UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
	*	
TRAIN DERAILMENT AT BNSF	*	
GLOBEMASTER YARD IN DENVER,	*	Accident No.: RRD25FR022
COLORADO ON AUGUST 5, 2025	*	
	*	

Interview of: [redacted], Engineer
Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway

Denver, Colorado

Thursday,
August 7, 2025

APPEARANCES:

SCOTT LAVALLEE, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

MICHAEL HOEPF, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

J.D. ARCHIE, Operating Practices Specialist
Federal Railroad Administration

ROBERTO GRAJEDA, Safety Task Force Investigator
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen

MICHAEL COOK, Assistant Vice President of Safety
Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway

CAMERON SAUNDERS, National Safety Team Investigator
SMART Transportation Division

ZACHARY ZAGATA, Branch Chief
National Transportation Safety Board
Observer

JEFFREY GARRELS, General Director of Operating Practices
Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway
Observer

BRETT BRIDGES, Superintendent
Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway
Observer

JASON MEYERS, Chairman, Local 626
SMART Transportation Division
Representing Mr. Corbett

I N D E X

ITEM	PAGE
Interview of [redacted]:	
By Mr. Lavallee	6
By Mr. Hoepf	22
By Mr. Archie	27
By Mr. Cook	29
By Mr. Saunders	31
By Mr. Lavallee	31
By Mr. Hoepf	37
By Mr. Cook	42
By Mr. Lavallee	43

I N T E R V I E W

MR. LAVALLEE: Good morning, my name is Scott Lavallee and I am the NTSB Investigator-in-Charge for this accident. We're conducting an interview today on Thursday, August the 7th with [redacted], who works for Burlington Northern Santa Fe. This interview is in conjunction with NTSB of the accident in Denver, Colorado. The NTSB accident reference number for this is RRD25FR022. The purpose of this investigation is to increase safety, not to assign fault, blame, or liability.

Before we begin our interview and questions, we'll go around and introduce ourselves. Please spell your last name, give us your title and who you work for. I'll start off and pass it to my right.

Again, my name is Scott Lavallee, the spelling of my last name is L-a-v-a-l-l-e-e, and I am the NTSB Investigator-in-Charge for this accident.

MR. HOEPF: Mike Hoepf, last name is H-o-e-p-f, and I'm a human performance investigator with the NTSB.

MR. GRAJEDA: Roberto Grajeda, I am -- G-r-a-j-e-d-a, BLET Safety Task Force investigator.

MR. GARRELS: Jeffrey Garrels, G-a-r-r-e-l-s, General Director of Operating Practices for BNSF Railway and I will be observing.

MR. ARCHIE: J.D. Archie, FRA, A-r-c-h-i-e is my last name, and I will be questioning and serving.

MR. BRIDGES: Brett Bridges, B-r-i-d-g-e-s, BNSF mechanical, I'm an observer.

MR. ZAGATA: Zach Zagata, Z-a-g-a-t-a, NTSB Branch Chief, observer.

MR. COOK: Michael Cook, C-o-o-k, Assistant Vice President of Safety, BNSF.

MR. SAUNDERS: Cameron Saunders, S-a-u-n-d-e-r-s, SMART-TD National Safety Team.

MR. MEYERS: Jason Meyers, M-e-y-e-r-s, SMART-TD local chairman out of McCook, Nebraska.

MR. [redacted]: [redacted], [redacted], BNSF engineer.

MR. LAVALLEE: Okay. All right, so thank you for that and I should've covered this off record, but we do have HVAC running in this room, it's a fairly hot day, but that HVAC can tend to get a little loud, so just please make sure that you speak in a loud, clear voice for the record, if you would.

[redacted], before we get started here, do we have your permission to record our discussion with you today, sir?

MR. [redacted]: Yes, you do.

MR. LAVALLEE: All right, thank you. [redacted], we afford you the opportunity to have a representative with you in the room, do you have one here today and who is it?

MR. [redacted]: I do. On my left, [redacted].

MR. LAVALLEE: Mr. [redacted]. Okay, thank you. And [redacted], do you understand that these transcripts --

MR. [redacted]: If he happens to fall for any medical reasons or anything, I'll have Robert step in as my second.

MR. LAVALLEE: Okay, Robert would be your second, if anything happens. Thank you for that. And [redacted], do you understand that the transcripts of this interview today will eventually be part of the public docket and as such, we can't guarantee any confidentiality?

MR. [redacted]: I do.

MR. LAVALLEE: Thank you.

INTERVIEW OF [redacted]

BY MR. LAVALLEE:

Q. All right, [redacted], I'll start off, this is Lavallee with the NTSB. I like to start with just general -- give me your background in the industry, right, your background, experience, and training within the railroad industry, if you would, sir.

A. Four years as a signal maintainer, 13 years and nine months active as a BNSF employee, 12 years, over 12 years as a locomotive engineer.

Q. Okay, that's a good amount of time. Have you always been -- you said that you're out of the McCook area, McCook, Nebraska, have you always been out of that area?

A. I hired out at McCook, not -- I have not always worked out of McCook due to me coming and chasing a job time to time.

Q. Would you say that, like, the majority of -- went out of McCook?

A. Yes, majority.
Q. Thank you for that. Let's go to the day of the incident, which I have as early morning on August the 5th. What I'd like to do is kind of back up to the start of that call. Roughly, how you received the call, roughly about what time you received the call, on-duty time, kind of walk me through the day.
A. I was called at noon Mountain for a 14:00 on-duty time, 14:00 Mountain for an H. Linden, L-i-n-d-e-n, 102A. We were on duty and departed McCook, I'll just call it roughly 15, 20 minutes after being on duty, got in the van, we bussed to the location of the train, which was in Corona. Not a hundred percent on the milepost, but roughly Milepost 473. Got on the train, toned up dispatch, let them know that the relief crew was on and we were -- we needed a set of GTBs and we plugged it, we plugged it in, waited for signal indication and then we moved from Corona to Denver, going through a couple sidings. I can't recall -- we went through Krauss siding, Wiggins siding. I want to say Barr siding, B-a-r-r.
Q. All right.
A. And then approached Denver, don't know the time. The conductor contacted the 31st yardmaster or 38th yardmaster for landing instructions, we were told to pull into 4 track and double whatever doesn't fit into 3 track.
Q. Okay. Kind of go back to -- so it seems like you went on duty in McCook and then you had the van out to Corona is what you

