

Appendix L

Interview Transcript, Battalion Chief Timothy Ernst

Survival Factors Group Chairman's Factual Report

Metrolink train 111
Union Pacific train LOF 65-12
Los Angeles, California
September 12, 2008
DCA-08-MR-009

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

* * * * *
Investigation of: *
*
HEAD-ON COLLISION OF A METROLINK *
COMMUTER TRAIN WITH A UNION *
PACIFIC FREIGHT TRAIN, * Docket No.: DCA-08-MR-009
September 12, 2008 *
Los Angeles, California *
* * * * *

Interview of: CHIEF TIMOTHY ERNST

Los Angeles, California

Wednesday,
September 17, 2008

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to
notice.

BEFORE: DANA SANZO

APPEARANCES:

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National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C.
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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MS. SANZO: My name is Dana Sanzo. I'm an Accident
3 Investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board, and
4 today we're conducting an interview for Accident Number DCA-08-
5 MR-009, collision of Metrolink train and UP freight train in
6 Los Angeles, California

7 We can start by going around the table, and everyone
8 state their names and their organizations.

9 MR. OJEDA: My name is Jesus Ojeda. I'm the Security
10 Coordinator for Metrolink Safety and Security Division. I have
11 been tasked to assist with the investigation with the NTSB.

12 MR. ERNST: I'm Battalion Chief Tim Ernst. I'm the
13 interviewee today.

14 MR. TAPIA: I'm Carlos Tapia. I'm a Mechanical
15 Equipment Inspector in the Railroad Operations Safety Branch of
16 the California Public Utilities Commission. I was also asked
17 to participate in this NTSB investigation.

18 CHIEF QUINTANAR: My name is John Quintanar. I'm the
19 Battalion Chief assigned to Metro Rail, Los Angeles City Fire
20 Department. I'm the liaison person with the Metro Rail as
21 stated before. I've been asked to assist in the investigation
22 of the Metrolink crash.

23 MS. SANZO: Thanks, everyone, for being here today.

24 INTERVIEW OF CHIEF TIMOTHY ERNST

25 BY MS. SANZO:

1 Q. And, Chief, if you can just tell us about when you
2 were notified and take us through the afternoon.

3 A. Okay. My timelines will be guesstimates --

4 Q. Certainly.

5 A. -- on this. The way this happened, I was -- Friday
6 afternoon, I worked the day already in downtown, and I was
7 actually with my son on the way to an orthodontic appointment
8 in Northridge of all places, and right at about -- I think the
9 dispatch probably went out about 4:20, 1620. Do you --

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 1623 I believe.

11 THE WITNESS: We heard the dispatch go out right as
12 we were getting ready to get out of the car. I have a staff
13 car with radios and everything. So we were going into the
14 office there. So I heard the dispatch go out, and I heard one
15 of the first companies on scene make a request for, you know, a
16 pretty sizable quantity of additional resources. I went into
17 his appointment and then I received a staff page, notification
18 of a derailment incident but no further details.

19 At that point, I sent a quick e-mail message to my
20 boss, who is the Bureau Commander of Emergency Services, Chief
21 Mario Ruwada (ph.), to ask him if he was going to respond to
22 it, assuming that he was probably still in the office and would
23 be responding from downtown. He responded in the affirmative
24 that he would, and so I figured I would be responding along
25 with him as soon as our appointment was over.

1 As it happened, our Incident Management Team that
2 both he sit on and I sit on was actually on call that week as
3 well. So for any large incident, we pretty much plan that we'd
4 be going. But on things that don't rise even to the level of a
5 I&T activation, usually the Bureau Commander will go, and
6 anything that looks like it's going to be a major patient
7 generator, I'll go.

8 My normal position in the Bureau is I oversee our
9 emergency medical services section. So really any large scale
10 EMS coordination would fall under my responsibility, and in
11 that, I figured -- they'd probably need some help, and if
12 nothing more, it would give me a chance to oversee the medical
13 setup that was going to go on there at the site. So at the
14 conclusion of my son's appointment, it was probably 4:50 or so,
15 we left his -- left the doctor's office and drove over, heard
16 where the station location was, started driving over in that
17 direction, was fortunate enough to follow another battalion
18 chief vehicle into the actual command post area because
19 otherwise I don't know whether I would have found it. So that
20 was absolutely just by chance that we happened to see his
21 vehicle. Pulled in.

