12 them out.

13 MR. BACHMEIER: Okay, that's all I got.

14 MS. WILLIAMS: No further questions.

15 BY MR. GRAUBARD:

16 Q. Dave Graubard, FRA. Who has the ultimate authority to set
17 equipment out on the train, is that -- would that be your call,
18 the dispatchers, I mean, how does that work?

19 A. The ultimate authority as in -- could you clarify it some?

20 Q. If you get any reason for concern, a crew calls in and
21 reports whatever problem, who has the authority to say okay, we're
22 going to set -- we're going to delay this train, set it out until
23 we can get other power up out there?

24 A. So it's kind of a mixture, a mixed bag, kind of. If it's a
25 pure mechanical issue, like a crew called up and said I got a

1 general fault, like, we'll run that through the mechanical desk
2 and say this is what they're experiencing or, you know, whether
3 they can still continue to move or not, you know, and vice versa
4 and then the mechanical desk will say all right, yeah, you can
5 send that or we need to try to swap it out or, you know, whatever
6 the case may be. But there are certain things that we deal with
7 directly in terms of like if they cut their PTC out or their cab
8 signals, you know, we have procedures in place, like, okay, that
9 can't go past a yard because it's got to go in to get repaired
10 and/or bypasses getting cut out, you know, we know it's got to
11 come off the road, you know, so those types of decisions of things
12 we know, we'll pull them off ourselves.

13 Q. Okay. Do you have your Sunday hours of service in your
14 position?

15 A. I'm sorry?

16 Q. The hours of service log, do you fill out, sign the book ever
17 for --

18 A. So we, as STOs, are not under hours of service.

19 Q. Okay. All right, last question. Do you personally have any
20 suggestions to improve these processes?

21 A. In terms of in the control center?

22 Q. In the control center in terms of, you know, would you like
23 folks to send more -- would you personally like more training on
24 this stuff, do you think the crews need more training? I'm just
25 -- I'm just curious.

1 A. I mean, if they were to offer, like, a -- you know, a
2 Mechanical 101, you know, I would gladly take it but, you know, I
3 think given our current staffing levels, I don't know when I would
4 be able to take it, you know, because we're -- there's six of us
5 right now and there's supposed to be 10, you know, and 18
6 dispatchers out of 30, you know, so like ideally, yes, I would
7 love to, you know, get a Mechanical 101, but we just don't have
8 the manpower to do it.

9 Q. You said there's supposed to be 10, how long has it been less
10 than -- less than the slotted spots?

11 A. Like I said, I started backfilling as STO and I pretty much
12 transitioned to doing it year round as a dispatcher in like 2020.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. So we haven't had a full staff since at least then.

15 MR. GRAUBARD: Okay. Okay, that's all I have, thank you.

16 BY MR. SHERRY:

17 Q. Rick Sherry, FRA. I want to piggyback off of Mr. Graubard
18 here. My concern is some communication getting out to you, you
19 said you weren't aware of any faults on this train coming down to
20 West Trenton to Suburban Station, you had reports of Car 113 being
21 reset twice for power fault, Car 418 being set once and then from
22 Suburban Station up to Villanova, I had 114 or 113 being -- 114 or
23 117 being reset once and 325 being reset once. That information's
24 not getting to you, is it?

25 A. When you said 325, did you mean 3:25 p.m. or --

1 Q. No, the car number.

2 A. Car 325.

3 Q. Yeah, I'm talking about the car number.

4 A. So do we -- was that reset by mechanical or was the crew's
5 resetting that?

6 Q. The crew's resetting that per your memo e-mail, has to get to
7 somebody.

8 A. Yeah, so those -- they were reset by the crews, they were not
9 -- that was not radioed in to us.

10 Q. Is it getting radioed in now? I understand this memo, you
11 know, is from the 25th, I understand that's prior, this accident
12 happened prior to that. Has anything come across your desk after
13 the 25th memo come out, that you're being notified when something
14 gets reset twice now?

15 A. I have not been notified of anything being reset twice, but
16 -- and like, for example, yesterday I am being notified more of
17 fault lights that we normally, I don't think, were being notified
18 of.

19 Q. Okay. Second question, do you understand dynamic braking and
20 how it works or what it even is?

21 A. I have a basic understanding of it, I don't have an expertise
22 technical level of understanding.

23 Q. Give me your opinion of what dynamic braking is and how it
24 works.

25 A. So dynamic braking, from what I understand, is when the

1 brakes are being applied with the -- lack of a better word, brake
2 pads and not so much with the bottled air, or is that backwards?

3 Q. I'm asking you.

4 A. Okay. So that's my answer, then, it's more of a friction
5 brake as opposed to using, like, the air. That could be way
6 wrong, though.

7 Q. I just wanted to see what you did or didn't know and to --
8 are you going to, then, ask the right questions to a crew or
9 you're taking the crew's knowledge and they're passing it on to
10 you? Per this memo now.

11 A. I'm sorry, could you ask that one more time?

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. I want to make sure I understand.

14 Q. Per the new memo --

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. -- okay, if your dynamic brake is not functioning properly,
17 they're to notify you, sticking, dragging, so to say, you're just
18 taking that and run with it, you're not asking any further
19 questions, correct?

20 A. I would ask a follow-up question of what is the issue, in
21 terms of like you said, if it's sticking or, you know, the brakes
22 are not releasing a hundred percent, whatever, but beyond that, I
23 wouldn't know what questions to ask, I would be in contact with
24 mechanical.

25 MR. SHERRY: No further questions.

1 MR. BACHMEIER: We're all good?

2 BY MR. BACHMEIER:

3 Q. Dillon, do you have anything you would like to add?

4 A. I don't think so.

5 Q. Okay. If we have any follow-up questions, would you mind if
6 we contacted you?

7 A. Sure, that's fine.

8 MR. BACHMEIER: Well, on behalf of the NTSB, our crew here,
9 thanks for your time and cooperation and coming in for this
10 interview, thank you.

11 MR. BERWICK: No problem.

12 (Whereupon, at 4:36 p.m., the interview concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: FIRE ABOARD SEPTA TRAIN NEAR THE
CRUM LYNNE STATION IN RIDLEY PARK,
PENNSYLVANIA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025
Interview of Dillon Berwick

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD25FR006

PLACE: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

DATE: July 29, 2025

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.



David A. Martini
Transcriber