UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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

Interview of: [redacted], Carman
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

[redacted], National Representative
Brotherhood of Railway Carmen
Representing Mr. [redacted]

I N D E X


| ITEM | PAGE |
|---|---|
| Interview of [redacted]: | |
| By Mr. Lavallee | 6 |
| By Mr. Hoepf | 24 |
| By Mr. Grajeda | 30 |
| By Mr. Cook | 31 |
| By Mr. Lavallee | 35 |
| By Mr. Hoepf | 38 |
| By Mr. Archie | 41 |
| By Mr. Lavallee | 42 |

I N T E R V I E W

MR. LAVALLEE: All right, we're on record. Good afternoon, my name is Scott Lavallee and I am the NTSB incident Investigator-in-Charge for this accident. We're conducting an interview today on Thursday, August the 7th with [redacted], who works for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe. This interview is in conjunction with NTSB's investigation of the accident in Denver, Colorado. The NTSB accident reference number is RRD25FR022. Purpose of the 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 name and tell us your title, 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: I am Mike Hoepf, H-o-e-p-f, a human performance investigator with the NTSB.

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

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

MR. ARCHIE: J.D. Archie, A-r-c-h-i-e, I am the Investigator-in-Charge for the FRA.

MR. BRIDGES: Brett Bridges, B-r-i-d-g-e-s, BNSF

superintendent and 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 for BNSF.

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

MR. [redacted]: And I'm [redacted], I'm the national rep for the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen. [redacted] is [redacted].

MR. [redacted]: I'm [redacted], [redacted], I'm a carman for BNSF Railway.

MR. LAVALLEE: All right, thanks, everybody.

So, [redacted], just a couple of quick questions to start off, do we have your permission to record our interview with you today, sir?

MR. [redacted]: Yes.

MR. LAVALLEE: All right. [redacted], we always afford an opportunity to have a representative if you so choose to have one. Do you choose to have one today and if so, who is it?

MR. [redacted]: Yes, [redacted], here.

MR. LAVALLEE: [redacted]. Thank you, [redacted]. And [redacted], just one more thing, I want to make sure that you understand that these recordings and the transcripts and documents and reports, they become -- will eventually become part of a public docket and

therefore, we cannot guarantee confidentiality, do you understand that, sir?

MR. [redacted]: Yes.

MR. LAVALLEE: All right, thank you.

INTERVIEW OF [redacted]

BY MR. LAVALLEE:

Q. All right. So, [redacted], I'd kind of like to start out with tell me -- tell me about your career history with the railroad.

A. I've been a carman for 12 years, I hired on in Lincoln, Nebraska, I transferred up here after about a year of me hiring on, so I've been here about, in Denver, 11 years. Yeah, I worked numerous jobs throughout the yard, I actually worked at Havelock when I first hired on with the train yard in Lincoln a little bit as part of my apprenticeship and then when I came here, I've worked in the rip, I've worked on the road trucking, I've worked in the train yard.

Q. Okay, so 12 years total as a carman, most of it seems like it's been right here at Denver, is that fair to say?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. All right. And within that, it seems like several different -- several different positions within the car department, like work in the rips --

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay, so pretty well experienced with the car department, thank you for that, [redacted]. As far as qualifications that you hold

or have to maintain, do you have any qualifications that you have to maintain like on a yearly or semi-regular basis as a carman?
A. Yeah, we have our welding certificates that we have to keep up to date, you know, we went to school for welding and then we have to keep those up to date by periodically welding. And yeah, just as far as qualifications, there's online training, the web-based training that we have to complete yearly or bi-yearly, like the QMI, I think, is -- might be bi-yearly.
Q. And that's all online, like, none of it's like instructor led or like classroom type stuff?
A. We have gone to school, like, as an apprentice, typically, where they do a more structured classroom type of training and there's a bunch of different classes that we can take.
Q. Would there be, like -- because you'll have to forgive me, I mainly work the operating side, right, so engineers and conductors, and on a tri-annual basis they have to basically take a rules exam, is there something similar to that in the carman world as far as, like, taking an exam to get a passing score every -- periodically to maintain any of these certifications you have?
A. Yes, sir, those would be the QMI-qualified mechanical, to be a qualified mechanical inspector, you have to pass a test yearly.
Q. Okay, is it just like an exam or, like, do you get a day of, like, refresher or anything like that, [redacted]?
A. No, it's up to you to be ready for it and I think you can miss -- I think you have to get 80 percent or better to pass,

which limits the amount of questions you can miss, obviously, and there's no -- it's up to you to train for it, I guess.

Q. Okay, fair enough. Let's kind of talk about your current position here at Globeville, like, what are your daily tasks that you perform in your current position? Or, you know, maybe, I don't know, it could be that you work an extra board assignment and what you do might change, but tell us a little bit about what work that you do here.

A. Yeah, right now I hold a train yard position, so we -- we'll do the inspections in the train yard, which requires lockout, blue signal, yeah, either it could be an inbound inspection or an outbound inspection. If it's an outbound, it's -- you know, typically, we'll have to lace the train together. An inbound is more just bleeding off of the cars and doing an inspection on the car. Outbound requires an air test to be ran.

