

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Investigation of:)
SEPTA Fire) Accident No.: RRD25FR006
)

Interview of: ISAAC KURUVILA, Engineer

Pages: 1 through 19

Place: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Date: September 26, 2025

HERITAGE REPORTING CORPORATION
Official Reporters



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:)
SEPTA Fire) Accident No.: RRD25FR006
)

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Friday,
September 26, 2025

Interview of: ISAAC KURUVILA, Engineer

[REDACTED]

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. KRAHOLIK: My name is Todd Kraholik. I'm the
3 NTSB Assistant IIC for this accident. We're here
4 today on September 26, 2025 in Philadelphia,
5 Pennsylvania, to conduct an interview with Isaac
6 Kuruvila, who works for SEPTA.

7 This interview is in conjunction with NTSB's
8 investigation of a fire that happened on September 25,
9 2025, at Gravers Station. The NTSB Accident Reference
10 Number is RRD25FR006.

11 The purpose of this investigation is to increase
12 safety, not to assign fault, blame, or liability.

13 Before we begin our interview and questions,
14 let's go around the table and introduce ourselves.
15 Please spell your last name, who you represent, and
16 your title.

17 I'd like to remind everybody please speak clearly
18 so we can get an accurate recording.

19 I'll start off and pass to my right.

20 Again, my name is Todd Kraholik. The spelling of
21 my last name is K-R-A-H-O-L-I-K, and I'm the NTSB
22 Assistant IIC.

23 MR. SHERRY: Richard Sherry. Last name is
24 spelled S-H-E-R-R-Y. FRA ICC on this incident.

25 MR. MAHON: Rich Mahon. Last name spelled

1 M-A-H-O-N. Assistant Chief Officer, SEPTA Railroad
2 Operations.

3 MR. POINSETTE: John Poinsette. Last name
4 spelled P-O-I-N-S-E-T-T-E. Director of Railroad
5 Operations and Yards.

6 MR. KURUVILA: Isaac Kuruvila. K-U-R-U-V-I-L-A.
7 SEPTA Engineer.

8 MR. HILL: Don Hill, BLET, Representative for the
9 Engineer.

10 MR. KRAHOLIK: Spell your name.

11 MR. HILL: H-I-L-L.

12 MR. THOMPSON: Jeff Thompson. T-H-O-M-P-S-O-N.
13 Senior Director for Railroad Vehicle Maintenance.

14 MR. KRAHOLIK: All right. Thank you.

15 Isaac, do we have your permission to record our
16 discussion today?

17 MR. KURUVILA: Yes, you do.

18 MR. KRAHOLIK: And do you understand the
19 transcription will be part of a public docket and, as
20 such, we can't confirm any confidentiality?

21 MR. KURUVILA: Yes.

22 MR. KRAHOLIK: And as we discussed, you have a
23 representative today. It's Don Hill, is that correct?

24 MR. KURUVILA: Yes.

25 MR. KRAHOLIK: All right. Everybody please

1 clearly announce your name and title before you start
2 a question.

3 INTERVIEW OF ISAAC KURUVILA

4 BY MR. KRAHOLIK:

5 Q Isaac, can you give us a synopsis of your work
6 history? Take us up to your present job and how long
7 you've been in your current position.

8 A I've been with SEPTA since 2009, September -- no,
9 from August. And I got promoted as an engineer in
10 2014. If I recall it right, it was July 3. So I've
11 been running trains for the last 12 years, I guess.

