

# TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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

Interview of: ROBERT PERKINS, Senior Director,  
Railroad Operations, SEPTA

Pages: 1 through 62

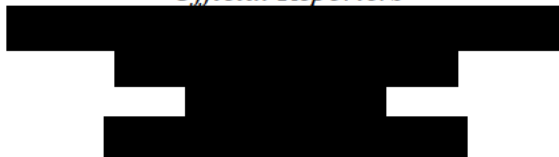
Place: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Date: September 30, 2025

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**HERITAGE REPORTING CORPORATION**

*Official Reporters*



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Tuesday,  
September 30, 2025

Interview of: ROBERT PERKINS, Senior Director,  
Railroad Operations, SEPTA

APPEARANCES:

TODD KRAHOLIK, NTSB Assistant IIC

BRETT JOHNSON, NTSB, Motive Power Group Chair

I N D E X

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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 today  
4 on September 30, 2025, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,  
5 to conduct an interview with Robert Perkins, who works  
6 for SEPTA.

7                   This interview is in conjunction with NTSB's  
8 investigation of the fire that happened on  
9 September 25, 2025, at Gravers Station. The NTSB  
10 Accident Reference 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, let's  
14 go around the table and introduce ourselves. Please  
15 spell your last name, who you represent, and your  
16 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 then I'll pass it to my right.  
20 Again, my name is Todd Kraholik. The spelling of my  
21 last name is K-R-A-H-O-L-I-K, and I'm the NTSB  
22 Assistant IIC.

23                   MR. JOHNSON: Brett Johnson, J-O-H-N-S-O-N, with  
24 the National Transportation Safety Board, and I am the  
25 Motive Power Group Chair.

1 MR. PERKINS: Robert Perkins, P-E-R-K-I-N-S.  
2 Senior Director, Railroad Operations, here at SEPTA.

3 MR. KRAHOLIK: All right, Mr. Perkins, do we have  
4 permission to record our discussion with you today?

5 MR. PERKINS: Yes.

6 MR. KRAHOLIK: And do you understand the  
7 transcription will be part of a public docket, and as  
8 such, we can't guarantee any confidentiality?

9 MR. PERKINS: Yes.

10 MR. KRAHOLIK: And as we discussed, you do not  
11 have a representative with you today, is that correct?

12 MR. PERKINS: That is correct.

13 MR. KRAHOLIK: All right. We can go on and  
14 start.

15 INTERVIEW OF ROBERT PERKINS

16 BY MR. KRAHOLIK:

17 Q Mr. Perkins, can you please give us a synopsis of  
18 your work experience? Take us up to your present job  
19 and let us know how long you've been in your present  
20 role.

21 A I've been here at SEPTA 37 years. I started as  
22 Assistant Conductor in 1988. I got promoted to a  
23 Locomotive Engineer in 1990. I went into management  
24 in 1994 as a Transportation Manager under the  
25 Operations Group. I then went into an Assistant

1 Director role in management in 2012, I believe. I  
2 then moved on to a Director title in 2016. And then  
3 my current Senior Director Title, 2022, I'm guessing,  
4 give or take.

5 Q All right. And what does a Senior Director do?  
6 What are your job title or duties?

7 A My duties is to oversee the railroad operations,  
8 which includes our transportation managers, it  
9 includes the yards that put our trains together, it  
10 includes the PAO, our Personal Assignment Office that  
11 staffs the trains.

12 Q Okay. And so, if, like, all the bulletins and  
13 all that stuff that came out, that would be under your  
14 department or --

15 A It is not directly under my department. I  
16 oversee what goes in it.

17 Q Okay.

18 A But I don't sign off on the publication.

19 Q Okay. So somebody would have clarified  
20 everything with you before they would put it out?

21 A Yes.

22 Q Okay. Got you. Got you. And so we had our --  
23 I'm just going to use general terms. We had five --  
24 all right. You can clarify.

25 A Yeah, I just wanted to make sure I was clear with

1 the last part. I'm not the only or final person that  
2 approves bulletins. I take my part and what I  
3 oversee, and there are others as in Service Planning  
4 and the Regional Rail Control Center. So we all play  
5 a part in what's published to make sure everybody's  
6 part was published accurately.

7 Q I got you. Okay. So we had five fires to date.  
8 Can you kind of walk me through what the  
9 Transportation Department has changed since the first  
10 fire to what we're doing today? What kind of things  
11 have been changed?

12 A Well, one of our major changes we've undertaken  
13 was making sure we talk with crews, reminded our crews  
14 about the importance of submitting our MP-11s so that  
15 we have all the information available. We've also  
16 talked with our crews about the importance of MP-11s.  
17 We talked to our Training Department about adding to  
18 our annual block training the importance of  
19 troubleshooting equipment and the importance of making  
20 sure we're reporting what's going on.

21 With that as well, our yard managers, we share  
22 with them the importance of making sure we have all  
23 the information when the trains come into the yards,  
24 that we're doing that type of maintenance situation  
25 correctly and aware of it. And the same with our

1 managers. We asked our managers to go out and do  
2 the -- they were the ones that was doing primarily  
3 most of the one-on-ones with the crews, making sure  
4 they was aware of our importance of that. And then we  
5 also put those instructions in our publications as  
6 well.

7 Q All right. So I have it written down actually.  
8 The first bulletin, I believe, went out, and the dates  
9 don't necessarily really matter, but the first one, I  
10 think, went out the 25th of July for the dynamic brake  
11 responding, propulsion dynamic brake and response.  
12 Then the 26th of August there was one for dynamic  
13 brake light issues, and then September 12, reporting  
14 defects on MP-11s. That's pretty much for the train  
15 crews when those went out. I believe that was -- the  
16 rest of them went to Mechanical Desk and such.

17 But at what point were the managers supposed to  
18 go one-on-one with the crews? After the first  
19 bulletin, or was it the last one? When were the local  
20 managers supposed to go out and talk to crews?

21 A So it was, when we first put the memo out, our  
22 normal is that when we put a memo out we talk to the  
23 crews that the memo was out and are you aware of it.  
24 The last one that we put out had a specific  
25 instruction of let's make sure we talk to each crew

1 member and then make sure we kind of track the names  
2 so we know everybody was spoken to. So, again, our  
3 normal process is a memo goes out, this had a high  
4 level of importance, chat it up with crews to make  
5 sure that they saw it, read it, and if anybody had a  
6 problem with it, but we don't necessarily track each  
7 name to say we got to every individual person.

8 Q I got you. So the standard operating procedure  
9 is they're supposed to talk to the crew members. So,  
10 if I were to tell you that in our interviews, which we  
11 only hit a certain number of crews, none of them said  
12 that anybody talked to them about the memos, it just  
13 got put in the tablets or it was in the printed copies  
14 of the bulletins, and I actually had somebody tell me  
15 that there wasn't enough managers to go talk to the  
16 crews, what would you say to that? Would you think  
17 that's accurate? Do you think that was a failure on  
18 the managers' part? What do you think about what I  
19 said there?

20 A I think there's absolute truth in there from each  
21 perspective, meaning, for example, we have 13 start  
22 locations, and I'll have -- for example, I have a  
23 manager at Doylestown in the morning. I have a  
24 manager at Warminster in the morning. There are three  
25 crews assigned in Doylestown. The manager in the

1 morning at Doylestown would have been like, hey, did  
2 you all see the memo? You know, we have those  
3 conversations. So does every location have a manager  
4 staffed at every sign-up? No.

5 So there, you know, of all of our, you know, we  
6 have a hundred and I believe 45 jobs that sign up  
7 Monday through Friday. We don't have a manager on  
8 location at every location for each startup to make  
9 sure something like that happens every day. So there  
10 will be truth, a lot of people will say I didn't get a  
11 chance or a manager didn't speak to me about that,  
12 because you speak to those you see throughout your  
13 eight-hour day and then that's how.