Q. So either inbound inspections combined with bleeding cars, outbounds could include lacing up, maybe applying yard air, I would guess.

A. Yeah.

Q. That seem pretty accurate?

A. Um-hum, yeah.

Q. And within that, doing either inbounds or outbounds, would you just be one or the other or do you just bounce back and forth doing inbound or an outbound, it's kind of luck of the draw how they go, how does that work?

A. Yeah, luck of the draw, there's no specific people that are assigned to inbounds or outbounds, it's just kind of how it falls.
Q. Okay. And who assigns, you know, is there someone that's saying okay, [redacted], I'm going to have you do this versus [redacted], I'm going to have you do this? Who splits the work up?
A. Um-hum, yeah, we have a lead man who's in communication with the tower, which would be like the 31st and 38th yardmaster. So they'll inform the lead man when an inspection is ready and then the lead man will inform us.
Q. And the lead man lets you know how, like over radio or you guys are like hanging out, ready, ready to go out there and walk in the room and tell you?
A. Yeah. Usually over phone or if we are -- happen to be in the same room as the lead man, we'll just do it face to face.
Q. Okay.
A. But some people work out of this end, some people work out of that end, the lead man's down there, so obviously if you're on this end, it would be by phone.
Q. Copy. Is there like a record of who gets assignments? And you may not know, [redacted], only speak to what you know. Is there a record of who works what, that you know of?
A. I believe the lead man does keep a sheet, a train yard sheet.
Q. Okay. I'm not sure what you know about the accident that we're here investigating that occurred on August the 5th, can you tell us what you do know about it so I can kind of gauge where

you're at with it?
A. Yeah. So my regular assigned shift is second shift, 3:00 to 11:00, I was forced over to work third shift that night, so I was here. I was probably the fourth or fifth person on the scene when it happened.
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah, yeah. Obviously, it was quite the -- you know, ordeal. Pretty chaotic when I first pulled up. There was a couple people already over to him and I wasn't sure who it was and they had an ambulance already on the way, so we were wondering okay, we need to make sure the gates are open so we can get the ambulance in and somebody needs to be there to escort them, and somebody said to me, like, they were worried about the fire trucks being able to get back there --
Q. Yeah.
A. -- and he said do you guys have -- he asked me if we had a truck or anything to possibly transport them to the fire truck, if we couldn't get a fire truck in there. So I immediately rode my ATV back to the east end, grabbed the F-250 and drove it up there, but by that time there was already fire trucks and ambulances already there. So --
Q. [redacted], it kind of seems like it was like an all-hands-on-deck type of thing.
A. Yeah.
Q. Is that fair to say?

A. Yeah, yeah, there was people running from the east end, people running from here over to it and by the time I got back, there was probably 10, 20 people there with firemen, paramedics showing up, too.
Q. Would you -- like the response time and granted, [redacted], you may have a sense for it or maybe not, but what was your feeling of like the response time from like when the incident happened to when we've got fire department on scene, would you call it quick or was it --
A. Yeah, I would. Very quick, actually, I was surprised that it was that quick.
Q. You talked about -- you described what seemed to me like a lot of organization and people doing different stuff to make sure that that response kind of gets done smoothly and as quickly as possible. Who was leading the charge on that, who were you kind of taking --
A. So I was -- I was out working when the actual thing, incident happened, I was working on 24 track in the -- I did kind of hear some cars banging, I was down on the east end, but it wasn't anything unusual to me because there's always banging going on in the yard. And then the lead man, who was [redacted] (ph.), called on the radio asking the guys that were working on 1 track if they were okay, so that immediately kind of raised my awareness because that's not normal, and they replied back, like yeah, I'm okay, what's going on, you know? And then I saw the lead man riding his

three- or four-wheeler down toward that way as I was on 24 track finishing up, so I flipped around and kind of followed him there, we were probably the third or fourth or fourth and fifth guy to, to the guy.

Q. Okay, so it just kind of sounds like some anecdotal stuff, like the lead man's asking the people on 1 if they're okay, but it didn't seem like anyone came right out over the radio and said hey, there's been -- there's been X, Y, or Z that's happened, please get over to here?

A. Not on our channel, I believe that was on 39 that that was relayed that there was an accident.

Q. But it seems like there's definitely enough to -- that you might've thought hey, something's not right here.

A. Yeah, when [redacted], who is our third shift lead man, asked if they were okay and they said yeah, what's going on, I think he said there's cars on the ground and that was it.

Q. Okay. So you work second shift 3:00 to 11:00 and over into third shift and third shift, help me out, that would be 11:00 to what?

A. Seven a.m.

Q. Eleven to seven. And you worked both of those shifts in its entirety?

A. I ended up going home after the accident, I probably left about 3:00 a.m. after everything was kind of done and over with, the foreman just told me I can go home if I wanted to and --

Q. Okay.
A. I didn't -- yeah.
Q. Just to kind of clarify because the shifts can kind of cross from one day to another, so that would've been like 3:00 to 11:00 on the 4th and then working over from 11:00 to like, I think you said you got released at 3:00 a.m. on the 5th, would that be correct?
A. I'm not sure of the dates, I'd have to look at a calendar.
Q. Okay. Because the date of the accident, from all of our records, was that it was early morning after midnight on the 5th.
A. Okay.
Q. Would that kind of -- does that seem reasonable, at least, without --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- not having any records?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. So if you, in fact, worked second shift on the 4th, that 3:00 in the afternoon until 11 o'clock at night, do you remember what your activities were for that particular day, for like that afternoon?
A. Yeah. Vaguely, I guess.
Q. Just tell us what you can remember.
A. I worked, I started off working 44 track with 43 adjacent. Then I had another inbound on 13 track, I believe. And then pretty much all back to back to back, I think I had an inbound on

4 track with 3 adjacent, then I worked a UP on 34 track, outbound. I believe.