12 Q All right. What did you do before you were an
13 engineer? Were you assistant conductor and conductor?

14 A Yes, I was an assistant conductor for four years.

15 Q Okay. And on the 24th, you took Train 729, is
16 that correct?

17 A Yes, I did.

18 Q And you got on at Suburban and you relieved Mr.
19 Guzman, the engineer, off that train, right?

20 A Yes, mm-hmm.

21 Q Did you guys have a job briefing?

22 A Yes, we did.

23 Q And what did you guys talk about?

24 A We talked about -- he said we have five cars and
25 there were no D's. That's basic.

- 1 Q What does D's mean?
- 2 A No, like no full diesel, nothing like that.
- 3 Q Oh, full D's.
- 4 A Yes.
- 5 Q Okay. I got you. Gotcha. Did you guys talk
- 6 about any, like, problems with the trains or anything
- 7 like that there was?
- 8 A No.
- 9 Q He didn't say there was any problems?
- 10 A Yeah, there was none.
- 11 Q And did he see a fault light on or mention a
- 12 fault light to you or anything?
- 13 A No, he didn't say that.
- 14 Q And did you see one when you got on?
- 15 A I didn't. I didn't. By the way, I had a trainee
- 16 with me, so it was me and herself was on the train,
- 17 yeah.
- 18 Q Okay. And just to clarify, she was running the
- 19 train?
- 20 A She was running the train going to Trenton, and I
- 21 rolled the train on the way back.
- 22 Q So you ran it on the way back?
- 23 A On the way back, I did, yeah.
- 24 Q Okay. So you would have ran the 730 part of it?
- 25 A Yes.

1 Q Okay. And when you get the train at Suburban --

2 A Mm-hmm.

3 Q -- what are you required to do? Like, do you do
4 brake tests or anything or do inspections? What do
5 you do when you get on the train?

6 A No, I just make sure the seals are good and the
7 paperwork is good, and, obviously, you know, we do
8 look for the fault lights and all that, yeah.

9 Q Okay. And she didn't, the trainee with you, she
10 didn't mention any fault lights or anything?

11 A No, she did not.

12 Q And she didn't mention any problems with the way
13 the train was running?

14 A No, because I was standing right next to her.
15 So, yeah, she was doing everything.

16 Q Okay. Okay, I got you. When you took over the
17 train, you swapped ends. Did you happen to notice any
18 fault lights when you swapped ends?

19 A No, there was none.

20 Q None on?

21 A I mean, honestly, I don't recall it exactly, but
22 I think there was no lights.

23 Q Do you know, is there any procedure you're
24 supposed to do if you see a fault on, like a fault
25 light?

1 A Well, you should be calling it in, you know, let
2 the dispatch know there was a fault light on, yes.

3 Q Okay. Do you know if they -- how do you know
4 that? Was it a bulletin given to you? Or how --

5 A Yes, they had a memo came out. Yeah.

6 Q And how did you get that memo?

7 A Well, I was met by, I think, two roadies at the
8 platform and they gave it to me and they explained.

9 Q Roadies would be a SEPTA manager of some sort?

10 A Yes.

11 Q Okay. Gotcha. And how long ago was that? A
12 week or so ago? Do you remember?

13 A No, it's been -- I would say it's been about a
14 month or so, something, yeah.

15 Q Gotcha. Okay. And do they always meet you with
16 new memos and stuff, or is this something different?
17 Was this one special in that way, or --

18 A I guess this was special. Yeah, that's why.

19 Q I got you. So you -- by them meeting you and
20 giving it to you and briefing with you on it, you
21 would expect it was probably something special for
22 them to do that? They don't always do that, right?

23 A I mean, usually, I mean, if something serious
24 like this, you know, we had the previous, what do you
25 call, the fire, so definitely this was much serious

1 than anything else.

2 Q Okay. And if you run into a problem and you've
3 got to call it in, who do you call it in to?

4 A We call whoever the dispatch who is in charge, I
5 mean, for that location. We call them up and we just
6 let them know the lights are on, all the fault lights.

7 Q Do you reset them first and then call them, or do
8 you call them when --

9 A I try to reset them, yeah.

10 Q Okay. If you can get the light to reset on its
11 own, do you call it in still?

12 A No.

13 Q Okay.

14 A That's my personal thing. I don't.

15 Q And do you know what a MP-11 is?

16 A That's a form that needs to be filled out if
17 there's anything wrong with the train.

18 Q Okay. So you know about the MP-11. Have you
19 ever filled one out?

20 A I haven't. No, I haven't, no.

21 Q I got you. But you -- do you know how to fill
22 one out? Have you ever been trained on how to fill
23 one out?

24 A I've done it, the paper ones that I've done, but
25 on the tablet, I've tried it. I mean, it's just a

1 whole hassle to go through it. It is not easy.