22 Now, it's probably shortly before 5:00. My wife -- I
23 was checking phone call messages, and I noticed on her phone, I
24 had called her at 5:02. So I arrived on scene probably 5 to 10
25 minutes prior to that because I was trying to get her to come

1 pick up my son. He's 11. So I knew I'd be there for a long
2 period of time. I left the kid in the car, threw him the
3 BlackBerry and said call mom and see what you can do, and I'll
4 come back and check on you.

5 Fortunately, in the position that I was, I was parked
6 in a parking lot of the school there, I could see a grass area
7 and see where some tarps had already been set down, some triage
8 tarps. We have colored tarps where we throw our prioritized
9 triage patients. So I knew I'd probably be in that area where
10 at least I'd be able to see the car. Fortunately, there was
11 also a Sheriff's motors deputy there who was sort of
12 controlling traffic going in and out of that parking lot, and
13 so it gave me some comfort that I knew he'd kind of keep an eye
14 on the kid and the car.

15 That being said, I walked over onto the grass playing
16 field area of the school. I ran into one of our battalion
17 chiefs, Battalion 17, Mark Jones, had noticed that we now
18 probably only had about maybe five to six patients total on the
19 three tarps together, talked to Mark to find out what his job
20 was, and he informed me that he was going to be the medical
21 group supervisor.

22 At this point, it would appear that the trains were
23 still burning because there was still a pretty good cloud of
24 smoke. I mean the screaming and everything else was still
25 pretty fresh, and this incident was obviously still ramping up.

1 It hadn't reached any kind of plateau yet. I don't know how
2 much you want me to ramble.

3 BY MS. SANZO:

4 Q. You're doing great. You're doing absolutely great.

5 A. Okay. We had limited fire department personnel on
6 the scene at this point. So I asked Mark, you know, in regards
7 to his job what he wanted me to do, and Mark was -- Jones was
8 very overwhelmed by what he had. So I just kind of volunteered
9 that I would take the treatment unit, which basically would
10 oversee all three of those patient severity treatment areas,
11 both -- the three triage areas. That gave me a chance to take
12 a real quick look at what we had, you know, the number of
13 patients we had, and at that time, I only saw -- we had one EMS
14 captain. We have paramedic supervisor captains as well. We
15 had one EMS captain on the scene, and one arrived probably
16 moments after I got there. The one captain that was there, I
17 told him I wanted him to stay in the immediate treatment area
18 to ensure that our critical patients were being, you know,
19 looked after. The next EMS captain that came in just moments
20 after that, Tom Johnson, I don't know where he was assigned
21 that day, I asked Tom to maintain sort of a guard position, if
22 you will. There's a gate that goes between the railroad right-
23 of-way and the green grass area, and I wanted him to stay at
24 that gate so that as patients were brought from the train into
25 our triage areas, he could actually do a quick check triage on

1 them to really make sure that the patients were triaged
2 appropriately. One of the big problems that we see
3 traditionally, I mean MCI incidents, is everyone gets triaged
4 immediate and then you have a real inaccurate way to decide,
5 you know, everyone's survivability because you've got minors
6 mixed with immediates. So I think if there was one thing that
7 really added to the success of patient care, it was having that
8 guard position there to really make sure that our triage areas
9 got the patients as close to as accurately triaged as possible.
10 We reviewed the incident a couple of days later, I guess one
11 day later, on Sunday, and I sort of came up with just a rough
12 guesstimate. If I had to look at the accuracy of our triaging,
13 I would say we were probably 85 to 95 percent accurate as far
14 as which patients went where. From what I've seen in the past,
15 in the past, if we're at 60 to 70 percent, that's probably
16 about standard. So I think we did real well as far as getting
17 the proper people triaged, and what that then means is picking
18 who ends up going to the hospital in what order and looking at
19 patients' survivability. So that was a good thing. The other
20 EMS captain was EMS 10. That was Colin Smith. He was at that
21 point in the immediate area. That's the captain who was in the
22 immediate area. We didn't have any other fire department
23 personnel there at that time working those triage areas, and it
24 even looks like as far as our transporters from the operational
25 area into the triage areas, I didn't see any -- I don't think I