said, is that correct?
A. Correct.
Q. Was there a crew on that train already or was it tied down?
A. Tied down.
Q. Okay. About how far is McCook to Corona, just out of my curiosity, ballpark is great.
A. Two hundred miles. No, less than that. Let me see, 4 -- 287 minus -- or 473 minus 27, so that's what? Yeah, a hundred and 90 miles.
Q. Okay. So that's a good distance of the overall trip that -- I understand the trip, total trip from McCook into Denver is about 250 rail miles, is that --
A. Two hundred and 54.2.
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah.
Q. So it's greater than halfway to go get the train.
A. Correct.
Q. All right, thank you for that. And you mentioned going in and out of a couple sidings, you mentioned Krauss, Wiggins, Barr. Was there any work between where you got the train there at Corona to Denver, any work en route?
A. No work.
Q. No work, all right. All right, after getting the yarding instructions, I believe you said that that came from the 38th Street yardmaster.

A. Correct.
Q. Was there any job brief about, you know, coming into Denver, things to look out for, anything like that? Can you kind of describe that to me?
A. Yeah, we're always looking out when we're in a restricted speed, we're always looking out for switches, derails, men and equipment.
Q. Okay. So like a terms D type of thing, right, be on the lookout for --
A. Exactly.
Q. All right, so yarding instructions were to come in 104 and that's a pull-in move, correct?
A. Um-hum. Yes.
Q. And there's a little bit of discrepancy between timetable direction versus actual cardinal compass direction, right, so if you're coming in to Track 104, what would that be like timetable direction?
A. South lead, no zones, 4 track. Am I in the right approach, what do you mean?
Q. So I'm just kind of looking like, would that -- like, according to the timetable, would that be like a -- like an east to west move or west to east?
A. We were moving east to west.
Q. Okay, so timetable would be east to west.
A. Um-hum.

Q. Do you know, geographically, if that lines up, as well, if that's like the actual compass direction that you're moving or is it different, as far as you know?
A. The mountains are to my left when I'm pulling in, so yeah, it holds up.
Q. It holds up, okay. Starting into Track 104, right, which is the first track you were instructed to pull down, anything out of the ordinary coming into 104?
A. We had one switch that was lined against us, we stopped and lined it.
Q. And which switch was that, if you recall?
A. One-oh-three, I believe.
Q. Okay. Did you stop at the bottom of Track 104?
A. We stopped at the bottom of 102 or 103 so we could properly line. If we stopped at 4, we would've ran through the switch, so it goes 1 through 4 from south to north, so we stopped at 2 track to line 3.
Q. Okay. Stopped at 2 track to line 3.
A. And that's not a hundred percent, I don't know if we stopped at 103 to line 104, but one of those two switches we did line.
Q. Sure, [redacted], and let me make sure I get this on record, too, that, you know, anything that you're asked, if you're not -- we don't want you to speculate, right, so things like "to the best of my recollection," those are fine, right, be sure that you --
A. To the best of my recollection, we lined 1 track on the lead

on the east end of the yard.
Q. Okay. Before coming out, I believe you would've pulled into 104 before coming out onto the 31st side of the yard, was there anything that you had to -- anybody you had to talk to before you could do that?
A. Thirty-first yardmaster.
Q. Okay. Kind of talk to me about how that conversation went, if you would.
A. I was instructed to come out, good for head space on the south lead and whatever we don't fit, we'll shove into 103.
Q. Okay.
A. So coming out of 104, what doesn't fit, go to 103.
Q. All right.
A. We were given permission to come out.
Q. Permission to come out, all right. Was your train completely in the clear in 104 at that point or did you need to pull further to pull the rear into the track?
A. We still had half a train, so we needed to pull.
Q. Okay. As you're pulling, how do you know when the rear's in the clear of Track 104?
A. Thirty-eighth yardmaster will spot us on the camera and count us down --
Q. Okay. And --
A. -- when he wants us to stop.
Q. Very good. And that happened as planned, as that procedure

goes, that did occur?
A. That did happen, yeah.
Q. Okay. What would be next, after we get the rear end in to clear of 104, talk to me about the -- you know, what would be the next move from there?
A. Conductor would get in between, set the appropriate amount of brakes, do a full release, make the cut, pull ahead.
Q. Okay. And [redacted], as we had spoken about that these transcripts eventually become part of the public docket, right, so I may ask you to clarify some railroad terms that the general public may not know, right? So when you say the conductor's going to get in between, can you kind of describe what that means?
A. The conductor's asking the engineer for protection so he can go in between railcars and set handbrakes, so as a securement, the cars can be secured.
Q. And as an engineer, how would you provide that protection for the conductor?
A. I, as an engineer, would center my reverser, give it full set on my independent, and it is up to the discretion of the engineer if he wants to set air on the automatic or not, but it's not required by the BNSF.
Q. Okay. So you request in between, I assume the conductor goes in between, does his thing as far as securement's concerned, and then you perform a release test, is that all correct?
A. Correct.

Q. And the results of the release test were good, is that right?
A. That is correct.
Q. All right. Then making a cut, could you kind of describe what you -- what you as an engineer would need to do when making that cut, if any?
A. I would verify the conductor's in the clear and being in the clear means that he's not in between any moving equipment and he's ready to pull the coupling lever to separate the train and as an engineer, I would move my reverser forward, release the independent and put the throttle into motion so the locomotive can move.
Q. Thank you for that, [redacted]. Sometimes, based upon the way the couplers operate, it may be necessary to give a slight reverse movement to allow enough slack for an uncoupling to happen. Was that the case on that day, did you need to come back for a pin or get a little slack out of it before the uncoupling could happen?
A. I don't recall.
Q. Don't recall. Okay, fair enough. All right, so we've got the cut made and let me ask you this, [redacted], because I understand that we had two engineers, or at least an engineer and a student engineer on the train that day, were you operating the controls while yarding here at Globeville/Den?
A. I did not operate the controls at any time while I was on duty.
Q. Okay. And who did?