Q. Okay. So when you say working Track 4 with 3 adjacent --

A. Um-hum.

Q. -- would that be like one -- because we've got just yard maps and stuff like that, would that -- would 4 and 3 also be known as like 104 and 103, do you know?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Do you remember -- and I know, you know, recollection is what it is, but just to the best of your estimation, right around what time would you have worked 104 with 103 as adjacent?

A. Pretty early on in the shift, still daylight. Early.

Q. Okay. And [redacted], I'm sure that those records may exist, right, so just to the best of your -- but still daylight when you were working 104 with 103 adjacent?

A. Yeah, I believe so, yeah.

Q. Okay. And working 104 with 103 adjacent, do you remember if that was like an outbound inspection or inbound?

A. Inbound inspection.

Q. It was inbound. When you work an inbound, are you ever -- are you told what it was inbound or does that even matter to you?

A. No, we're not always told what it was, we can go on the computer and see what it is.

Q. Do you happen to remember what that was inbound?

A. Maybe Lincoln/Denver, maybe.

Q. Maybe Lincoln/Denver. Okay. So you mentioned before about lockout and blue signal protection. Can you kind of -- remember, this transcript is going to be for the general public who may not know anything about protection or railroading. Can you kind of describe what lockout/blue signal protection is and how you achieve it?
A. Yeah, we're required to basically make it impossible for any moving equipment, whether it's a car, locomotive or anything, to be able to come into the track that we're working. So we throw a switch, make sure the points are good, put a blue flag up behind it and make sure that nothing can come into the track that we're working. Put a lock on it.
Q. So I just want to clarify, right, so you're basically locking those tracks out so nobody else could get into it and to do that, you may throw a switch, put up a blue flag and then lock the switch, is that correct?
A. Yeah, you may or may not throw the switch depending on which way it's lined, sometimes it's lined the way you need it, sometimes you have to throw it to line it away from the track.
Q. In those scenarios where it's not lined the way you need it for protection and you have to line a switch, how would your carman who's maybe just starting a career, how would they learn how to line a switch, learn about switches, is that part of the apprenticeship program? Tell me about that.
A. Yeah, I think you do that with somebody rather than just

getting sent out there on your own as an apprentice.
Q. Okay. And the locks that you put on the switch after it's lined the way that you need it, are those just regular old locks the train crews would have access to or are they special to you or maybe even just special to the car department?
A. Yeah, I believe it's more special to the car department.
Q. Okay. So a train crew wouldn't have a key they need to get into that track?
A. No, I don't believe so.
Q. Okay, thank you for that clarification. Thinking back to that inspection on 4 with 3 adjacent that you said you believe might be the Lincoln/Denver, do you remember what your protection -- how you set up protection for that particular piece of work?
A. Yeah, they're -- 4 is its own switch and then 3 below it has a crossover switch that goes into 2 and that would be the switch you need to lock to protect yourself in 3.
Q. So 4 -- and I want to make sure I clarify this, [redacted], Track 4 or 104, right, the same.
A. Yeah.
Q. Four would have just a switch on each end of the yard, is that correct?
A. Yeah.
Q. And would you lock both of those or just one?
A. Yeah, you lock up both ends.
Q. Okay, so lock up 4. Do you remember if you had a to align

the switches for 4 away or not?
A. You know, I -- my main focus is just making sure the switch point is lined correctly. I throw -- sometimes you throw switches, sometimes they're lined for you, I don't know if I threw it or not.
Q. Okay, that's fair enough. I wouldn't want you to, you know, tell us something that you don't remember, you know?
A. Um-hum.
Q. Going back to 3 for a second, you mentioned that 3 has a crossover into 2 and you stated that you'll have to line that crossover switch to prevent movement into 3. Can you kind of just walk through, walk me through that, be a little clearer on that?
A. Yeah, so if you don't lock out that crossover switch, technically, something could come up either from 2 and then back into 3, so in order for us to be protected, we have to make sure the switch is lined away and locked --
Q. Okay.
A. -- so nothing can come into 3.
Q. So you line the crossover switch in Track 3, right, because there would be two, two ends of that crossover switch, [redacted], is that correct? One in Track 3 --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- and one in Track 2, is that correct?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. Would you line just one of those switches or both of

them?
A. Yeah, initially you're concerned about making sure that you're protecting your line correct, but yeah, you don't want to leave it non-corresponding.
Q. Okay. And by "leave it," right, so if you're in -- if you're going to have adjacent protection in 3, right, so you need to line that crossover switch away from three, it's now lined into the crossover into 2, is that correct?
A. Correct.
Q. Okay. That switch that is in 2, the corresponding end of that crossover, do you also line that switch for the completed crossover movement into 2?
A. Yeah, I think you make sure that it is lined corresponding.
Q. Okay. To the best of you recollection, do you recall lining both of those crossover switches on that day?
A. Like I said, I don't know if it was already lined and I just put a lock on, I do recall putting the lock on, making sure my switch point was going into 2 --
Q. Okay.
A. -- to protect myself in 3.
Q. When you have to line a switch, right, because you said sometimes they're already lined the way that you need and other times they're not and you have to line them --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- I believe was your statement, when you have to line a

switch to give protection, when you're done with whatever task that needed that protection, are you required to come back and take off your lock and restore the switch the way it was when you found it? Talk to me about that.