14 And then, once you're on the train, they don't  
15 really stop. Like our managers, we might be at Wayne  
16 Junction doing compliance checks. But, when a crew  
17 comes in, we don't hold the train up to have that memo  
18 conversation. We're doing compliance issues at that  
19 point. So it's normally our start locations, yards at  
20 our start locations, and sometimes end points where  
21 we'll have those conversations. So that's why it  
22 could be a lot of people that says you didn't get a  
23 chance to talk to me or I didn't hear that from  
24 anyone. But the managers, you know, again, at their  
25 locations, they do have those conversations. That's

1 part of our SOP, so to speak, Standard Operating  
2 Practice.

3 Q I got you. Okay. That clarifies that. So, if a  
4 crew has a question with one of those memos, I'm going  
5 to call it a memo, bulletin, whatever we want to talk  
6 about, who are they supposed to talk to about that?

7 A They should see any operations manager.  
8 Technically speaking, they go to any operations  
9 manager because all of our crews know our managers and  
10 our managers that are qualified.

11 For example, when you're at Suburban Station,  
12 you'll come across passenger service managers, but  
13 they're not NORAC qualified and they know that. So, if  
14 they have a question about a rule, they'll call the  
15 Rules Department, they'll speak to their union, or  
16 they'll talk to a qualified manager that's out here of  
17 the 12 or 14. I don't remember how many we have at  
18 the top. I don't remember off the top of my head.  
19 But we all, we just talk to a manager, and they --  
20 even our yard managers. I think there's only one yard  
21 manager we have that's not SEPTA NORAC qualified but  
22 have qualifications. All the rest of them are  
23 certified Conductors or Engineers and they would have  
24 asked them if they had a question. So that's just the  
25 normal process of, if you have a question, seek out a

1 manager. You know at least you got those that you  
2 know are qualified and you would just ask whatever  
3 question you need.

4 Q So the locations that don't have a manager on  
5 scene, they're to call a manager? Is that what you  
6 would expect? So, if they come on duty and there's  
7 not a manager there, they're supposed to call a  
8 manager?

9 A Well, they could, in that moment, if there was an  
10 immediacy of that, they could call the ROC and say I  
11 need manager at this location because I have a  
12 question.

13 And then oftentimes our day is we don't go one  
14 location, stop. We go from West Trenton to Suburban,  
15 get off, we might have a half hour, hour. You would  
16 see a manager there. So, throughout our day, you  
17 normally see managers, and if you ever had a question,  
18 you could actually call for a manager or, when you get  
19 to Suburban, you can call the Rules Department, you  
20 know, and, hey, Wyatt, hey, I had a question about the  
21 memo you all put out, what did it mean?

22 So we all just reach out to management when you  
23 have a question. And the hub being Suburban is, when  
24 you get to Suburban, you can walk to the PAO, our  
25 Personal Assignment Office, and say, hey, I need a

1 manager about something. So that's our way of anytime  
2 you need us, if you don't see us, just call for us.

3 Q I got you. Okay. I got you. And when the  
4 bulletins started coming out, did SEPTA Transportation  
5 realize how often these crews were resetting the  
6 lights? Like, or, I guess, do you know that every  
7 crew we talked to have said every day pretty much  
8 they're resetting lights on locomotives? Did you under  
9 -- did SEPTA management know that that was happening  
10 that often?

11 A (No response.)

12 Q All right. Further clarification. The fault  
13 lights on trains, every crew we talked to said that  
14 daily pretty much they were resetting fault lights.  
15 Did SEPTA management realize that it was that often  
16 they were resetting that, the fault lights?

17 A No. The way you're asking, the answer would be  
18 no. The management understanding is the  
19 qualifications at NORAC that we're qualified on  
20 instructs us when we have a fault on our equipment to  
21 submit an MP-11. Whether you reset it and it held or  
22 not, you're supposed to submit an MP-11. So we're  
23 under the understanding and impression that our crews  
24 are following the rules and doing what, you know, the  
25 certification calls for.

1 Q Okay. So, even before the fires have started,  
2 two years ago, if a crew reset a fault light, they  
3 were supposed to put an MP-11 out?

4 A Correct.

5 Q And SEPTA would only know that a fault light was  
6 reset for the MP-11s that they received?

7 A Correct.

8 Q Okay. Got you. Do transportation managers have  
9 to make train rides on the head end, or is it only do  
10 they only ride for the yearly recertification?

11 A They ride -- we all ride trains, yes.

12 Q Okay.

13 A We do both. We have OPM rides that are done as  
14 part of our annual, and then, in part of our duty day,  
15 we'll ride trains periodically, whether it's the head  
16 end or in the coach, because we ride for engineer and  
17 conductors. NACs as well. So, when we make a train  
18 ride, we can observe any or all portions of that.

19 Example, on my way up, I rode the head end for a  
20 couple stops, but I also was in the body of the coach  
21 seeing what the conductor and NAC was doing. So that's  
22 kind of a typical manager's choice based on what  
23 they're doing that particular day.

24 Q Okay. Got you. I understand. Do you expect --  
25 or what number of tests, compliance checks, do you

1 expect your managers to perform? Is there a number  
2 every month they're supposed to hit? Or is there --  
3 how do you expect the compliance testing to happen?

4 A I believe there is a number every month. I  
5 believe it's 75 or a hundred. It might have moved from  
6 75 to a hundred because, over the last few years, we  
7 added a few. But there is a number there, I did look  
8 in the book, again, whether it's 75 or a hundred, and  
9 then there are about 10 or 20 compliances and each  
10 month we kind of cycle through.

11 Also, with that, we have a safety meeting monthly  
12 and we kind of review what we're seeing and/or not  
13 seeing, and then we'll add an item to kind of review  
14 this and, you know, let's see how we're doing with  
15 that. So we do that monthly, and then we kind of  
16 adjust according to, you know, what we're seeing and/or  
17 not seeing.

18 Q Okay. On a compliance check, is it supposed to  
19 be announced or unannounced? Are you supposed to tell  
20 the crews you're going to come out and test them that  
21 day, or do you just show up? Or can it be both? So  
22 does a crew know they're going to get tested before the  
23 test happens?

24 A No.

25 Q Okay. So it would be --

1 A That very rarely happens. We just wherever --  
2 again, as part of my daily duties, when I'm at  
3 Doylestown, when I'm at Doylestown in the morning, I'm  
4 there and while I'm there I'm doing checks just because  
5 I'm a manager. So the crew doesn't even --  
6 technically, the crew knows you're there and you're  
7 doing checks, but you don't say, hey, I'm here today  
8 and I'm doing checks. You're just, hey, good morning,  
9 it's good to see you. Yeah. You taking the train out?  
10 Yeah, I've got this train, and part of our day, we're  
11 just watching and we're observing. And then, as  
12 needed, we take note. Sometimes, at the end, we say,  
13 hey, I was watching, you did a good job on everything.  
14 And then, if there are exceptions, we say some of the  
15 same things. But it's never announced prior except for  
16 the OPM ride. When we show up for an OPM ride, we'll  
17 say, hey, good morning. Hey, got your ticket? Yes,  
18 I'm here for your OPM ride, and then you start that  
19 process.

20 Q Okay. And my next question was, do you expect  
21 the managers to tell the crews that they were just  
22 performed a test on? Pass or fail, do you expect your  
23 managers to tell the crews that they did just perform  
24 a test on them?

25 A They're not mandated to do it, no.

1 Q Okay. So a crew member could get a test on them  
2 and they didn't even know a test was performed on  
3 them?

4 A That's correct.

5 Q And is there a -- the railroad I came off, there  
6 was a screen I could go into online to look at all the  
7 tests that were performed on me. Does SEPTA have  
8 something like that?

9 A We don't have that that the crews have direct  
10 access to. But, if a crew member was asked, hey, can  
11 somebody pull up, or we can pull it up, show them  
12 every test that was done on them for the entire year.

13 Q Okay.

14 A That's called our QUARC program, Q-U-A-R-C.  
15 QUARC, yeah, that's our QUARC program.

16 Q And who, if anybody, does SEPTA have that reviews  
17 the compliance tests? Do you have one -- if a manager  
18 puts in 500 safety glasses testing, does somebody look  
19 at that and say, you know, is that really -- is there  
20 a person that looks at that?