A. My student engineer, [redacted].
Q. Okay. So the student engineer was operating under your supervision, would that be correct to say?
A. That is a hundred percent correct.
Q. Okay. I just want to clarify for the record, too, so when you pulled into 104 and needed to line a switch ahead in order to get that head room, the conductor would've gotten off the locomotive to perform those tasks, is that also correct?
A. The switch was operated on the east end of the yard, the conductor was on the head end with us, so the conductor's responsibility to line the switch.
Q. Okay. So when you -- obviously, when the conductor gets his in-between protection and goes and does his tying handbrakes, at that point the conductor's on the ground, he's no longer in the cab of the locomotive.
A. Correct.
Q. Okay, thank you. All right, so we get our securement test done, we uncouple the equipment, student engineer's running, what next?
A. We pull forward and depending on where our locomotive's at, we're on the main heading towards a signal, 31st yardmaster will give you a signal indication, permission to take it, and if you happen to take the signal, which means if your locomotive goes past it, he also gives you permission for a reverse movement while your locomotive's in the OS and -- sorry, what was the second

part?
Q. So I was just asking about the process after we cut away, right, you're on the right track as far as, you know, where I'm going? Well, just --
A. We'll pull ahead far enough until the conductor on the ground counts us down to a stop.
Q. Okay. And that would -- in theory, and I realize you're on the cab of the locomotive, but the goal of the conductor, as far as we understand, would be -- since you were in 104, is going to clear the 103 switch in preparation to shove back, would that be correct --
A. That would be correct.
Q. All right. Any issues with communication with the conductor during this process, as far as you can recall?
A. During that process, no.
Q. Just based on the answer to that question, it seems like at later points there may have been problems.
A. It's always a problem in Denver Yard, everybody at that yard, I would say 70 percent of the people that work out here work on one radio channel. And I don't know if that's 70 percent, 80 percent, I'm just hypothetically giving you a percentage.
Q. Sure.
A. So everybody talks on the same radio channel.
Q. And what can be some of the issues when everybody's on the same radio channel?

A. Someone can miss a communication.
Q. And just for clarification, do you know what that radio channel is? You may have mentioned it and I didn't catch it.
A. Channel 39.
Q. Channel 39. Speaking specifically regarding communications with your conductor during this operation, did you have any specific examples of any communication issues that you can speak to?
A. Can you specify, meaning while moving or --
Q. Yeah, was there --
A. -- at any time?
Q. -- a point that you couldn't hear him or anything along those lines?
A. After movement was -- after the cut was made, we pulled forward, he counted us down to clear 3 track, communications was good and then there was other radio traffic and I asked, hello, conductor on the Lincoln/Denver, I couldn't hear him, the train was not moving at any time, we haven't had any commands, then we reestablished communication, once communication was -- I'll just let you ask the questions, is that what you want?
Q. Yeah, that's fine, that's fine. All right, so it seems like we made the cut, we pull out to clear the 3 switch and stop and that countdown went okay.
A. Correct.
Q. But it seems like after that there may have been a long pause

where there wasn't any communication from the conductor, is that what you're kind of getting at, where you couldn't reach him?
A. I asked -- I asked the conductor if he said something because there was other radio traffic.
Q. I see.
A. And then I didn't get a response.
Q. Okay. And you said eventually, communication was reestablished with the conductor, though, is that correct?
A. That is correct.
Q. All right. Can you talk to us about the communication that took place prior to the shove move into Track 103?
A. There was a countdown for how he wanted us to stop the train.
Q. Okay. I'm sorry, about like right before, because we're stopped at this point, now we've reestablished communication with the conductor and we're ready to shove the balance in the -- a balance of the train into 103, I'm talking about that radio communication, how that --
A. The conductor's on the point protecting, back 30, three-zero.
Q. Okay, conductor on point protecting, back 30. Is that pretty standard as far as the information that you would need as an engineer in order to initiate that move?
A. He's establishing where he's at, how many cars he needs, yes.
Q. As an engineer, and I realize that you weren't operating, you know, at the time, that's what you told us, how would you handle the train or would you even handle the train differently if a

conductor's riding versus if they say that they're ahead of them?
A. I always operate the train differently when I'm shoving, just to protect my conductor.
Q. And how would you -- how would you do that differently if they're riding?
A. I set air on the train to give him a smooth ride.
Q. Okay.
A. I don't ever try to stop the movement with my independent because it'll cause slack action and a train's like an accordion, you have to keep it buffed up or draft and you try to give the guy the best ride you can and by -- shoving with air is the best way.
Q. Okay. And just again for the general public, right, so when you talk about putting air under the train, could you kind of describe what that would mean in a way that the public might understand? And I know it can be difficult to kind of come up with that, but do your best.
A. From the front to the rear of the train, a train has 90 pounds of available air and that helps the train stop, it's setting air to the train, individual cars as a group, and you can control your movement by setting air, which is like if a pedestrian was pressing his foot on a brake pedal, the harder you press, the faster it stops, the same principle with a train and trains go from minimum setting to a 10-pound setting and above. You try not to go anything above 20 pounds because at that point you're not going to be able to have any locomotive power to shove

a train.
Q. Okay.
A. I hope I answered that.
Q. No, [redacted], that was great, thank you for that. So being that you weren't running, did you -- or operating the controls, did you have a job briefing with your student engineer about that process, what, you know, brake applications to be in, what throttle setting? How involved was that?
A. Very involved. I gave him a step-by-step procedure what to do.
Q. And could you share that step-by-step with us, to the best of your recollection.
A. I told the student engineer, when he says conductor's on the point protecting, back 30, I said we're going to initiate movement, we're going to go slow and once we move about a car length, car and a half, we're going to set a minimum, and word for word I said I want you to get experience on how to shove a train with air, how that -- basically, that's kind of what I said, maybe not word for word, but that's -- I said we're going to get experience shoving a train on air because we got someone riding.
Q. Okay.
A. Air was set, I told him to set a minimum after we got up to five to six mile per hour and he set a minimum. Shortly thereafter, train went into emergency.
Q. Okay. So it sounds like you're pretty involved with your

student engineer as far as hey, this is the process we're going to use today, this is what to do, Step 1, Step 2, Step 3, would that be fair to say?