A. No. The only time you would ever want to throw a switch back is if it was off the main line, which doesn't apply in the yard. We do have a switch off the main line, but it's locked out and out of service.

Q. Okay.

A. So the only time you would want to throw a switch back is if it's connected to a main line, like out on the road or something.

Q. Okay. Would there ever be a time with crossover switches that you wouldn't line them in correspondence, meaning either both for straight rail, 2 to 2 and 3 to 3 movement or, you know, for crossover from 2 to 3 and 3 to 2? Would there ever be a time where you just leave one switch of the crossover lined and not the other?

A. Yeah, if there was possibly a -- like another train on that track, you wouldn't want to throw a switch while a train's on top of that --

Q. Okay.

A. -- you know what I mean?

Q. In those --

A. Per our rules, we can line into the side of a train, as long as it can't couple.

Q. Okay. So per your rules --
A. As long as we're still protected, obviously.
Q. Okay, per your rules, while you need that protection, you can line that switch into like a train that's already standing there, as long as you determine that it's not going to move, is that correct?
A. As long -- the rule is if it can't couple.
Q. If it can't couple, all right. I think I understand now, thank you.
A. Which is -- you know, you wouldn't think you'd want something lined into a side of a train, but --
Q. When you went to work 104 with 103 as adjacent protection, do you recall if there was anything on Track 102 at that time?
A. I don't. I don't -- I don't believe so, but I don't think so.
Q. Okay.
A. Or I don't know for sure.
Q. And we'll just do a little bit of a scenario here. If there wasn't, right, if you're going to work 4 with 3 adjacent protection and there's nothing on 2, would you then line that 2 to 3 crossover, both ends of it, in correspondence with that crossover move? Ideally, right, if that were the scenario, or would you just line one end of the crossovers?
A. Yeah. Typically, you'd want the -- them to be in a line.
Q. Meaning if that 2 to 3 switch is lined from -- I'm sorry,

that 3 to 2 switch is lined from 3 into 2, you would also want that switch into 2 corresponding for that crossover movement from 3 to 2?

A. Yeah. I mean unless you can see that there's movement, because then if something comes in from this way on 2, then it's going to blow through that switch.

Q. Okay.

A. You know what I mean?

Q. Yeah. And then I just want to clarify, when using crossover switches to provide protection for you, whether it's adjacent or primary, you're going to work that track, you can leave them out of correspondence if there's already -- like, if there's already equipment on the other track and it would prevent you from putting them back or, you know, would mean that you'd have to line a switch under a train, am I understanding that correctly? And maybe I'm just not using the right words.

A. Yeah, I don't know, I don't --

Q. Okay.

A. -- quite understand.

Q. All right. I'm going to --

A. I will say --

Q. Sure.

A. -- we are -- since day 1 we're taught to not throw switches when we're done working a train.

Q. Okay.

A. Because there has been instances, accidents where, say you work a train, power's on, crew's on it and they're ready to go and the carman throws a switch to line them to go so they don't have to get off and do it, but they're not ready to go yet or whatever and there's a crew, like, three switches up that's lined, looking to kick cars into the track next to you, it has happened and there's been instances to where they'll kick cars when the carman threw the switch and then spill the track next to them, now it's going into the crew.

So that has always been, from day 1, you do not throw switches back when we're done because we don't know who saw that and we don't know what the switch crews are doing with what they've seen.

Q. And that training, right, that, you know, you just described being trained not to line switches back when you're done, would that be part of, like, the recurrent training that you have or is that more of like a word-of-mouth thing that you learned from the guys that have been out here longer than you have?

A. Oh, yeah, I mean, that was from day 1 and there's also been instances where they've had to stop a train from hitting because the carman lined a switch for a crew and they didn't leave yet and they're trying to kick a car next to the adjacent track and there's been near misses and there's actually been collisions of that happening.

Q. Okay. And just one final before I pass it on down the line

here, [redacted]. When providing lockout protection for Track 3, is there any other way than lining that crossover, lining and locking that crossover, could it be performed some alternate way? Because I remember you said 4 only has --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- the two switches on either end.

A. That's the problem with that crossover, when you don't have two -- if you have two, you can lock it up high and that crossover is irrelevant because we're -- we have 2 and 3 and that means everything, any moving equipment's blue flagged, so there's going to be no movement that could use that crossover. But when we don't have two, that means something can come from 2 through the crossover, they can throw the switch back and into 3.