21 A The answer is yes.

22 Q And who would that be? The title, not  
23 necessarily a name.

24 A The Senior Director of Railroad Operations.

25 Q Okay. Got you. Got you.

1 A But that's also, we have a Director that has  
2 direct oversight on that as well. And part of our  
3 safety meeting is every month we sit down and go over  
4 the compliances by the managers that they "got to"  
5 their number. There is no number for failures. It's  
6 just a number of the hundred that you have to do, and  
7 we have a breakdown looking for certain ones.

8 Q Got you.

9 A And what we started, I want to say about, I  
10 believe it was about six months ago, we started a  
11 program where, when we did have failures, that we  
12 would go back and review that person, you know, two  
13 weeks or three weeks later to see are you getting  
14 better because we kind of recognize, all right, thanks  
15 for the failure, it's good that -- I shouldn't say  
16 thanks for the failure. Recognizing there was a  
17 failure, we started talking about, well, did we go  
18 back and see if the person got better? Because you  
19 did tell the person -- anytime a person does not -- is  
20 not in compliance, they are told they're not in  
21 compliance, whether it's that moment because you might  
22 have been -- if I see you at Wayne Junction and you're  
23 passing, I might not have a moment to tell you I saw  
24 it. So I'll meet back up with you at my earliest  
25 convenience to let you know, hey, I was at Wayne

1 Junction and I noticed you didn't have your name tag  
2 on or whatever the non-compliance is. And then we try  
3 to go back within a two-week period to kind of put  
4 eyes on that person to see if they got better in  
5 whatever they was -- in the totality of their  
6 performance and especially whatever they were in non-  
7 compliance for last time just to see if they got  
8 better.

9 Q And when you go back rough -- I'm going to say  
10 roughly two weeks when you go back, is there a -- do  
11 they document those tests as well, or is it just you  
12 observe them and see if they complied at that point?  
13 Or would it actually be another test that goes in the  
14 system?

15 A Correct. It's another, the same QUARC you would  
16 do would be two weeks later. So, if I saw you two  
17 weeks later, I'm putting down the things I saw well,  
18 and if there was a failure, I put that down. And at  
19 our next meeting, when we talk about, hey, what  
20 failures -- hey, who checked those people? Did they  
21 get better or did it repeat itself? So that's what we  
22 talk about at the following meeting.

23 Q Okay.

24 A So it's like the following meeting kind of  
25 updates where we were last time, and anybody we needed

1 to put some eyes on, we would do that as a follow-up  
2 meeting.

3 Q So, if we were to look at -- if we requested your  
4 testing and we saw a failure, I'm just going to use  
5 safety glasses, two weeks later roughly we should see  
6 another safety glass test?

7 A Correct, pass or fail.

8 Q Right. Just as long as --

9 A Correct.

10 Q Got you. Got you. Okay.

11 A And our system is set up where it's progressive,  
12 so if you did happen to fail the first time, when you  
13 fail the second time, there's a different level -- it's  
14 a progressive discipline, so to speak. So you might  
15 have got a coaching, it might have went up to a  
16 written warning. So, I mean, it's just part of the  
17 contractual language, so --

18 Q I got you. Okay. That makes sense. Okay. And  
19 does SEPTA have a system that -- the railroad I came  
20 off with, if an employee hadn't been tested in 30 days,  
21 they would say, hey, this employee hasn't had a  
22 compliance test in 30 days. Does SEPTA have anything  
23 like that to make sure every employee is getting  
24 touched or no?

25 A Yes.

1 Q Okay.

2 A So part of our compliance program requires all of  
3 our employees to get tested on specific rules  
4 throughout the year.

5 Q Okay.

6 A And as we get to the end of the year, we double  
7 back to make sure everybody, it's about 10 rules, give  
8 or take. Engineers get this, these criteria rules  
9 where conductors get this one, and we kind of make  
10 sure everybody got it because we normally assign out  
11 managers. Each manager might have, hey, these are  
12 your 30 people, these are your 30 people. So you know  
13 at the end of the year, if I say Rob Perkins didn't get  
14 or did Rob Perkins get everything, I know, hey, Lou,  
15 you had Rob, did you make sure you get everything. So  
16 it's not just randomized. Everybody gets it. You'll  
17 get it randomized, but someone was assigned to make  
18 sure that it happened.

19 Q And that 10 or so, I'm not holding you to the  
20 number there, but that 10 or so, is that the same 10  
21 where you told me the manager has 75 to a hundred  
22 tests and there's 10 specific ones? Are those the same  
23 rules as the ones that --

24 A Some of them are the same, yes.

25 Q Okay.

1 A So that's why it works itself out.

2 Q Okay.

3 A But we still have one person that's assigned to  
4 make sure.

5 Q Right.

6 A Because, again, we're all at different locations.  
7 If for some reason nobody was at Wayne Junction when  
8 you go by Wayne Junction to get that one particular  
9 rule, you still have to go get it. So some of those  
10 rules, you know, we tell you get a stop signal, make  
11 sure you get a couple, you know, name tags, make sure  
12 you get five Rule G's every month, so eventually we'll  
13 get them all.

14 Q I got you. Okay. Are you in charge of  
15 dispatchers as well, or is that a different  
16 department?

17 A No, sir. That is a different department.

18 Q Different department, okay. So my question,  
19 well, I'll tell you what my question was because then  
20 I've got a question for you. My question was the  
21 crews told us that they used to call in the fault  
22 lights and the dispatcher would say, okay, I'll get  
23 back to you, and they never got back to the crews.  
24 They said that that's one of the reasons why they quit  
25 reporting the fault lights, is because every time

1 they'd call one in they just got dismissed or whatever.  
2 But has any crew member ever expressed that to you, as  
3 like, hey, I've been reporting fault lights and  
4 nobody's ever following up with me? Has any crew ever  
5 said that to you?

6 (Pause.)

7 BY MR. KRAHOLIK:

8 Q All right. So I was asking, has a crew member  
9 ever said that they've turned in lights and nothing's  
10 happened?

11 A I do, I can say that crew members have told me  
12 before that, you know, Rob, we've called the ROC and  
13 told them our equipment was bad or we had some kind of  
14 fault light and they would have still told us, like,  
15 take it through or something like that. Yes, crew  
16 members have said that statement to me, yes.

17 Q Okay. And when they say that, do you refer them  
18 to the MP-11 or expect that the MP-11 would be put in?

19 A Correct. So each time I do remind them, like,  
20 yes, thanks for letting the ROC know, but did you make  
21 sure, you have to put the MP-11 in so that by the time  
22 the equipment gets to somewhere, if it stayed out on  
23 the road, that's when Mechanical will see the MP-11 and  
24 they'll go ahead and put it in their system and they'll  
25 start making their adjustments.

1 Q I got you. Okay.

2 A If I can add, though, like similar to, if I was a  
3 train coming north and I reported at Temple I had a  
4 fault light or something was going on and I was going  
5 into Roberts, they would still say okay. And when I  
6 came into Roberts, I would also tell the yard master  
7 because I was coming right into a yard facility.

8 So similar to, that's just a reporting piece of  
9 the situation. But the entirety of it is, when you  
10 put the MP-11 in, that's really, that's the mechanism  
11 that really starts the ball to start looking at what's  
12 going on and how do we need to address it.

13 Q Got you. And before the latest bulletin on the  
14 12th of September came out, is that something you talk  
15 about, like, in your yearly rules test or yearly get-  
16 together with the employees? Is that something that  
17 the trainers bring up? Or do you not know?

18 A I'm going to say yes to that. So part of I think  
19 usually the first 15 minutes to half hour of our rules  
20 and training, we have a category called Hot Topics and  
21 it's things that we kind of see. Same type of trends  
22 we'll see, we'll ask the rules foreman, hey, do me a  
23 favor, make sure you're talking about this in the  
24 beginning to remind people, you know, troubleshooting  
25 and how we troubleshoot and the MP-11s and things like

1 that. So I definitely want to say over the last eight  
2 to nine months that, you know, that came up a while  
3 back. I would have to, like, try to check a few  
4 records, but I do feel comfortable that it was a hot  
5 topic that we addressed.