A. That is fair to say, it's my job.

Q. Okay. I appreciate that. So the initial car count, you stated, from the conductor, he was on or riding back good for 30 cars, you have the discussion with the student engineer, how we're going to handle it, and it seems like you're supervising that pretty intensely. Was there any additional radio communication with the conductor after the initial shove instructions?

A. No.

Q. Okay. All right. And then you said shortly thereafter, the train went into emergency. To the best of your estimation, yeah, how far would you feel that the train -- the lead locomotive had moved it backwards at that point?

A. Prior to emergency?

Q. Correct.

A. Four cars.

Q. About four cars. Do you recall any, like, instructions with the student engineer about what throttle settings to use, like don't go above this or any sort of communication between you and the student engineer regarding throttle? Other than go slow, I think is what you said, but anything specific as far as what throttle notches to use?

A. No.

Q. Okay. As the senior engineer, did you have any feedback for the way that the student engineer was running or was he doing a good job in your estimation?
A. He was doing a very good job.
Q. Okay, thank you for that. You had a sense -- and I know in a situation like that, you may not be watching the speedometer like a hawk, right, but did you have a sense as far as how fast the shove movement started out? I also understand the head end and the rear of the cut may not be moving at the same speed with brakes applied, right, but as far as the lead locomotive is concerned, do you have a sense of how fast you got up to prior to the emergency brake application?
A. Five, five or six mile an hour. That's why I told him to set a minimum.
MR. LAVALLEE: Okay, thank you for that, [redacted]. I'm going to give a break at this point and pass it on to my right.
MR. HOEPF: All right. Thanks, Scott, this is Mike, NTSB. [redacted], you doing okay, you need a quick break or anything?
MR. [redacted]: No.
MR. HOEPF: Okay.
MR. [redacted]: Doing fine, thank you.
MR. HOEPF: Just at any point, you know, just -- if you do, just, you know, throw up a hand. Also, I just want to say, I'm sure I speak for everybody here when we're sorry this happened to you and your team and hope you're doing okay and --

MR. [redacted]: Thank you.

MR. HOEPF: -- thank you for -- thank you for being with us, I know it's not easy.

BY MR. HOEPF:

Q. So I think you covered the -- you know, kind of the accident sequence pretty well there, I kind of want to just to finish that topic out before we kind of move on to some more general discussion. And just to kind of clarify here, you know, like Scott said, sometimes things are just kind of railroad terms you got to clarify for the general public. When you say that the train went into emergency, can you just kind of explain what that means mechanically?

A. When a train goes into emergency, automatically 90 pounds of pressure of air will be released from Point A to Point B, from the front to back and at that point, any controls you have on the locomotive are in-op, you can't put whatever throttle position is it, it's not giving any more power. Basically, the only thing you can do in an emergency situation is talk on the radio and blow the horn. The controls on the engineer's stand is our -- well, that's a lie. Your independent is still available to you on the locomotive.

Q. Gotcha, gotcha. And so the -- and just confirming here, so the student engineer did not manually apply the brakes, the brakes automatically came on as a result of the collision, is that -- is that a fair --

A. One more time?
Q. So when the train went into emergency, right, was that -- was it put into emergency by the student engineer or was that something that happened automatically as a result of the collision?
A. The train went into emergency not by the student or myself.
Q. Okay, so it was -- to the best of your understanding, it was an automatic process.
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. Yes.
Q. Just kind of built into the train engineering, okay. And was that -- was that the first indication of trouble that -- at that point? When the train went into emergency, you know, up to that point, was everything just hunky-dory, you know, good to go? Was that the first indication that something is wrong?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay, okay. So just clarifying, so prior to that point, there was no -- there was nothing that -- no red flags, nothing that caught your attention, nothing atypical that, you know, had you concerned or anything, it was just everything's fine and then all of a sudden, the train's in emergency, is that a fair characterization?
A. That is fair and it's correct.
Q. Okay. And I know that this is difficult to do, but just to

the best of your ability, can you just kind of walk us through, you know, kind of from an emergency response perspective, you know, you obviously don't need to be graphic or anything, but just kind the aftermath of this and how that unfolded, you know, after the train went into emergency?

A. My student engineer says the PCS is open, I'm sitting in the brakeman's seat, which is in the middle of the locomotive. Typically, the brakeman's seat is not in the middle, it's behind the conductor, but this locomotive had a seat in the middle of the cab where I was sitting and he said the PCS opened up, I leaned over and looked at the computer screen, I said we're in emergency, I picked up the hand mike and I gave the emergency broadcast of emergency, emergency, emergency. And he said, "What do you think happened?" I said, "I don't know." Oh, and you want to continue?

Q. Yeah, yeah, just -- just, you know, up until, you know -- you know, did you talk to the -- you know, afterwards, who did you talk to, did you interface with the firefighters or emergency response personnel or anything like that?

A. No, we never interacted with any BNSF personnel until approximately about an hour after the incident. We got to watch the ambulance and fire trucks go over the overpass, but there was a radio communication with someone in the yard that says, "You have a man down," I picked up the radio, again I said, "Say again?" or "What did you say?" I can't recall my exact words. To the best of my recollection, it was "You have a man down, there's

cars everywhere." So I picked up the hand mike and I said, "Brake, brake, brake, emergency, emergency, emergency. All traffic in Denver come to a stop, we have an emergency situation. Hello, 31st yardmaster."

Q. All right, all right.

A. And that might be in some different steps, but those are the words that were said.

Q. Great. And basically, what I'm getting at was, you know, were there -- were there any concerns from your perspective in the emergency response, or did it go as well as it could at that point, from your perspective?