Q. Okay.

A. So if we don't lock that crossover on 3 when we don't have 2, then we're not protected.

Q. Okay. And has that been an issue before in this yard, that you can recall?

A. Well, the crossovers have been kind of a headache for us because of that.

Q. Okay. And is it because of that headache that we just lock the crossovers and that's what we do? In your estimation.

A. Well, that's what we have to do to properly protect our self, is lock --

Q. Okay.

A. -- lock that crossover.

MR. LAVALLEE: Okay, I'm going to pass it on to my right, thank you.

MR. HOEPF: Yeah, Mike, NTSB. Thanks, [redacted], for, you know, all the insights you're giving us. You doing all right, do you need a break or anything?

MR. [redacted]: I'm okay.

BY MR. HOEPF:

Q. Okay, great, great. Yeah, I think, you know, Scott kind of covered this topic pretty well with you, I mean, it's -- you know, we're just trying to get a feel for how this works, you know, in terms of how you set up the protection --

A. Um-hum.

Q. -- and, you know, I think you really, you know, covered that pretty well. You know, maybe you could just talk a little bit more about just some of the things that you just kind of mentioned to Scott. You know, I think -- I think it's really interesting, this insight that you say that you kind of -- that taught not to -- not to put the switches back to how they were. You know, is there -- I mean, I don't want you to just make a percentage, but I mean, is it -- so would you say like 90 percent of the time you just, you know, leave the switches in the same position and then, like, sometimes you have to put them back? I mean, I'm just trying to get a feel for, you know, when you're done, you know, you're done, you're done, you've inspected your cars, you know

what you need to do, like, about how often do you have those kind of situations, maybe, where you need to, you know, revert those switches back to how they were versus how often do you, you know, leave them positioned in?

A. Yeah, I'd say closer to 100 percent of the time, like I said, unless you're outside of the yard and working off of a main line.

Q. Okay, so it's --

A. The only time you'd throw a switch back is if -- usually, there would be, like, a 105 lock on that switch or maintenance of way or whatever, that would have to be removed and then -- yeah, I mean, that's super rare, I can't even recall if I've done that, but it would make sense, you know, off of a main line, you don't want to leave that line.

Q. Yeah, yeah. Okay. And thank you, that's helpful, I mean, I was just kind of trying get kind of a figure and it sounds like it's exceedingly rare that you revert --

A. Yeah, the only -- the only time where people are tempted to do that is working an outbound train when there's power on and the crew's on and they're about -- you know, they're just waiting for you to get done with the inspection and they're taking off.

Q. Um-hum.

A. I know I used to work third shift, so we'd get the Z train every morning and that train, in particular, is a high-priority train where they usually have a green light to get out of there pretty quick, but even then I think there is some people, maybe,

maybe not, I'm not sure, that will throw the switch for the conductor, the first one, anyway, maybe. But yeah, any time they've asked me to do that, I just say it's against our rule, I can't throw the switch for you.

Q. Um-hum.

A. It puts me at liability if they pick a switch and they'll say the carman threw the switch, not me, you know.

Q. Um-hum, um-hum. Yeah, that's an interesting thing and I'm just -- I'm wondering if there's any more to add to that for the kind of non-railroad audience here. So there's, you know, conductors throw switches and carmen throw switches, but they're kind of for different purposes, right?

A. Yeah, carmen throw a switch to protect themselves, a conductor will typically throw a switch to align him to go where he wants to go.

Q. Um-hum, um-hum. Right. Does anybody else typically throw switches or are those kind of two main classes of --

A. I mean, switchmen, whoever the operations crews are that I'm not familiar with.

Q. Yeah, yeah. I gotcha, I gotcha. And then just to kind of talk a little bit more about, you know, the crossovers and you were saying the crossovers are kind of a headache, you know, I was hoping you could kind of talk a little bit more about that. You know, Scott, you were talking with Scott about like this idea if a crossover has got two switches, it's associated with that, is that

right?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And then -- so it's, you know, again trying to kind of help put some words around this for the non-railroad audience, including myself, but in order -- strictly speaking, to protect yourself, you would really only need to operate one of those two switches to divert a train from coming down, is that -- is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay, okay. And then it's -- and I don't want to put words into this, but is it -- is it kind of a gray area, sometimes, what you do with that corresponding switch or sometimes you would also line that switch and then sometimes maybe you wouldn't line that switch depending on what's going on over there?
A. Typically, I would make sure that it is corresponding.
Q. Okay. So it's not really a gray area, you're saying?
A. Well, no, it could be. Like, if there is movement up ahead, like, if they're in the pocket of 2, I wouldn't want to throw that switch, you know, that could potentially create an accident, you know?
Q. Yeah, yeah. And again, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but it sounds like it kind of depends on the situation.
A. Yeah, I -- yeah, I don't know.
Q. Okay. It's okay, I don't want you to speculate or I don't want to put you -- well, I'm just trying to understand, you know,

this is kind of a new concept to me.
A. Um-hum.
Q. You know, we were talking about it, you know, Scott used the word one-eyed jack, is that a phrase you guys have heard before?
A. No.
Q. You haven't heard that, okay, okay. I was just curious. And then -- so you've been working in this yard for a while and you probably threw a lot of switches and, you know, you were saying it's very rare that you would realign a switch, right? But I'm just trying to get a handle on, you know, how many of these switches are associated with crossovers, you know, is it -- I don't want to put words in your mouth, but it's like, it seems to me that you would encounter these crossover switches fairly common, fairly frequently, but is that not the case, is it usually your operating switches that are not associated with the crossover? Does that make sense?
A. Yeah, a majority of them are not the double-ended crossovers.
Q. Okay, so the majority are not.
A. Yeah.
Q. Any idea, is it like 90 percent are not the crossover switches or --
A. Yeah, it would be hard to say. Like, I think over at Rennix there's probably more of them and even here, I think a lot of them are tagged and locked out of service --
Q. Yeah.