6 Q Got you, got you. Okay. And these bulletins  
7 have been out, well, the one's only been out 18 days  
8 roughly. Are you guys going back and checking,  
9 saying, you know, this was called in to the ROC on  
10 this date or the help desk? Are you checking to see  
11 if the MP-11 was put in?

12 A We did start a process like that. I'll be honest  
13 with you, I believe that was last week where it was  
14 like, hey, let's start checking because we wanted to  
15 see if there were people -- first of all, we were  
16 finishing off the list of did we get everybody to  
17 actually say one-on-ones with, and then, if we found a  
18 train that was similar, like, hey, we -- so we did  
19 start that last week.

20 Q I got you. Got you. Okay. And what is the  
21 discipline if they weren't to put an MP-11 in? Does it  
22 just go as a failure at the time and then you have to  
23 work your way up? Or is that something more serious  
24 that they would get disciplined for?

25 A So, for our crew members, contractually speaking,

1 our crew members, what we have is progressive  
2 discipline. So, once a crew member is non-compliant  
3 on any operational rules, you just refer to the card.  
4 Once you confirm that they did violate or were non-  
5 compliant on a rule, you refer to the card and if you  
6 have nothing on your record and you was observed by a  
7 manager, we start with a coaching, and then it goes  
8 all the way through re-instruction, written warning,  
9 and all the way up to a five-day suspension, and then  
10 possible discharge, with the exceptions being  
11 decertify of the rules, which carry their own FRA  
12 weight that they're automatically charged with. So  
13 that's our process on the property.

14 So it's based on where you're at in the program.  
15 But I want to say what we try to -- we talked about  
16 this three years ago, and I'll be honest on the record  
17 to say discipline is not what's important and what we  
18 try to get out there. What's important is I usually  
19 like to use the term corrective action. Are we  
20 talking to each enough to really get the corrective  
21 action, which is do we know what we're supposed to be  
22 doing. Discipline is cute and it's nice -- sorry for  
23 using the word cute. I won't say it. Discipline is  
24 what it is. But what's most important and we're trying  
25 to get at to our team is realize are we doing the

1 right corrective action so that you understand what to  
2 do and not do the next time. So I like to -- we've  
3 been trying to use the term more corrective action  
4 because that's what it's really about so we don't keep  
5 seeing the same thing over and over again.

6 Q I got you. I got you. Okay. And what would you  
7 say the morale is around SEPTA?

8 A Everybody you ask is different. You ask a five-  
9 year guy or a three-year person, it might be great.  
10 That's -- I'll be honest with you and say I had an old  
11 timer one time say to me, Rob, tell me their seniority  
12 and I'll tell you their problem. Everybody's  
13 different.

14 Q Got you.

15 A You wake up one morning and SEPTA put your money  
16 in your check right, you used your benefits and  
17 everybody's happy, you love SEPTA. If you wake up one  
18 morning and they gave you the crappiest job on the  
19 railroad because it was your turn to take it, I hate  
20 SEPTA. You know what I mean?

21 But, I mean, overall, I will admit we always can  
22 do better because we always feel like, honestly, we  
23 always feel like we're underpaid compared to other  
24 places in the industry, so that's a starting point  
25 right there that says I'm not in love with SEPTA

1 because I feel like I'm not paid enough.

2 Q Right. That's good.

3 A My morale is good, but everybody's a little bit in  
4 a different place. But I think overall I think we're  
5 kind of even keel. We know who we are. We know  
6 there's a lot of areas, just like many that we  
7 can get better at, and I think, honestly speaking, I  
8 think when we have moments where everybody takes their  
9 accountability for what they did today, I think that's  
10 when we have the best morale days. Did I do my best  
11 version of me today regardless of anybody else?

12 Q Got you.

13 A I think those are things we're trying to get to.

14 Q I got you. What about safety culture? How do  
15 you think the safety culture is here?

16 A I will be honest to say it's really to me very  
17 similar because every -- SEPTA is very clear and we  
18 put out all the time safety is important and safety is  
19 first, and we absolutely believe that. But that's  
20 always relative to how the employee takes it.

21 And I'll say it this way very quickly. We started  
22 a while back where every week we as senior managers, I  
23 go in and talk to our people. I go in and talk to the  
24 crew members every Wednesday as part of our annual  
25 training, and we have a session called Real Talk. And

1 it's funny because last week I said something for the  
2 first time that rung with me, and I'm going to do this.  
3 I was challenging a couple of our -- real talk, so  
4 nobody -- we're just having real conversation. It's  
5 not about discipline or it's just no corrective  
6 actions. Guys, what's going on out here? Let's get  
7 this better.

8 And one thing I said to somebody when we were  
9 going back and forth, I said let me ask you this  
10 question. Hey, what's that, Perk? I said, is that  
11 what you did on your promotional? Because we all have a  
12 promotional to get our certification, and on our  
13 promotional, we do what we're supposed to do on the  
14 promotional. And I go, guys, that's why we -- that's  
15 what we're talking about today. Some of the stuff  
16 we're doing, that's not what you would have done on  
17 your promotional. That's where we're trying to talk  
18 about how do we get back to some of that because some  
19 of the things we're talking about we would not have  
20 done on our promotional --

21 Q Right.

22 A -- because we know we wouldn't have passed. But  
23 yet some of it, here we are today doing it. And I  
24 told them, I said, granted it might be some things  
25 management should have done better, but the one thing

1 I'm being honest with, because we're all certified in  
2 this room, did we do that on our promotional? If you  
3 had a train on your promotional that had a fault light  
4 or a reset, on your promotional, you would have wrote  
5 that MP-11 right in front of your promotional  
6 instructor to make sure you knew he knew or she knew  
7 you did it.

8 Those are the things we're talking about. How did  
9 we get away from that and why did we get away from  
10 that? And that's not the crew's fault. If you notice,  
11 I said, what part did management play as well? But  
12 we've got to play a part that says how do we get back  
13 to making sure that was the best version of you.  
14 Inexperienced, but I knew all the rules. Now I got  
15 you experienced, and I hope, I want, and we want  
16 everybody to still make the same choices on what  
17 rules. Don't start picking and choosing which ones are  
18 okay for you. I don't know. That makes sense to me,  
19 but it's just different.

20 Q Right.

21 A I've been doing this a long time. So yeah. But  
22 it's funny because, like, I work tomorrow and I know I  
23 can't wait to use it like, is that what you did on your  
24 promotional? Because we all know that's not, some of  
25 that's not what we did on our promotional.

1 Q Right.

2 A That's some of it that's a difference to me, and  
3 we have to figure out a way to help keep everybody in  
4 that spot because that's one of our safest spots.

5 Q Got you.

6 A For whatever reason. Most of it's because we all  
7 want a job.

8 Q Right. Absolutely.

9 A Just being honest.

10 Q Right.

11 A I don't know what your qualification is, but  
12 coming from the trains, we all got to get that  
13 certificate to get the job.

14 Q Right. Now let me ask you one more question  
15 about the Safety Department and I'll pass you to  
16 Brett. What is your understanding of what Systems  
17 Safety is and what are they supposed to do to help  
18 you? What are they supposed to do to help you, and  
19 what are they doing?

20 A Guys, to be honest with you, Rob Perkins and the  
21 seat I sit in now, honestly speaking, we do not rely  
22 heavily on the Safety Department because all that we  
23 do already encapsulates all that.

24 For example, again, we're all certified on the  
25 rules, so we're all out there reminding, sharing and

1 doing -- we don't necessarily call the Safety  
2 Department to say come. No, we're doing everything as  
3 part of what we do. So I don't -- we, I and/or we,  
4 don't necessarily look at our Safety Department as --  
5 maybe we should look at them more heavily, but we kind  
6 of do most of it all ourselves. If there's something  
7 major that never was going on, we pull them in to  
8 bring them in. But, if we're talking about things  
9 we're already certified on, we lean to the Rules  
10 Department to help us because they do all our training  
11 with us. So we'll go, I'll call. Hey, make this part  
12 of our Hot Topic. Hey, do me a favor. Put this on  
13 our test. Let's make sure, ask them the question on  
14 the test so we know they got it right.