A. I seen lights and sirens, yeah, I guess it was as good as anything, but we didn't get told anything, it was radio silence for an hour.

Q. Okay.

A. But we knew the situation was serious when you see that many emergency personnel showing up.

Q. Again, I'm sorry that -- sorry about the whole thing and it's hard hearing --

A. And just to protect myself and my student engineer, the control stands were left in emergency, the reverser was centered, independent set. Nothing else was touched other than the computer screen because certain locomotives will shut down, all it takes is a couple buttons on the computer screen and you hit reset. Other than that, no controls to operate the train were -- or were

touched.
Q. Okay, okay. So let me -- let me just back up a little bit in terms of the day, you know, you said that there were no red flags or anything like that but just, you know, can you just tell us, like, how was the day going, was everything going okay, were you guys -- were you guys ahead of schedule, on schedule, behind schedule?
A. That's more of a 31st/38th yardmaster question. I'm good for 12 hours.
Q. Okay, so that wasn't a concern for --
A. I don't know how to answer that. I had an hour and -- what time did the incident happen?
Q. A little bit after midnight.
A. My hours of service was up at 02:00, so I do whatever they tell me until 02:00.
Q. Okay, okay. Again, I don't want you to speculate or anything, just kind of asking from your, you know, perspective, you know. So you personally weren't feeling rushed?
A. No.
MR. HOEPF: Okay, okay, great. I'll have a few more questions for you on the second round, but I just want to give the rest of the team a chance to ask questions about the sequence.
MR. GRAJEDA: Roberto Grajeda, BLET Safety Task Force. [redacted], thank you for coming, for being with us here today and appreciate your professionalism on handling the situation the best

in the time that it was.

MR. LAVALLEE: Okay, at this point, we're going to take a brief timeout at the request of the interviewee and we will pause the record.

(Off the record.)

(On the record.)

MR. LAVALLEE: All right, this is Scott Lavallee, NTSB, interview with [redacted] back on the record. We last left off with Robert from BLET. If you would, sir.

MR. GRAJEDA: So Roberto Grajeda, BLET Safety Task Force investigator. Like I said, [redacted], thank you for your time and of course, your professionalism and I have no questions.

BY MR. ARCHIE:

Q. J.D. Archie, FRA, OP inspector. I just have a couple basic questions. Is this a normal job coming to Denver or what is your seniority down at McCook?

A. We go two directions out of McCook, we either come to Denver or Lincoln, Nebraska.

Q. Okay. So how many times a month do you usually come to Denver, would you say?

A. Half or greater of my trips. Oh, you want a number?

Q. Yeah, if you have (indiscernible).

A. Five or more.

Q. Okay. Is it normal to come in on 104 and then inbound (ph.) the other half of your train on 3, on the 3?

A. Historically or currently?
Q. Historically.
A. No.
Q. Okay. Are you a pool employee or an extra board?
A. Pool.
Q. Pool. Do you guys (indiscernible) --
A. We have a consolidated pool.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He means do you work --
MR. [redacted]: Oh, to Denver, coming to McCook?
BY MR. ARCHIE:
Q. Do you work with the same person every time --
A. No.
Q. -- based on seniority and who wants to (indiscernible)?
A. No. Same person, no.
Q. That's (indiscernible), right?
A. Yeah.
Q. Have you worked with this conductor prior -- or let's start with have you been training this fireman for a while or is he assigned to you? How does that work?
A. He's going through the program, he can mark up with any engineer he would like. This is my second trip with him, one completed trip and then the half, meaning McCook to Denver and we didn't take a train from Denver back to McCook.
Q. And the conductor, have you worked with him at all?
A. Several times. Several means five or more, but we'll just go

way more than that, my whole career I worked with --

MR. ARCHIE: That's all I have for now (indiscernible).

BY MR. COOK:

Q. Michael Cook, C-o-o-k. And again, [redacted], sorry this happened to you. Thanks for what you guys did getting emergency services out there, working with the yardmaster and everybody --

A. Uh-huh.

A. -- and just got a few questions. So whenever you guys were coming in and you got your landing instructions from 38th yardmaster and then you're commissioned out by the 31st yardmaster, can you tell us about the briefing that you guys had in the cab, between like you, the student, and the conductor, before you all started making your moves?

A. I can't, because I don't recall every word that was said, but we were coming down 4 track and usually you don't have a normal -- any other conversation other than the task at hand, if we have one, if not, we're just engaged, so I don't recall --

Q. Okay.

A. -- talking about anything other than -- I'm not even going to -- I'm not going to speculate because I don't remember.

Q. Okay. Fast forward to after you guys came in to 4, you tied your train down, that you were leaving, you did your air test, you pulled south and you're about to make your shove, I believe you said that the conductor said I'm on the point, conductor's on the point, back up 30.

A. I'm on the point protecting, back 30.
Q. Okay. And when you say on the point, what does that mean?
A. It means the conductor's hanging on the car with at least three points of contact.
Q. Right.
A. So he's on the rear, riding.
Q. Okay, okay. When you guys came out of that track while you're pulling ahead to make your double-over, was there any switches lined against you, ahead of you all's movement after the conductor was back behind making the cuts?
A. There was no switch lined against us. There's two ways to come out of 4 track, you can go around the horn, that will lead to the south running, or you could continue going straight and I asked 31st yardmaster, do we take the crossover, do we go straight, he says they both take you to the same spot. And then someone on the radio, don't know who, said something in regards to something or another, all I heard was it's lined and then Matt, the 31st yardmaster, said just go straight. So we had the crossover around the horn to line up to make our movement go straight from 4 track down the lead.
Q. So did you guys have to physically line that or was it lined for you?
A. Physically line it.
Q. Who lined that?
A. I did.

MR. COOK: No more questions right now.

BY MR. SAUNDERS:

Q. Cameron Saunders, SMART-TD. [redacted], thank you for being here, I know it was a horrible experience and I hope nobody ever has to go through that again, especially you. I got a quick question. So after once you made the shove move, went into emergency, you and the student engineer were 40 cars away on the locomotive, correct?