2 Q I got you.

3 A Yeah. Sometimes even getting connected to it,
4 it's very awkward.

5 Q And do you get on a piece of equipment with fault
6 lines on them on often, or is that, like, a unusual
7 thing?

8 A It's not unusual, but it's there. I mean, not
9 all the time. You know, once in a while, yes, there I
10 see it.

11 Q And other than when these two managers came out
12 to meet you and gave you this new memo, do you see
13 transportation officers much or no?

14 A Yeah, we see them on the platforms, yes.

15 Q Do they talk to you and you interact with them
16 and stuff?

17 A Once in a while, yeah.

18 Q Do they ever do any kind of, like, compliance
19 checks on you or anything?

20 A Definitely they would, yeah. Yeah.

21 Q Okay. And do they -- let's say they do one on
22 you. Do they tell you you passed or failed or
23 anything like that?

24 A No, but they just, I know they instruct you and
25 they take your ID number, I mean the number down.

1 Q I got you.

2 A Yeah.

3 Q I got you.

4 A I don't know what else they do with it. I don't
5 know. I'm not going to ask.

6 Q But I guess, if you failed something, they
7 probably would have told you so, right?

8 A Oh, definitely, yes. Yeah, mm-hmm.

9 MR. KRAHOLIK: I got you. They just don't tell
10 you you pass all the time. Gotcha. I don't have any
11 more questions right now. I'm going to pass it to
12 Jeff.

13 MR. THOMPSON: I'm Jeff Thompson, the Senior
14 Director of Vehicle Maintenance.

15 BY MR. THOMPSON:

16 Q When you operated the train back from Trenton --

17 A Mm-hmm.

18 Q -- did you notice it had, like, the reduced speed
19 that you get when the fault trips out, like the DWL?

20 A I didn't have any issues coming back.

21 Q Okay.

22 A Yeah.

23 Q Were you able to -- do you remember if you were
24 able to get above 80 miles an hour with the --

25 A Yes, I did.

1 Q You did?

2 A Plus it was raining, so I didn't -- you know, I
3 didn't want to go slip by the station, so I just took
4 it nice and easy coming in.

5 Q You took it easy?

6 A Yeah.

7 Q Okay. All right.

8 A But I know I did go past 80, yeah.

9 Q You were able to get above 80?

10 A Yeah, yeah, I was, yeah, mm-hmm.

11 MR. THOMPSON: Okay. All right. No further
12 questions from me.

13 MR. POINSETTE: All right. You mentioned -- John
14 Poinsette, Director of Railroad Operations.

15 BY MR. POINSETTE:

16 Q You mentioned you tried to submit an electronic
17 MP-11 --

18 A Right.

19 Q -- but was having difficulties.

20 A Right.

21 Q Did you try to fill out a paper one?

22 A I'm not talking about for this particular
23 incident. That, I was referring to what I've done
24 before. But, for this thing, I didn't see any lights,
25 so I didn't fill out, I didn't even make any attempt

1 or anything. But I was talking about that MP-11 that
2 I tried previously, a few months ago. That's what I
3 mentioned.

4 Q Okay. My next question would be --

5 A Mm-hmm.

6 Q -- as you walked through the cars changing ends,
7 did you smell anything?

8 A No.

9 Q Okay.

10 A No.

11 MR. POINSETTE: I'm good.

12 MR. SHERRY: Rick Sherry, FRA.

13 MR. KURUVILA: Mm-hmm.

14 BY MR. SHERRY:

15 Q You said you had trouble putting an MP-11 in
16 before, and you said -- I know it's been -- but you
17 said it's also difficult to fill out. Can you walk me
18 through what's difficult and how can SEPTA --

19 A No.

20 Q -- make the process easier?

21 A Oh, okay. I only tried it once, to be honest
22 with you. I couldn't even get to that page. That's
23 what I meant by, like, it was just buffering and that
24 took forever.

25 Q Okay. So you never got into the process?

1 A No, never, never, never. I was just checking it
2 out, you know, how it works and stuff like that, and,
3 yeah, I never got to that, you know, that page at all.