15 We do things like that. So we engage more with  
16 Rules and we do a lot of that ourselves, to be honest.  
17 We don't really lean on Systems Safety. And maybe we  
18 should lean on them more, but, again, we function, and  
19 it's all part of what we do. That's really how it is.

20 MR. KRAHOLIK: Got you. I'm going to pass it over  
21 to Brett.

22 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Brett Johnson, NTSB.  
23 How are you doing? You want to take a break? Doing  
24 okay?

25 MR. PERKINS: I'm Rob Perkins. I'm good.

1 MR. JOHNSON: You're good? All right, buddy. If  
2 you need to take a break, we can take one.

3 MR. PERKINS: No.

4 BY MR. JOHNSON:

5 Q So walk me through the process or what -- let's  
6 just say I'm a trainman and I work for you.

7 A Mm-hmm.

8 Q And I've got an issue with a car. I know I'm  
9 supposed to fill out an MP-1-11. What is MP-1-11 and  
10 what am I -- like, what's the steps? When, how? Like,  
11 I don't know anything about MP-1-11, but I know I've  
12 got a car that's messed up and I'm supposed to do  
13 something with one. Can you explain it to me so I can  
14 understand it better?

15 A I'll give it a try.

16 Q Okay.

17 A Number one, it's MP-11.

18 Q MP. Like Mike Papa 11?

19 A Correct.

20 Q Got you. Okay.

21 A MP-11. And then, even coming through training,  
22 and it's in our special instructions, whenever you have  
23 an issue with your equipment, you fill out an MP-  
24 11. And the MP-11 is just the information, your train  
25 number, the car's number, and on the form that you

1 look at, it tells you what's the problem with the  
2 train. And then, when you're using the paper copy,  
3 which is what everybody was taught on --

4 Q Right.

5 A -- the paper copy, you fill out the top. The  
6 last portion is yours to keep, and you leave it right  
7 there in the cutout where the air slip is so that  
8 wherever the train goes, it's there. And you can just  
9 call the ROC and let them know, hey, I put an MP-11 on  
10 the train.

11 You also, as an engineer, you're taught when  
12 making relief or when getting relieved, if I take this  
13 train from Roberts to Suburban and I took a fault at  
14 Temple, when I give this train up, I tell four cars,  
15 no D's if I have no Form D's, and FYI, fault light, I  
16 put an MP-11 on the dash and we'll discuss what the  
17 fault light is. It's trained as what you're part of to  
18 do as an engineer. So you're given, if you have a  
19 problem, fill it out, fill out all the information,  
20 leave the slip with the train, contact the ROC, you  
21 can contact the ROC and let them know, and if you make  
22 relief, you have to tell the relieving engineer the  
23 conditions of your train.

24 Q Okay. So that MP-1-11, so like one of those  
25 carbon copy forms, you know. And then where do I get

1 one?

2 A Every train has one or two MP-11s right there in  
3 the cab compartment of the train.

4 Q Okay. So there's, like, a slot where there's  
5 available forms that you may need en route?

6 A Correct. On the train, yes.

7 Q Okay.

8 A And if I'm not mistaken, it's part of the  
9 mechanical inspections. They're supposed to make sure  
10 that the MP-11s are on the train when they do their  
11 inspection.

12 Q I see. Okay. And now I heard something about a  
13 tablet. Is there a digital form of it, or is it still  
14 paper, like, as of today?

15 A There's a digital form available today. It's  
16 been available for a little while now, and it's just,  
17 again, right on the front page of our tablet. You  
18 click it, same information, you just type it in, and  
19 when you hit submit, it automatically goes to a few of  
20 the managers in Mechanical Department. It also goes  
21 to me, Rob Perkins, and it also goes to the SMART 61  
22 and BLET union officials. We have it automatically  
23 set up where they see that an MP-11 was submitted.  
24 That was our way to make sure that they -- because  
25 they asked us, hey, Rob, how are we going to get a

1 receipt like we used to get? So we gave them an email  
2 that says, hey, something was submitted. And then, at  
3 the end of each month, there's an Excel sheet that we  
4 show you line by line exactly what was submitted.

5 Q I understand. All right. Thank you for that.  
6 Now going back to your managers that report to you,  
7 how many front-line ballast-line managers report to  
8 you?

9 A Honestly, I consider all of them in, so I'll say  
10 14. I'd have to count them. Fourteen to 17 is my  
11 number. I have to count it specifically for what it  
12 is.

13 Q Okay. I understand.

14 A Because transportation managers, assistant  
15 directors and directors, we all have field locations.  
16 We all start in the field. We're not "office cats."  
17 We actually start in the field. We grab our white  
18 SEPTA T-card, we start in a location, we go to a  
19 location. We start our day out in the field. Our day  
20 is "the field." Assistant directors and directors  
21 also have some good admin paperwork to handle, but all  
22 of our managers, assistant directors, directors, and  
23 transportation managers are field personnel.

24 Q All right, Mr. Perkins, so ballast-line managers,  
25 folks out there in the field, you've got, you said,

1 14?

2 A Fourteen, and I believe I have four jobs open.  
3 So let's say we have a total of 18 that are our field  
4 manager levels, yes.

5 Q And do you have any other managers that report to  
6 you?

7 A Yes. We have 13 yard managers that report to me.  
8 And I consider our yard managers to be similar to the  
9 field. They're just more static to their yard.

10 Q Okay.

11 A And they do compliance checks as well, and,  
12 again, they're qualified. They do compliance checks  
13 and they handle what's in their yard under the NORAC  
14 umbrella.

15 Q So your yard managers, they interface with crews  
16 going on duty and coming off duty?

17 A Yes.

18 Q Okay. And in addition to that, you know,  
19 obviously, you mentioned compliance testing. Are  
20 there any other duties that they're responsible for?  
21 Just your yard managers, your outlying folks, your  
22 front-line ballast-line, we'll call them ballast-line  
23 managers, don't do, like the difference, or is it just  
24 location?

25 A Well, the major difference is our yard managers

1 do not handle investigations.

2 Q Okay.

3 A So pretty much that's where, you know, the  
4 investigations and the actual "discipline," corrective  
5 action, those measures and that process is handled by  
6 our field supervisors. They do all the Q&A  
7 interviews, et cetera, et cetera. Yard managers will  
8 give me the static of it, and then they turn it over  
9 to our field operations that do deeper investigations  
10 and things like that.

11 Q Okay. So do your yard managers interface much  
12 with the mechanical managers or Mechanical Department  
13 leaders?

14 A All day every day.

15 Q Okay. Like, if I was a yard manager, what would  
16 that entail? Like, just some examples of what they  
17 may interface with or go to lunch together, whatever.  
18 You know, how do they interface and work together?

19 A So, for example, we're at Roberts Yard right now.  
20 Right next door to us is our crew quarters where our  
21 yard manager is. That yard manager's on the phone  
22 constantly across the field, which is our Mechanical  
23 Department. Mechanical also walks in. So they're  
24 literally the crew. The crew is yard master and  
25 mechanical foremen because, if we take that yard and

1 say there's a four-car train that I need papered, he  
2 calls Mechanical and says paper four track because I  
3 need a paper to leave out at 5:05. So they're in  
4 constant communication about everything.

5 If the train can move or not move, if we're  
6 making cuts, whatever it is, that's the constant  
7 communication that they do to make sure that our  
8 trains are constant sized or put together correctly  
9 and all trains are ready to go. So, if they have to  
10 get -- their yard sheet says here's 20 trains, their  
11 yard sheet says these 20 trains have been papered  
12 correctly and we can give them to a crew to take them  
13 out on the road.

14 Q And when you say paper, is that a mechanical  
15 inspection or a pre-departure --

16 A Yes. That's our air slip. That's our air slip.

17 Q Your air slip?

18 A Air slip.

19 Q Got you. Got you. I understand.

20 A Calendar day inspection, PTC, ATC, all on the air  
21 slip saying good to go, 24-hour calendar day.

22 Q Right.

23 A Correct.

24 Q Got you. So you've got 13, you said -- was it  
25 13?

1 A Thirteen yard masters, yes.

2 Q Yard masters. And then --

3 A Eighteen --

4 Q Eighteen ballast-line, three shifts?

5 A Two shifts technically.

6 Q Two shifts.

7 A We work from 4 a.m. to 1 a.m. We don't really

8 consider that -- because we don't go continually

9 overnight. Our third shift means you went continually

10 overnight.