A. Correct.

Q. And you all stayed there, I guess, for that hour, that's where you were, not hearing anything or seeing anything for an hour, you all?

A. Correct.

Q. Held up there. Did somebody come get you all, did they tell you to tie it down, did they --

A. No instructions were given. A crew showed up in a van, two personnel, and they relieved us.

Q. Okay.

A. Then we got in the van.

Q. And went to the depot?

A. Yeah, correct.

MR. SAUNDERS: Okay, that's all I have.

BY MR. LAVALLEE:

Q. Okay, back to Lavallee, L-a-v-a-l-l-e-e, NTSB. A couple follow-ups for you, [redacted]. So the information regarding specific

places within the territory, right, like who to talk to, specific dangers, maybe track lengths, procedures about what to do when you get to this location, where -- how would that information be known to BNSF employees? So if there's special instructions about a certain task or going into a certain yard, is that information provided to you?

A. Yes.

Q. And how? Like, how -- what would it be called, where would that information be found?

A. It would be on our electronic tablet and it would be located under the Powder River subdivision title timetable.

Q. Okay, Powder River timetable. And Powder River timetable is the timetable that, like, was over, like, the Denver area, then?

A. Correct.

Q. Okay. Go ahead.

A. Specify, there's also other timetables once you go past our location. At Still (ph.) Yard you'll have Front Range, Pikes Peak, but under what I was operating under was the Brush subdivision under Powder River.

Q. Brush subdivision, Powder River, okay. But going someplace else, you know, you then eventually go beyond that Powder River timetable and have to look at a different one.

A. Never past the Powder River, just different subdivision --

Q. I see.

A. -- within the Powder River.

Q. Okay, copy. Thanks for that clarification. In those timetables, you talked about you can get -- you'd be made aware of special conditions at certain locations that you need to be aware of. As far as you know, were there any special conditions that you needed to be aware of within the confines of Denver/Globeville Yard here?
A. Pertaining to my movement?
Q. Yeah, pertaining to your movement.
A. Not that I recall.
Q. Okay. And I just wanted to kind of be clear on something here. So you said that you were sitting in what would be considered, like, the middle seat of the locomotive, the brakeman's seat, I think you referred it to.
A. Correct.
Q. Were you there the whole time or did you change over to any other seat after the conductor left?
A. When the conductor got out on the east end of the yard, I remember briefly sitting in his seat.
Q. Okay. Is the view, like, better in one seat or another as far as you're concerned, just your opinion?
A. In that locomotive, the conductor and the engineer seat are the best two seats. My seat, I can see out of both windshields, but the windshield's not -- it gets broken up by -- it gets divided, there's two separate windshields, so --
Q. Okay.

A. -- if I continue sitting where I was at, there's obstruction in my view. It's not a hundred percent view, so that's why I moved over. There was no other --
Q. Okay, I appreciate that.
A. Yeah.
Q. All right. And I just wanted to clarify, too, right, so just to get a better sense, J.D. had asked you about working with this particular crew, I want to clarify for my notes that this was -- this was the second -- well, start of the second round trip with this particular student engineer, is that right?
A. Correct.
Q. And as far as the conductor's concerned -- and I'm not getting you to throw a number, this is really for my benefit, you said five or more times you worked with this conductor, but you also said, like, your whole career with the BNSF?
A. Correct.
Q. Okay. So --
A. But not that whole entire, I guess --
Q. Well, with the same department --
(Crosstalk.)
MR. [redacted]: Yeah, yeah.
BY MR. LAVALLEE:
Q. But since you're working TE&Y, you've worked with this conductor on and off, so you're pretty familiar with him?
A. Correct.

Q. Did you have any concerns about that conductor's ability to perform his job, you know, was he a good employee as far as you're concerned?
A. He's a great employee.
Q. Great employee, thank you for that. Is there any -- I want to bring up a term called close clearance. Are there any areas that you're aware of that are considered close clearance?
A. Yes.
Q. Within the confines of the Globeville Yard?
A. Yes.
Q. Do you know what those areas are, offhand?
A. Yes.
Q. Could you share them with us?
A. Close track center clearance, Tracks 101 to 120.
Q. One-oh-one to one-twenty. Is there any special precautions that need to be taken when operating within tracks that are designated as close clearances, as far as you know?
A. Yes.
Q. And what would those special conditions be?
A. You're not supposed to ride a car down a track if the track has any cars in it, the adjacent track has to be clear.
Q. Okay, so just to clarify, I want to make sure I understand what you're saying, that you're not supposed to ride cars into a track if the adjacent track has cars in it, is that correct?
A. Correct.

Q. All right. So our move was to come down Track 104 and we had secured cars there and then the balance was going to come over to Track 103, am I correct in that statement?
A. Correct.
Q. By virtue of that knowledge and given that guidance for close clearance tracks, that you're not supposed to ride in them, was riding the shove into Track 103 with cars in Track 104, was that something that should've happened according to the rules and guidance from the timetable?
A. I don't know, I don't know if there was cars on 102, I knew there was no cars on 103 because we were -- it was empty and obviously there was cars in 104 because my train was occupying it.
Q. Okay. So just to clarify that --
A. Timeout.
MR. LAVALLEE: Timeout at the request of the interviewee.
(Off the record.)
(On the record.)
BY MR. LAVALLEE:
Q. Scott Lavallee, NTSB, L-a-v-a-l-l-e-e, back on record with [redacted]. During our break, a little side discussion and some looking up was done and I'm just going to make sure that, as part of the investigation, the most current timetable in effect at the time of the incident, and all surrounding rules therein, will be accurately reflected so that there's no confusion. All right. Going back to that, I understood, [redacted], that you -- that although

there may be restrictions on what to do and what not to do, you may or may not have been aware of all of the circumstances that were being taken into consideration by the conductor, would that be a fair assessment to say?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay, thank you. All right. Just going back to one final thing that I've got here that I wanted to clarify, you said the last -- you get the shove instructions from the conductor, which was on and riding, back for 30, anything else from the conductor after that? Not as far as, like, the shove is concerned, but any radio communications like post-accident?