A. -- except for that one because I know they like to store power in the pocket of 2 and they use that to run around the pocket of 2 to get into 2 track down lower.
Q. Okay, okay. And then just the last question I've got, at least for right now, is just -- but we'd say that that would be one of the situations when you would revert a switch back, is if you have crossover switches that are out of correspondence, that would be, you know, when you're done protecting yourself, generally speaking, that would be one of those exceedingly rare situations where you would be inclined to revert the switch back to the position it was in, is that a fair characterization or no?
A. Or line the other side so it is corresponding because, like I said, when I go work my train, I don't know what crew had seen the way that it's lined, they could be up kicking cars in, intending to go to the track next to me --
Q. Um-hum.
A. -- and if I throw a switch, then I can send it where it didn't intend to go.
Q. Okay, okay. But you would -- you would not be inclined to leave those switches out of correspondence, generally speaking, right? That would be an example of a time when, after you were done doing your work, that you would go back and throw switches, is that -- I mean, is that generally true?
A. Yeah, I don't know.
MR. HOEPF: Okay. All right, thanks, [redacted]. I'm going to

pass it off.

BY MR. GRAJEDA:

Q. Roberto Grajeda, BLET Safety Task Force investigator. So going with the whole process of inspection lock out -- and then first and foremost, thank you so much for your help at the scene of the accident, getting over there and assisting as much as you possibly could for what they needed, so I appreciate that very much.

With the inspection that was going on in 1 and 2, you talked about the process of locking out and giving yourself protection. If you were to lock out, you're doing an inspection on 1 track, like what was going on at that time, what would be the process to make sure that 2 track was then secured for you, would you align that crossover or would you verify that crossover and lock it out so that no one could throw it against and have a train go on top of you or would you just bypass that and just go to the other end of 2 track? Would that be a process, like in your own practice, would you do that or what can you tell us?

A. Well, it would be a good idea to get it, but per the rules, like I said earlier, if a train can't couple together, you're protected. So it's always been kind of a funny rule because some yards, you'd have to lock out the whole yard if that wasn't a rule-type thing, is how it was explained to me. So yeah, if that train can go into the side of your train, technically, by the rules, you're okay.

MR. GRAJEDA: Okay. Thank you, that's all I have.

MR. [redacted]: Um-hum.

MR. ARCHIE: J.D. Archie, FRA, I don't have any questions at this time.

BY MR. COOK:

Q. Michael Cook, BNSF. On the crossover, the 103 to 102 crossover, when you were expecting 4 with 3 adjacent, did you line that crossover to go from 3 to 2?

A. You know, like I told him earlier, the only thing that I'm sure of is I made sure the switch point was lined away from me, whether I threw the switch or not to line it, some switches are lined as I need them, some aren't, throw a lot of switches every day. I mean, I know everything's on camera, I just don't want to get put in this position where it's like oh, he said he didn't do this or that.

Q. Right. No, I wouldn't want you to guess.

A. And that stuff's all --

Q. Okay. So is that -- is that standard to make sure that that -- the 103 crossover is lined away if you're going to either inspect at 3 or have 3 adjacent?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there a reason, and the reason for that is so nobody can come through the crossover and then back in on top of you?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there a reason we don't leave that one lined into us and

line the 102 crossover for straight rail and lock it where they can't use that side of it instead of sending a potential where a car could go into the side of a train?
A. Can you repeat that?
Q. So crossover has two switches --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- 103, 102. Could we have lined 3 track away and then lined the 102 crossover for straight, so that you have no access to the crossover from 102 to 103 instead of having a potential issue where if a car got away, I could be lined from 3 to the 3 crossover and then into a train? So instead of -- sorry for the longwinded question. Instead of lining the crossover side on 103 for crossover, could you have locked 102 for straight, to prevent that side from being used?
A. Then we still have to line the 3 away from us, we don't line 3.
Q. But could you have went up and lined the 3 switch on the lead and locked it away from you?
A. I'm not sure, I'd have to -- I'd have to visualize it.
Q. Can I draw it, can I draw the question? I'll draw the question. Let's see. This is the lead right here, lead 4 and then 3 comes off here and then 3 crossover to 2 right here and then what, is this the main line right here?
A. No, I think it's --
Q. One track, 1. So my question is, instead of lining this

crossover for crossover movement, could I have locked this track out for straight, this track out for straight, and this crossover for straight and left that one lined into me?