11 Q Got you.

12 A Our person signs up at 5, gets off at 1, we still

13 call that second shift.

14 Q Understand.

15 A But we go from 4 a.m., the first people sign up

16 at 4 a.m.; last person doesn't get off until 1 a.m.

17 Q Okay. Now the folks that are -- your managers

18 that are doing their compliance tests --

19 A Mm-hmm.

20 Q -- do they do, in addition to the mandated, you

21 know, 10 specific rules a year for an employee, do

22 they strictly do, like, safety rule tests, or can

23 they -- do they do tests that could range from --

24 like, would you put in a test for -- on somebody tying

25 down a hand brake?

1 A Yes.

2 Q Okay. Would you perhaps do a manager do a test  
3 for somebody, you know, properly mounting and  
4 dismounting equipment? Is that something that you  
5 would test?

6 A Yes. Yes.

7 Q So it can be a broad range of tasks --

8 A Correct.

9 Q -- that are, you know, safety-sensitive. so  
10 forth?

11 A Correct.

12 Q Okay. And if an employee does not perform a task  
13 or rule properly, they do it wrong, they don't tie down  
14 the hand brake -- I'm using that as an example -- but  
15 they don't tie down the hand brake correctly, and  
16 they're observed by a transportation manager, and they  
17 fail them on that compliance test, what's the next  
18 steps? Like, okay, you just witnessed me tie down a  
19 hand brake wrong. How does that go? Like, what's the  
20 expectation of your managers proceeding, you know, to  
21 address that?

22 A The manager at that point will inform the person  
23 that they just failed it, and then they'll talk them  
24 through the right way to do it. And then,  
25 technically, we're saying to them in the moment, we're

1 issuing you a coaching. And our coaching method says,  
2 hey, we share with you a rule we know you're qualified  
3 on because you have a certificate. We're asking you to  
4 confirm, yeah, I know it, okay, I didn't do it right, I  
5 got it, and I understand it, and we're good. And we'll  
6 put that in the system as a coaching.

7 So a manager who sees someone with a non-  
8 compliance will let them know first available chance  
9 this wasn't right. This is the right way. You got it?  
10 We're good? And then we're moving forward.

11 If for whatever reason we recognize when we go  
12 back later that, hey, somebody talked to you about  
13 this two weeks ago, we'll call them in and let them  
14 know, hey, I know we talked about this, but because of  
15 your record, as I mentioned earlier, you were talked  
16 to about this before, so now we're moving it up.

17 So the same conversation happened with the same  
18 corrective action, and then whatever the  
19 administrative paperwork says we have to do per the  
20 contract. That's why I mentioned earlier, to me, it's  
21 two separate things. The corrective action is more  
22 important to me than whatever that admin discipline  
23 contract talks about because we didn't know if we had  
24 the conversation to have a better expectation.

25 Q And this is defined in the compliance check

1 program that SEPTA uses, correct?

2 A That is correct.

3 Q Okay. If you observe someone doing the task  
4 wrong, is it automatically going to result in, you  
5 know, if that failure, you observe that failure, is it  
6 automatically going to result in documentation towards  
7 the discipline steps? Or is there -- does the manager  
8 make a judgment call as to whether to write it up or  
9 not? You see what I'm getting at there?

10 A I do. And the answer is there's a yes in there  
11 because I don't know when, but just some time ago, 10,  
12 15 years ago, we actually created the coaching  
13 mechanism as a way to say we talked about it and it  
14 wasn't like -- it used to be re-instruction was the  
15 first step. We created a step before re-instruction  
16 to let the managers be able to engage the crews, not  
17 to feel so faulty, and have a way to document it  
18 because truth be told, we were doing coaching, but we  
19 had no way of documenting it. And then, so we kind of  
20 created that. It was about 10, 15 years ago we  
21 created that. So the answer is yes. All of our  
22 managers, that's why we put it in there. The coaching  
23 didn't hurt you.

24 Q Got you.

25 A If you're not repeating yourself, it'll fall off

1 in a second, don't worry about it. And the most  
2 important part is we had a way to show we talked about  
3 this.

4 Q Do you feel that your managers are a hundred  
5 percent using that tool?

6 A I won't lie to you and say anything is a hundred  
7 percent, but I will admit I believe that they should  
8 be 80 or better --

9 Q Okay.

10 A -- because when put it in and we talk -- again,  
11 we talk about it at each manager's meeting. And I'll  
12 be honest to what it is. If we have a meeting and our  
13 failures seem very low, I'll just ask them. I don't  
14 know if we saw -- are we coding what we're seeing or  
15 are we really getting that much better? Because I'll  
16 be honest with you, I've got 14 managers and I see one  
17 non-compliance in a month, I'm thinking wow, we really  
18 had a really good month, and I'll remind them, hey,  
19 just code what you see. That's why we put coaching in  
20 place. Put the coaching down, it doesn't hurt anybody  
21 and it lets us know we're talking to our people. So I  
22 want to believe we're 80 percent or better, that all  
23 of our managers know that's the way, the coaching, it  
24 helps us say that we see some things and we did make  
25 some steps to make sure everybody understands better.

1 Q Understand. So, if your managers have to have  
2 these face-to-face continuous conversations with  
3 employees, coaching, addressing failures, reinforcing  
4 good behaviors, you know, dealing with bad behaviors,  
5 right, as a front-line manager, what kind of  
6 development is in play or place to develop those folks  
7 to be able to have those difficult conversations or  
8 good conversations? What structure is at SEPTA to  
9 develop them, to equip them to be able to have those  
10 tools in their, you know, virtual tool belt?

11 A So, when we first -- when all managers -- when  
12 the managers first come on board as a first-time  
13 manager, our training process I want to say is, I  
14 don't know, 12 weeks long, somewhere in there. I  
15 forget the exact timing, six to 12 weeks long. Part  
16 of our system says we talk to you, you pair up with a  
17 manager, and we talk you through our daily duties and  
18 things like that. If I pulled it up, you would talk  
19 about I think Week 2 or 3 it talks about compliance  
20 checks. We watch, you know, so we partner with you  
21 and we shadow you through a program, and then we  
22 actually check you off on that, and part of our system  
23 is, hey, how do we have those tough conversations? So  
24 it comes up in our training process.

25 Q Mm-hmm.

1 A When we have our meetings, we talk about, you  
2 know, how we're doing, how we're not doing. And so  
3 that's pretty much the -- there are one or two classes  
4 SEPTA has. We used to call it Stepping Up to  
5 Supervision. It's called something else now. To be  
6 honest with you, I believe 80 to 90 percent of our  
7 managers within their first six months or so get a  
8 chance to go through that process. Like, first-level  
9 managers --

10 Q Sure.

11 A -- where they just kind of give you some bullet  
12 blocks. But the most important part from our point of  
13 view is our training and our mentoring because it  
14 really doesn't stop after the "12 weeks of training."

15 Q Yeah. Sure.

16 A You're still working with the group, and when  
17 you're new, we kind of keep you paired up with  
18 somebody even longer. So that's pretty much our  
19 training process. And during that training process,  
20 we make it important that if a situation happens, we  
21 make sure that the rookie comes in and does the  
22 interview with us, and then eventually we have one  
23 where, okay, you're doing the interview and we're  
24 watching you. So that's part of how we do it while  
25 we're doing our training.

1 Q Understand. So I'm going to ask this question,  
2 it's not a trick. I'm just -- you have compliance and  
3 you have commitment. And I'm not trying to set a trap.  
4 Can you define the difference between or define those  
5 two? And if you can't, that's fine. I mean, it's just  
6 like to you as a transportation officer, commitment  
7 and compliance, is there a difference?

8 A The answer is yes.

9 Q Okay.

10 A To me, compliance is I just did something because  
11 I had to do it. To me, commitment is I just did  
12 something because that's what I do. That's the  
13 difference to me.