4 Q Okay.

5 A Like, if I have to do something, what I do is I
6 just fill out the regular paperwork and drop that in.

7 Q Do you know October 1 that paper's supposed to be
8 ending and it's supposed to only be electronic from
9 now on?

10 A Okay.

11 Q I'm just asking did you know that.

12 A Yeah, I know. I didn't know that.

13 Q Okay. Were you on the train when you were trying
14 to put that MP-11 in or on the platform or --

15 A No, I was home. I'm talking about the MP -- oh,
16 you're talking about the paperwork or --

17 Q No, your MP-11. You were actually home trying to
18 put it in?

19 A Yeah, yeah. I was just trying -- I wasn't even
20 trying to put one in. I just wanted to see how it
21 works, and I was trying to get to that page.

22 Q Okay.

23 A And that did not work at all. That's what I
24 meant, you know.

25 Q Okay. How often -- you run two trains a day?

1 A Two to three on average.

2 Q Two to three trains a day?

3 A Yeah, mm-hmm.

4 Q Five days a week?

5 A Five days a week, yeah.

6 Q How often do you see a fault light?

7 A Not all the time, but it's there. It's there. I

8 would say about 15 percent of the time, train.

9 Q Fifteen percent of the time?

10 A Yeah, 15, 20, yeah, 20 percent, yeah.

11 Q All right. So now are you aware that you're

12 supposed to be putting -- one, calling in the fault

13 light and, two, putting an MP-11 in?

14 A Yes.

15 Q All right. My next question is, is there a

16 reason you're not?

17 A I just, you know, I didn't do it. But, I mean,

18 for this train, I didn't --

19 Q No, no. I'm just talking about for last month --

20 A Oh, okay.

21 Q -- is there a reason that you're not following

22 protocol, SEPTA's protocol that they put out?

23 A A lot of times, what I do, I go through the boxes

24 if I can. And when I get to the end of the, you know,

25 the destination, I go through the box. If I'm able to

1 reset -- most of the time, it's the no power button,
2 and that just goes away. So, once that's cleared up,
3 that's why I don't call it in.

4 Q So now, on that sheet in front of you --

5 A Mm-hmm.

6 Q -- what the new protocol is, whether it gets
7 reset or fixed, you still have to put an MP-11 in --

8 A Okay.

9 Q -- so that Mechanical knows so they can do their
10 job correctly.

11 A Got it.

12 Q Were you aware of that? Were you aware of that
13 form?

14 A This form? No, not this one.

15 Q That was never presented to you? You never saw
16 it? Did any manager come out and talk to you about
17 that?

18 A I think the form, I mean, the memo that they came
19 out and gave to me, I think it had, yeah, some of -- I
20 think it had some of this too, yeah.

21 Q Moving forward, do you believe that you'll be
22 calling them in and putting in MP-11s?

23 A I will. I will.

24 Q I have your commitment?

25 A Yes, sir. You can take it.

1 MR. SHERRY: I appreciate it. No further
2 questions.

3 MR. KURUVILA: Mm-hmm.

4 MR. KRAHOLIK: Todd with the NTSB. I don't have
5 any more questions.

6 MR. THOMPSON: No more questions from Jeff
7 Thompson.

8 MR. POINSETTE: No more questions. John
9 Poinsette.

10 MR. KRAHOLIK: All right, Isaac, did we miss
11 anything that we -- should we have asked you as a
12 question and we didn't? Is there anything you want to
13 add?

14 MR. KURUVILA: No.

15 MR. KRAHOLIK: If we have any follow-up
16 questions, do you mind if we give you a call and ask
17 you?

18 MR. KURUVILA: Not a problem.

19 MR. KRAHOLIK: All right. On behalf of the NTSB,
20 thank you for your time and cooperation.

21 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled
22 matter was concluded.)

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25 //

CERTIFICATE

CASE TITLE: SEPTA Fire
ACCIDENT NO.: RRD25FR006
LOCATION: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
DATE: September 26, 2025

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the National Transportation Safety Board 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.

Date: October 7, 2025


Marcia Thurmond
Official Transcriber
Reporting Corporation

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