A. No.

MR. LAVALLEE: No.

(Pause.)

MR. LAVALLEE: All right, believe that's all I've got. I'm going to pass it on for everyone's second round, to my right.

MR. HOEPF: Thanks, Scott.

BY MR. HOEPF:

Q. This is Mike again, the NTSB. [redacted], I think we're well on our way to finishing this out here, just kind of closing up a few things. One thing I was hoping you could kind of just give me your general take on an aspect of rail operations, not specific to this particular incident or anything, but just generally speaking, you were talking about the switches and you were saying, you know, lined against and could you just kind of clarify what that means

for -- you know, to a non-railroader?
A. On the reference, when a switch is against you, that means that it's not lined for your movement, for you to continue safely on the rail, meaning it doesn't allow you to go from Point A to Point B continuously on the rail with the wheels.
Q. Right. Gotcha, gotcha. Just wanted to clarify that.
A. Yeah, sorry.
Q. And --
A. I think I explained that right.
Q. Yeah, so -- and when you're going down the track and -- can you tell me a little bit about what that process looks like in terms of when you're making a determination of the position, you know, of a switch? So yeah, I just mean -- do you -- do you look at the target, do you look at the track, you know, what --
A. We always look at the track.
Q. Okay.
A. We never look at the target.
Q. So you basically just ignore the target, that's what I needed.
A. Yeah, because the targets can be rough.
Q. Okay, okay. And again, just to -- just to explain to a non-railroader, can you just explain what you mean when you say you look at the track and how that works?
A. So coming down the rail I'm looking for a specific gap that will allow me to continue from one track to another. If that gap

is not there, that means the switch is lined against me, which means also a reference that's called bad iron, it just won't let me continue to "kind of stay on the road," the rail.
Q. Right, right. And then again, if you can just kind of reiterate, when you see a switch lined against you, is it a fair characterization to say you stop the locomotive, you get out and you line it and can you just kind of describe that process?
A. Make sure all movement has come to a stop, yeah, a crew member will get out, line a switch and -- are you looking for, like -- like a certain feed or --
Q. Just any general information, you don't have to -- it doesn't have to be a deep dive.
A. The railroad requires you to be 50 feet away from a switch before operating it and making sure you got a good hand on the -- I don't know, I haven't been a conductor in a long time, I don't know how to describe it to the public. There's a foot pedal that will release the latch that will release the handle for you to grab with both hands and move it from left to right and that will make the rail in front of you move to the point where you want it to move so your train stays on it.
Q. Okay, great.
A. But the train's not moving.
Q. That's perfect.
A. Okay.
Q. Thank you. And then -- so that would generally be the

conductor's responsibility, is that what you said?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay, okay. So when you're pulling cars, is it the -- is it the engineer's job or the conductor's job to make that assessment as to the position of the switch? Or is it both?
A. Both engineer and conductor are responsible for everything on the rail. But your question was, is it my responsibility or the conductor's responsibility?
Q. Just in general, just the engineer versus the conductor, not specific to you with, you know, this particular sequence of events.
A. Two-man crew, conductor's responsibility. I had a three-man crew, I had two engineers, myself included, and a conductor.
Q. Okay, okay. And then the -- so when you -- let's say you're coming in to -- okay, you know, we'll just talk about this yard because, you know, it's the yard in question, the Globeville Yard, so you're coming in and which switches do you direct your attention to, do you -- when you're coming in, you know, do you just focus on the ones that are applicable to your immediate movement or do you -- do you pay attention to any other switches for any reason?
A. I don't look at any switch that doesn't pertain to my movement.
Q. Okay, okay. All right. And then the -- again, this is just to explain things to non-railroaders. So a shoving movement, in

that situation, you don't have visibility to the direction you're going, right, is that fair to say? So you're relying on the conductor to be your eyes, is that --

A. Correct.

Q. Okay. So in that situation would you say it's basically the conductor's responsibility to make an assessment of the position of a switch because you don't have visibility to it from the position in the cab?

A. Correct.

Q. Okay, okay. So I think that's -- oh, so a couple, just a couple more questions just real quick right here. When you're at night and you're looking, I'm just curious, do you -- do you -- when you're in the cab, do you tend to put the higher bright lights on or the lower bright lights when you're making an assessment of the position of a switch?

A. Well, when you come into the yard, you never leave your lights on bright because those lights are extremely high visibility and it blinds other people in the yard, so your lights are always on dim, which is enough visibility to see any switch, but as I come up to a switch, my personal deal, we always flip back from high to low just small moment of time to indicate that your light -- you're movement's lined, but sometimes I don't do that because, in all honesty, it's hard to see the gap that I'm looking for when your lights are on bright. Everything I need to see I can see on dim.

Q. Yeah, interesting, interesting. So the rail is actually easier to see, with the glint there, it can be kind of washed out with the bright --
A. A hundred percent.
Q. Yeah, okay, okay. And then I know you're not a conductor, so if you don't want to talk about this, you don't have to, but if you were on the ground, would you direct your flashlight toward the switch that you're looking at or would you not or would it just depend?
A. I'd rather not specify.
Q. Sure. No, I get it, you're not a conductor, that's no problem. The last question that I have for you, and I know you already said that this conductor was, you know, an excellent employee and great to work with, and so I'm not trying -- we don't to imply anything like this, but just kind of a standard question, did he seem okay to you, did he seem like he was having a rough day, you know, tired, did he seem -- did he seem like he was on his A game or was there anything that was maybe bothering him that he complained to you about?
A. It seemed like a normal day for [redacted]
MR. HOEPF: Okay, sounds good. That's it for me, thank you.
MR. GRAJEDA: Roberto Grajeda, BLET Safety Task Force, no questions.
MR. ARCHIE: J.D. Archie, FRA, no more questions.
BY MR. COOK:

Q. I just have a couple. So just to clarify --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Say who you are.

BY MR. COOK:

Q. Sorry, Michael Cook, C-o-o-k, BNSF. When Michael asked you, you said you're not a conductor, you are, you're a certified conductor as well as an engineer, right?