14 Q Your front-line managers, whether they be the  
15 yard masters or your line or road folks, are they able  
16 to get commitments from their folks, their craft  
17 employees, to do, you know, the right thing or observe  
18 rules or, you know, accept change?

19 A There's a yes in there, and that's one of the  
20 benefits I feel because I came through these ranks,  
21 that our transportation managers are our same crew  
22 members. So oftentimes, because you have that  
23 connection with people -- like, I have a team that  
24 they can talk to this group of people better than I  
25 can because they have that relationship.

1 Q Mm-hmm.

2 A So that's things we talk about all the time too.  
3 Like, hey, that's why we actually have the conversation  
4 with our crew members so that when it's time you can  
5 say, hey, we're in the right place. You know I'm not  
6 out to get you, I'm just Rob Perkins, this is what  
7 we're trying to do today. So I do believe that that's  
8 here on the property, I believe it's probably 60, 75  
9 percent. If you take our own 14 to 18, but you say  
10 each 14 to 18 probably has a group of 25 to 50  
11 depending on where they can go, let me  
12 go -- I'll talk to them. Don't worry about it, Rob.  
13 We'll make sure. And that's a big part to me of our  
14 system working is that we all are relational to each  
15 other. It's not just do it because we said it. That's  
16 what it is.

17 Q Got you. All right. So kind of a change in  
18 subject here. So I know Todd discussed Systems Safety  
19 and this may not be the case, but let's say I'm working  
20 for SEPTA, I'm an engineer, and I take exception to a  
21 signal at the control point, that it's mis-focused. I  
22 can't see it properly coming through a curve or  
23 something. What's the process to get that addressed?  
24 Is that something where I talk to -- call the  
25 dispatch, do I call my manager, do I call Systems

Heritage [REDACTED] poration

( [REDACTED]

1 Safety? How does that work to get that addressed?

2 A You get that addressed when you call the ROC and  
3 you say it through to the ROC. The ROC should  
4 automatically be calling out the CNS, our Signals  
5 Department, and getting that addressed.

6 Crew members will also put in an incident report  
7 that'll go directly to operational managers, and then,  
8 when we see it, we'll address it as well.

9 And to be honest with you, our crew members will  
10 also sometimes tell the union and then the union reach  
11 out to us. But the way per "a rule" would be they  
12 call the ROC. The ROC notifies CNS. But, if they  
13 filed an incident report, Operations will get it and  
14 do the same thing.

15 Q I see. Okay. So last but not least here for my  
16 round here, you had mentioned that your -- not the  
17 yard masters, it's your train masters or what are they  
18 called? Station managers?

19 A Station managers, right.

20 Q Station managers?

21 A Yes.

22 Q They take care of your investigations if  
23 something happens, right, out on the ballast line, the  
24 reporting?

25 A No.

1 Q No?

2 A No.

3 Q Okay.

4 A The field supervisors take care of that. When I  
5 mentioned the passenger service managers, our  
6 passenger service managers are not NORAC qualified.

7 Q Okay. I got you. I got you. All right. I'm  
8 getting them all crossed up here. So, when dealing  
9 with let's say an employee gets injured walking the  
10 ballast line, rolls an ankle or something. What's the  
11 expectation for from the event onward as far as  
12 reporting and handling that situation?

13 A So all our employees, the rules are clear, you're  
14 to report that -- if it happens out in the field, you  
15 should report it on the train to the ROC. If it needs  
16 emergency assistance where you're at, a train away,  
17 managers will be dispatched to you and emergency,  
18 whatever happens first. If emergency goes to you  
19 first, we'll try to get to you at the hospital to get  
20 all the relevant information, and then it goes that  
21 way. We have one assistant director who has oversight  
22 for all injury on duty for our employees, and then we  
23 make sure we track that we get all the appropriate  
24 information.

25 If it happens and you can get yourself to town or

1 to a yard, the same thing applies. You come right in  
2 town. A field supervisor, someone qualified, will  
3 actually make sure we get your paperwork. We can take  
4 your paperwork, but a yard manager, they're qualified  
5 to take the initial paperwork. A passenger service  
6 rep is qualified to take the initial paperwork. And  
7 our field managers take the initial paperwork, which  
8 is the online FRA form, and then SEPTA has a separate  
9 sheet to get us a little bit more information.

10 Then, based on that, we investigate the whole  
11 situation, put a cover letter on it, and that's the  
12 part that our assistant director, Shirley Williams,  
13 handles. She has a whole chart that says make sure  
14 this is done, this is done. If it involves  
15 Mechanical, she'll reach out to Mechanical to get a  
16 report of equipment. Whatever it involves, she takes  
17 part in making sure we get everything wrapped up and  
18 we put a nice little bow on it to see whatever we see  
19 out of it.

20 Q So there's an internal, like, report, like a root  
21 cause report or, you know, like, with that? Like,  
22 what's a -- can you give me a description of the  
23 report?

24 A We just call it a summary sheet.

25 Q Summary sheet.

1 Q Once the manager's done, they create a summary  
2 sheet that says this event happened. After reviewing  
3 everything, we found this, that, or other. Whether it  
4 was a crew issue, not crewed in. Employee did not  
5 have his shoes tied. There was a safety violation.  
6 Appropriate corrective action was taken. We saw no  
7 issues with the crew. Mechanical said it was a  
8 defect. Whatever that is, it's part of the cover  
9 letter and that cover summary starts and ends the  
10 report, and then all the paperwork of what it was is  
11 just inside of it.

12 Q And as far as, like, is there a monthly, weekly,  
13 quarterly review where transportation officers, you  
14 know, sit down or have a call or something where you  
15 go over, you know, the system safety injuries to look  
16 at that stuff, to review it or anything like that, or  
17 work with Systems Safety on that or anything?

18 A So I'll be honest and say, no, I'm not involved  
19 in a quarterly meeting with Systems Safety. We do  
20 create -- there is a IOD summary report that comes out  
21 and you can, and our departments have access to review  
22 it to see what it is. Using what we did internally,  
23 we kind of keep an eye on what we saw. And I will  
24 admit, it was a little while back, to be honest, about  
25 four to five months ago we started talking about at

1 our Local Safety Committee level correlating those two  
2 pieces to see if we saw trends. We just talked about  
3 that. We didn't really implement anything all the way  
4 through on that, but it was talked about about five  
5 months or so ago, we had talked about that.

6 Q So, if I'm an engineer and there's been, you know,  
7 a couple of injuries this week somewhere on SEPTA,  
8 would I know about those injuries in any way? Or is  
9 that just -- would there be any type of, like,  
10 broadcast from SEPTA or anything like -- or no?

11 A Yes.

12 Q Okay.

13 A So that monthly report is put out, there should  
14 be one next door at Roberts. All of our report  
15 locations get a monthly report. The email comes out,  
16 here's the report, it shows all the injuries per  
17 craft, location, date, and what was injured, and it's  
18 just hanging up at all the facilities for everybody to  
19 see.

20 Q And if there -- let's just say there's an unsafe  
21 situation. Let's say there's a shy ballast or a  
22 washout somewhere at a certain mile post. Is there a  
23 way when crews come on duty they will be briefed, or  
24 is there train orders or something to say, hey, at  
25 such and such a mile post watch for these walking

1 conditions or anything like that on SEPTA?

2 A So we would say yes. If we were made aware of an  
3 issue that needed a broadcast, we would put it out.  
4 For example, there's been a slippery rail reported on  
5 all the stations on the north end from Fern Rock to  
6 Doylestown. We'll put that out on radio. All the  
7 trains headed to Doylestown will get it.

8 Normally, and part of what we do when we get  
9 that, and Shirley and the managers do, if there's  
10 something that has an immediate, needs an immediate  
11 response, we dispatch immediately. Normally, it's  
12 rectified, speaking honestly, if a cone had to be put  
13 in a hole until we fixed it, so it is rectified  
14 immediately as part of the team, and yes, if the ROC  
15 or anybody needs to broadcast a situation, that's done  
16 as well.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. All right. No further  
18 questions.