A. I guess, technically. Maybe.

MR. LAVALLEE: For the record, then for the record, I'm going to briefly describe the diagram that's drawn. So drawn on the whiteboard here in the conference room is a rough diagram of the switch that exists in Globeville Yard depicting Track 101, 102, 103, 104, showing the crossover between 103 and 102 and described was a process of locking out the 103 switch, lining the crossover for 102 as straight rail and then described was also lining the opposite end of 103 away on the lead to provide protection in Track 103. I will also take a picture of this diagram for potential inclusion in the docket. Thank you.

MR. [redacted]: Yeah, I guess it would kind of depend on what the yard was doing with their movement. Technically, I wouldn't want to throw any more switches than I have to.

BY MR. COOK:

Q. If there was a train on 2 --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- let's say, that was already over that switch, could you lock that switch to where nobody could throw it, to where they couldn't come from 2 to 3?

A. Well, for one, I think that would be blocked, I'd have to go -- the switch is on the other side of the train, so it's -- I

think -- it's hard without, like, seeing the tracks, it's hard to picture it in my head.

Q. Okay. So after you establish your protection, either the 3 crossover was either already lined away or you lined it and locked it, then what? What did you do after that?

A. After I -- after I locked it?

Q. Yes.

A. I went and worked my train after I put up blue flags.

Q. Okay. You blue-flagged 3 and 4 and then worked your train?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And then after you were finished -- do you remember about how long it took you?

A. Maybe, I don't know, an hour, maybe. I don't know.

Q. After you got finished, how did you take your protection down?

A. I don't remember if I dropped the east end first, then came to the west or if I came back to the west and dropped that first and then dropped the east, but typically you would drop your blue flag and then take the lock off the switch.

Q. Okay. If there was a train on Main 2 and that crossover from 3 was lined into that train, after you dropped your protection, would you line that crossover on 3 back for straight rail, if there was a train on 2?

A. That's hypothetical, I don't -- I don't believe there was a train on 2. I don't know.

Q. Okay. Do you remember what you did with that crossover, did you line it back or did you line the 2 side crossover?
A. No, I believe I left it in the crossover position.
Q. Okay.
A. Because, just like I said, we don't typically ever throw switches back when we unlock them.
MR. COOK: Okay, I think that's all I have right now.
MR. SAUNDERS: Cameron Saunders, SMART-TD, I don't have any questions right now. I would like to say that since we've been here, we've heard a lot about the emergency response and everybody's role that went and did something to help EMS get in there and all that and thank you for your part of that.
MR. [redacted]: Um-hum. Thank you.
BY MR. LAVALLEE:
Q. Okay, back to Lavallee, NTSB, L-a-v-a-l-l-e-e. Just a second round. I just have one follow-up question, [redacted], and just because I don't have a whole lot of experience with blue signal and lockout protection, and I heard something I just want to verify. So is there an order, locks first then blue flags, that you have to adhere to when establishing protection and then when taking them off and if so, can you kind of describe, you know, what that order is? If there's a set order at all, I don't know if there is.
A. Yeah, typically, we'll line and lock the switch, then provide the flag.

Q. And then when removing the protection, the opposite?
A. Yeah, the reverse, yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. Um-hum.
Q. So it would be line the switch, if necessary, lock it if you don't have to, then put up your blue flag protection, is that correct?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And for those tracks that are -- that have switches on either ends, right, let's just keep it simple, like at Track 4 in that example where you only have a switch on the north end or south end, either way, there's only two ways to get in the track, one from each side, does it matter which one you lock first?
A. We're only required to put a lock on the one that would provide the protection for us.
Q. Okay. But if it's, like, in a yard track, right, kind of like 104 where you got a switch on either end that would allow entrance from -- of a train into the track, right, they could potentially get in on both ends --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- do you have to lock -- do you have to lock and flag both ends, is what you do?
A. Yes, yeah.
Q. And further with that, does it matter which one is locked and flagged up first?

A. No.
Q. Okay.
A. Not typically, no.
Q. And likewise with taking it down, would there be any sort of difference in which end comes -- or is it just the one you're closet to?
A. The only time that might apply is if there's power on there, like a locomotive, because you do have to put a blue flag on the power. You want to remove the blue flag off the power before you unlock --
Q. Okay.
A. -- one end of the track.
Q. And then finally, going along with that, that 104 track example, so you go to the south end, lock the switch if you -- you know, if you don't need to line it or lock and line, depending on how the switch was, and you stand up your blue flag on the south end, do you have any protection in that track yet or do you have to make sure that the other end is locked, if necessary, and flagged up before you have the protection?
A. Yeah, you do have to make sure the other end is locked and flagged before you're protected --
Q. Okay.
A. -- fully.
MR. LAVALLEE: Thank you for that clarification, [redacted]. Okay, we'll complete the second round, I'll pass it on.

MR. HOEPF: Thanks, Scott.

BY MR. HOEPF:

Q. Mike again, NTSB. [redacted], just a couple more questions for you, not too much here. I think I accidentally cut you off before when -- I mean, I asked kind of a more specific question, but I did kind of want to just ask generally, big picture, I think you made the comment about crossovers being a headache and I just wondered if you could just talk a little bit more about what you meant by that.