A. Correct.

Q. Yeah, thanks. I just wanted to clarify that for the record. And I know -- being an engineer, I know exactly what you mean about the headlights, that's exactly how I operate into a yard, as well, I can watch the rail --

A. Um-hum.

Q. -- better with them off, just like you said. With you and the conductor, you worked off and on through your career with him, have you guys ever made this move before, from -- coming into 4, double over to 3?

A. Never.

Q. Okay. Did you know there was a crossover in 3 before this event?

A. No.

MR. COOK: Okay. Okay, no more questions.

MR. SAUNDERS: Cameron Saunders, SMART-TD, I don't have anything further.

BY MR. LAVALLEE:

Q. All right, this is Lavallee, L-a-v-a-l-l-e-e, back with the

NTSB. I do have just a couple final ones and then we'll get you out of here, [redacted], I appreciate you sitting with us today. So we mentioned that move coming into 104, balance shoved to 103 was not the normal -- historically normal, I think, is how J.D. had put it. Can you tell me, like, what the historical norm would be? And I realize that, you know, often it can be different, but what would you consider to be a normal move for yarding this particular Lincoln to Denver train?

A. I was afraid you were going ask what's a normal day for Lincoln/Denver, I was going to say we never make the yard.

Q. Oh, man.

A. But normally, historically, we come through 45 or 44 track and you'll double what doesn't fit on a track that's potentially empty, so it could be 43 counting down. I've gone through yard -- or Track 43 and I've doubled over to, like, 27, but as historically, I would say in the last 12 months or less, we have came in a lower track number, that could be 1 through 10, I'm only using that as numbers, but I've never gone through --

Q. Sure.

A. -- 9, 8, 7, 6, and then you put the scuff -- scuff means the remaining balance of the train and you put that into a higher track number like 21, 27. So you would use a lot of different leads and -- I would like to say a comment about that question Mr. Cook asked about the crossover.

Q. Sure, you can say whatever you like.

A. I don't recall ever knowing there was a crossover in 3 and 2, but after the fact, after I was relieved, I came back, I believe that a lot of members -- not saying names because I don't know anybody's name, just other TY&E employees, they had -- they said the whole night, early morning, that's the last chance crossover, don't know if that's accurate or not, I've never used it even though that was the reference name to it and they said they've never seen it used and they also thought it was out of service and spiked. And out of service means it's nonoperational and spiked, I do not know what spiked means. You're maintenance?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, I get it.

MR. [redacted]: Spiked meaning, I guess, it would be out of service and -- but I don't know if either one of those is true.

BY MR. LAVALLEE:

Q. Is there anything else you want to say about that?

A. Yeah, I guess we'd have to cross-reference that.

Q. Okay. So being an engineer myself, I just want to make sure the general public gets an accurate view of the coordination that it takes between an engineer and conductor when making a shove movement. It had been mentioned earlier that -- and answered, that as an engineer, you can't see what's going on behind you, 40 cars away, I just want to confirm that that's correct.

A. That is correct.

Q. Because of that, would it be fair to say that you're relying on information given to you from the person protecting that shove

and have to take that as gospel to build that sort of trust between engineer and conductor?
A. That is correct.
Q. Is it required, as far as you know, right, and I'm not asking you to, you know, reference a rule or anything like that, but is it required, as far as you know, to include the route that we're lined up for a shove move?
A. I don't know, no, but I knew my route. When he said conductor's on the point protected, back 30, I knew we were going into 3 track --
Q. Okay.
A. -- because that was our previous instructions.
Q. Thank you for that. All right, [redacted], we've asked you a lot of questions here today and I appreciate you sticking with us. Apart from the questions we've asked and you've answered, do you have anything independent of that, that you want the investigative group to know?
A. I just wanted you to know about what I heard about the crossover, so I'm glad I got to pass that along before I forgot it.
Q. Absolutely.
A. Nothing else.
Q. [redacted], if something comes up later and we've got some follow-up questions, you gave me your contact information, would it be okay if I reached out to you if I had something further?

A. That's fine.
Q. Okay. Is there anyone that you can think of that the investigative group should talk to regarding this accident?
A. Maintenance of way.
Q. And just out of curiosity, in what regard?
A. If my statement was true or not, you talk to the local chairmen with the UT or BLET and see if there was any SERPs on that crossover. SERP means -- I don't know the acronym for what it means, but it's basically a sheet that you fill out if a TY&E employee has any concern with faulty equipment, faulty meaning hard to throw, hard to operate to its full extent.
Q. On the -- in particular, [redacted], because I want to make sure I capture your concern here, are we talking about the crossover switch that we later determined to be there?
A. Correct.
Q. Okay.
A. The crossover switch from 3 to 2.
Q. So just to clarify, you feel it would be in our interest to talk to someone in maintenance of way regarding if that crossover that we later learned exists in 2 to 3 or 3 to 2 has any defects or complaints against it, is that correct?
A. Correct.
Q. All right.
A. Also, the local chairmen from both unions to see if there's any SERPs on it.

MR. LAVALLEE: All right. [redacted], we appreciate that input.

MR. [redacted]: All right.

MR. LAVALLEE: Again, one more time, we've asked you a lot of questions today, I appreciate you coming in and speaking with us. On behalf of the NTSB and everyone assembled here in this investigative group, thank you for coming in today.

MR. [redacted]: All right.

MR. LAVALLEE: I appreciate you.

MR. [redacted]: Yeah.

MR. LAVALLEE: And with that, we'll go off record.

(Whereupon, the interview concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	TRAIN DERAILMENT AT BNSF GLOBEMASTER YARD IN DENVER, COLORADO ON AUGUST 5, 2025 Interview of [redacted]
ACCIDENT NO.:	RRD25FR022
PLACE:	Denver, Colorado
DATE:	August 7, 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.

[redacted]

[redacted]
Transcriber