19 Mr. Kraholik?

20 MR. KRAHOLIK: Todd Kraholik, NTSB.

21 BY MR. KRAHOLIK:

22 Q So, on the 12th, this report, all defects on MP-  
23 11s came out. And on the 25th or 23rd, I can't -- one  
24 of those incidents, the 25th. The 25th incident with  
25 the traction motor, there were six crews that saw a

1 fault light on a train and not one person put an MP-11  
2 in. Not one person called the fault light in. Why  
3 did that happen? Why do you think that happened? Why  
4 would the crews not do that?

5 A I'll be honest with you, I didn't get a chance to  
6 talk to any of those crews, so I don't think it would  
7 be fair for me to try to summarize why that didn't  
8 happen.

9 Q Do you think that --

10 A I'm really curious how or why six crew members  
11 would have saw a fault light and not followed the  
12 instructions, especially because we've just been  
13 blasting and putting it out. I'm very curious as to  
14 what choice they made. But why, again, I mean, I did  
15 not talk to them, so I wouldn't be able to say the why  
16 to that. It wouldn't be fair.

17 Q Do you think that's a one-off? Or do you think,  
18 if that same thing were to happen today, do you think  
19 the same thing would happen, or do you think that was  
20 just -- six crews. That's six engineers. Do you  
21 think that was -- I think you have 206 engineers. Do  
22 you think the other 200 would have done the same  
23 thing? Or you think that was --

24 A Again, I don't, I honestly, I don't want to  
25 speculate. Here's the thing I want to be careful of.

1 I'm not right now understanding, was the light on  
2 continuous the whole time? Were all the crewmen -- I  
3 don't know that for a fact, so I don't want to make a  
4 statement that makes it sound like this light was on  
5 the entire trip for everybody. Or did it come on, did  
6 they reset it, it went off, and then it came back on?  
7 I wasn't part of it because I know, on equipment  
8 sometimes, we can have a fault light, we can make a  
9 reset, the light goes out. I still should have put in  
10 an MP-11. But the light went out. I still should  
11 have put in an MP-11, but because -- so I don't know  
12 if it was continuous -- I don't want to answer it  
13 without knowing, because I didn't sit down on those  
14 interviews yet to be honest with you. I didn't even  
15 talk to the team about it because I took a couple days  
16 off.

17 Q I got you. I got you. So do you feel that SEPTA  
18 managers did everything they could do as far as trying  
19 to get the crews to put MP-11s in? Do you think there  
20 was anything that needs to be done, or do you think  
21 you guys did pretty much everything you think you can  
22 do?

23 A So the last question is that is a -- we have to  
24 continually work on how else to make sure we get the  
25 information out. There is definitely a part of

1 management that feels as though when we put it in our  
2 publications and our requirement reads that that's  
3 absolutely a good first step, and we have to keep  
4 trying to manage how to make sure everybody has it.  
5 So that part I wish I had a perfect answer for, but  
6 it's just a work in progress. But we do, I will be  
7 honest to say we rely heavily on all certified people  
8 understanding when publications come out and things  
9 are in there that they're supposed to read, be  
10 knowledgeable of it and be ready to comply with it.  
11 And if they have any kind of question, get it to us  
12 immediately so we can help them out. And we've got to  
13 figure out the bridge of getting the rest of that  
14 done. That's all I can figure out on that.

15 MR. KRAHOLIK: Okay. I don't have any further  
16 questions.

17 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Brett Johnson, NTSB.  
18 Just a couple more questions, Mr. Perkins.

19 BY MR. JOHNSON:

20 Q So we've been talking a lot about MP-1-11s  
21 reporting, MP, Mike Papa 1-1's, yeah. MP-1-11s, when  
22 did you become aware or how did you become aware that  
23 there's going to -- there's an issue warranting extra  
24 focus on this reporting procedure due to, you know,  
25 these ongoing issues with fires?

1 A My best recollection of that is somewhere between  
2 one or two of our major incidents --

3 Q Sure.

4 A -- the conversation came up with some of our  
5 senior managers on the mechanical side where it was  
6 there are issues with Silverliner IVs that crews keep  
7 verbally saying that was not matching the MP-11  
8 documentation on the record at the Mechanical Desk.

9 Q Okay.

10 A And that's when we first realized we need to make  
11 sure that the words being said matched the documents  
12 we expect them to be written on.

13 Q And what, like, forum would that -- those  
14 conversations -- was that, like, local level folks, or  
15 how would that --

16 A We were in after-action meetings about -- this  
17 was each department, Mechanical, ROC -- you know, the  
18 department heads were in a room talking about what are  
19 we hearing, what are we knowing, and when some of that  
20 came up, we started recognizing that people are  
21 saying, we're hearing from -- we're hearing verbally  
22 crews are saying this, but it wasn't matching the  
23 documentation of MP-11. So there was some internal  
24 discussions with the various departments at SEPTA.

25 Q So are you or were you made aware that SEPTA had

1 made a commitment to NTSB and FRA that they would,  
2 SEPTA would be reporting fault light indications as  
3 they come up to the ROC? I guess it was what, in  
4 July, July 25 or something. Were folks at -- were you  
5 made aware or other folks like your peers made aware  
6 of the commitment and extra effort to really focus as  
7 an agency on these fault lights?

8 A Yes.

9 Q Okay. And how was that communicated to you?

10 A Through a meeting we had, and I believe one of  
11 the first few memos that came out may or may not have  
12 had my name on it. We had a couple names on it.

13 Q Sure.

14 A But we had meetings about it and that's when that  
15 memo came out. Again, respectfully, the Senior  
16 Director of Railroad Operations -- myself or Rich  
17 Mahon kind of head the memos that kind of come out  
18 from an operational standpoint. So, between the two  
19 of us and, you know, the team, that's how it comes out.  
20 So it was around that time when that memo was  
21 developed. It got developed through our understanding  
22 of what was the accident and how we're getting it out  
23 to crews and how we're talking about it with crews.

24 Q Okay. And so --

25 A Which also included, again, we're using it as

1 we're phasing it, which also included putting it out on  
2 the tablets. And, honestly, we actually had a  
3 conversation with our union leaders (inaudible) --

4 Q Mm-hmm. Sure.

5 A -- saying, hey, this is happening. Help us  
6 spread the word with the team as well. So we did that  
7 as well in conjunction with that right around that  
8 same time.

9 Q And did, like, upper leadership, you know, top  
10 leadership at SEPTA, you know, communicate to you or  
11 your manager, because you guys are at the top of  
12 Transportation Operations, like, the reason why this  
13 was being done?

14 A Again, I want to say yes to that. We were,  
15 again, part of the internal meetings that I kind of  
16 discussed. We had an understanding that, you know,  
17 there was some kind of gap, give or take, using that  
18 word loosely, but -- so yes, there was some  
19 understanding that we need to get this better. And  
20 that was our focus on getting it better, making sure  
21 we're sharing information and getting it where it needs  
22 to be correctly.

23 Q Okay. All right, Mr. Perkins, I'm going to ask  
24 one last question here and I'm going to take it from  
25 Mr. Kraholik. Is there anything that, any questions

1 that we may have, should have asked that we didn't that  
2 you could see could add, that are important to this  
3 incident, these fire incidents that come to mind that  
4 you'd like to put out there to talk about?

5 A No, I don't believe so.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Mr. Kraholik?

7 MR. KRAHOLIK: All right. Is there anything else  
8 you want to add or anything you want to get on the  
9 record or anything, or are you good?

10 MR. PERKINS: I am good.

11 MR. KRAHOLIK: All right. If we have any follow-  
12 up questions, do you mind if we contact you?

13 MR. PERKINS: Feel free.

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

16 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled  
17 matter was concluded.)

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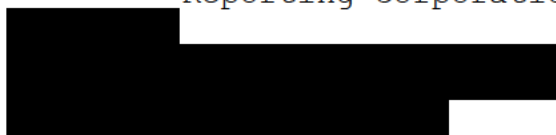
CERTIFICATE

CASE TITLE: SEPTA Fire  
ACCIDENT NO.: RRD25FR006  
LOCATION: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
DATE: September 30, 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 10, 2025

Marcia Thurmond  
Official Transcriber  
Reporting Corporation



Heritage Corporation