A. Well, the one from the main over to 1, I believe, is out of service, so it's just rail that's there that doesn't allow us to ride our vehicles through there. And also, there's one in between 1 and 2 that I believe is also out of service, but the rails are still there, the switches are still there -- I think -- I think that one's out of service. So yeah, they're just unused since and that creates that extra switch that you have to be aware of. When you have 3 track and you don't have 2, you have to make sure that crossover is lined away from you.

Q. Um-hum, um-hum.

A. You know.

Q. I gotcha. So it's kind of just some --

A. A lot of times we get 2 with 3 and so it's irrelevant in that situation.

Q. Um-hum.

A. But when we have 3 without 2, you got to be aware of the

crossover.
Q. I gotcha. Sounds like it kind of just complicates things a little bit, is that -- I mean, is that a fair assessment?
A. Yeah. I'd say for the carmen, yeah, it does.
Q. Okay. And then the only other thing I just wanted to get your take on, as just -- as somebody that, you know, works in the yard at night, when you're out there, you know, taking a look, what -- you know, if you could just talk about how you use your light source, you know, when you're verifying the point of a switch, do you usually, you know, direct your light to it or not?
A. Oh, yeah. Yeah, that's one of the most important aspects of our job is making sure we're flagged correctly, that nothing can come barreling in on us. So yeah, for me, I'll look at the switch point, if it's up flush against the rail on the left, I know it's going right. If it's up flush against the rail on the right, I know it's going left and/or straight, same with the other way.
Q. Uh-huh.
A. Yeah, they usually have them painted white so you can see them.
Q. Uh-huh.
A. Yeah, you check the points of your switch.
Q. And when you're walking around there at night, how does -- you know, is -- do you find a light source would be helpful in terms of, you know, when you're looking at something? You know, do you shine your light on, you know, the indicator in the rail or

not so much?
A. Yeah, we use lights every night out there, yeah.
Q. Yeah.
A. Whether it's a handheld flashlight or mounted to your helmet.
Q. Um-hum. And again, this doesn't really have anything to do with anything you did, I'm just -- as part of this investigation, I'm just wondering, you know, if you were looking at -- if you were going to take a look at a switch, you know, to make sure it was in a certain position, would you --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- would you shine your light on it?
A. On the switch point itself, yes.
Q. Yeah.
A. I don't rely on the signs, the green and red signs, I look at the point, make sure it's lined away from the track that I'm working.
Q. Yeah, okay, okay. I was just -- just wondering if -- I mean, not to get too much into analysis, but I'm just wondering, you know, is that -- is that kind of -- at night, is that kind of a good indicator of where your attention is, is like where your light is looking, you know? Like, do you use that -- I think you said yes and I don't mean to -- I don't mean to overly get into this topic, I just -- we had some discussion about, you know, the indicator being -- having reflections and it's easier to see with a light and then we're just kind of talking about the rail, you

know what I mean, is it easier to see the points of the rail with your light or without your light or it just depends?

A. I think it would be easier with a light, if it's dark, especially, yes.

MR. HOEPF: Okay. Thank you so much, [redacted], I appreciate it.

MR. GRAJEDA: Roberto, BLET Safety Task Force, no further questions. Thank you for your time.

MR. [redacted]: Yeah.

BY MR. ARCHIE:

Q. J.D. Archie, FRA. I just wanted to clarify one question or one answer, one of your answers from before. You mentioned that you're taught not -- taught and told, basically, when you started, not to operate switches after you're done with the track due to the obvious fact that somebody may already be kicking something by there, you might end up going into that train instead or --

A. Um-hum.

Q. -- hitting somebody. Did they ever teach or tell you the same thing with crossover switches?

A. I believe it was just switches in general, not specified.

Q. Okay, so they -- so they never really -- so did they or did they not, like, enforce to you that okay, when you're done using this -- this half of the crossover switch for protection, make sure it's lined back up with the other, the corresponding switch, the correspondence with the other switch?

A. Typically, you would want to make sure it's corresponding

with the other switch, yes.
Q. Okay, okay. I just wanted to make sure, see what they were teaching you or told you from before.
A. Um-hum.
MR. ARCHIE: If it was (indiscernible). Thank you.
MR. COOK: Michael Cook, no, no questions.
MR. SAUNDERS: Cameron Saunders, no questions.
BY MR. LAVALLEE:
Q. Lavallee, L-a-v-a-l-l-e-e, NTSB, back to me. So we're going to wrap here, [redacted], so we've asked you a good amount of -- a fair amount of questions here today. Is there anything that you feel the investigative group needs to know apart from having already been asked and answered?
A. No, nothing.
Q. Okay. [redacted], you provided me -- I'm sorry, what was that?
A. Nothing off the top of my head.
Q. Okay, I appreciate that. I apologize for walking over you there. [redacted], you provided me with your contact information, thank you for that. If there are any further questions that may come up, could I reach out to you for --
A. Yeah, absolutely.
Q. I appreciate that.
A. Um-hum.
Q. Then, one final thing, [redacted], is there anyone that you think we should -- anyone that you think we should talk to?

A. No.

MR. LAVALLEE: All right. Then, [redacted], on behalf of the NTSB and the investigative group here today, I'd like to thank you for your time and cooperation and we'll cut you out of here.

MR. [redacted]: Okay.

MR. LAVALLEE: With that, we'll go off the 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