1 saw any fire department people doing it. The majority of that
2 was all uniformed LAPD officers, who were a huge help to this
3 incident because they had such a robust response. As the
4 triage tarps started to fill up more and more, we had a couple
5 of conversion volunteers come in, a few RNs which I put to use.
6 I think the first RN I assigned to the delay treatment area,
7 and then we had a few I think CERT members who came in as well,
8 which I think I put the CERT members into the minor area. One
9 of our biggest challenges at this event was getting LAFD ground
10 transportation ambulances to the site. And so I repeatedly
11 went to Mark Jones. I could have made the order, but with our
12 incident command system, we try to do everything as officially
13 as possible. So from my position, any resource requests would
14 normally go through the medical group sup. So I went to Mark
15 Jones and asked him, hey, where are our rescues, you know, we
16 need some transportation here because at this point now we
17 probably had six to eight, you know, criticals starting to pile
18 up. And he had informed me that he had requested them and no
19 one was coming, and at the time -- I don't know if we had a
20 helicopter on the parking lot area. We used one of the parking
21 lots, sort of on a, I guess it would be the south end of the
22 school as our helipad and/or maybe a helicopter had just left
23 prior to me getting there, and when I was talking about the
24 rescues, he said that was the last helicopter that we're going
25 to get, that they were going to move the helispot to another

1 location, which I guess was approximately a half a mile or mile
2 away, and I said, well, then how are we going to transport our
3 patients, and he had responded that we're going to ground
4 transport patients from the incident to the helispot and then
5 fly them. And I've been doing this long enough to tell him
6 that's absolutely not going to work. First of all, we don't
7 have ground transport here. I mean, that's a huge waste of
8 time. So I said we have to land our birds at the school.
9 That's the only way we can do it. Fortunately, it sounds like
10 maybe an issue, one of the reasons that the helispot was
11 decided to be moved down to that other location was because it
12 was too close to a command post vehicle, one of the first chief
13 officers that came in to run the whole incident. So, instead,
14 that command post chief moved to another location I think up
15 the driveway up on the hill at the school. And so we were able
16 then to keep all helicopter transport traffic designated in
17 that area of the parking lot. If we were to look at successes
18 of this incident, I again would say that having the helicopters
19 land and transport from where they transported probably was one
20 of the things that made this thing go as smoothly as it did
21 from our response. Again, in looking at the big picture of an
22 MCI setup, I would say this was almost a textbook footprint for
23 what a MCI would look like, and the reason for that is you had
24 some rough barriers around where your treatment area is. We
25 had fences on at least two sides of the treatment areas. You

1 have wide-open grass area. You've got access but separate from
2 the operational area. So you don't have them directly
3 impinging on the treatment areas. You've got transportation
4 routes which I'll talk to you in a second, of RAs, risk
5 ambulances, into the treatment areas, and then you have a real
6 close, yet separated helispot. So as far as the setup goes,
7 and hopefully if we can get some satellite pictures of that,
8 that's something I think would be critical as we look at, you
9 know, our role in the future setup of these operations. So we
10 still -- we were real slow in getting fire department resources
11 here. So the majority of our emphasis was really just paid to
12 our critical patients, our immediate patients. The next EMS
13 captain that came in was Tim Wilson who is assigned to EMS 17.
14 I put him in the delayed area, and our biggest challenge there
15 was making sure that our delayed patients didn't end up
16 worsening in a medical situation which would then bump up into
17 our immediate treatment area. The plan, once we got rescues
18 there, would be to have rescues come down the little narrow
19 driveway and pull through the parking lot and actually access
20 the playing field and could drive directly east to west across
21 that playing field and out this gate. So when we did finally
22 get rescues, and I don't have a timeframe on that, I'm thinking
23 it was -- unfortunately I think it may have been up to an hour.
24 Once we finally got rescues, our own rescues there, we lined
25 them up in a straight line right across the field in front of

1 the treatment areas, which worked out great. Patients were
2 loaded right from the tarps on the rescues and then out, down
3 south along the railroad right-of-way along the tracks, and
4 then that runs down a dirt road through a gate and back onto I
5 think is Rinaldi down here. As we started getting more fire
6 department resources in, I asked an officer to take the
7 position of -- serve an ambulance staging. I had the feeling
8 that we had another staging area set up, but I wasn't familiar
9 where it was, and I did not know if and how many resources we
10 had. I only had one radio, and so that radio was just on the
11 medical tech channel. So I wasn't aware of any of the other
12 communications that were going on as far as those resources
13 being staged there. So once we had an officer assigned to this
14 area, at least when we did get resources in, we were able to
15 get them to where we needed them. And from that point, I would
16 say again if we look at early successes for patient
17 survivability, we had a steady transportation flow of our
18 ambulances between all of our ships, several ships from LA
19 County Fire. We had Air 5 from the County Sheriff's. So on
20 the average I would say we probably, between patients -- or
21 between helicopters landing and taking off, there probably
22 wasn't more than maybe a one to two minute lag time between a
23 ship leaving and the next ambulance coming in, extremely,
24 extremely useful the way we had that rotation there. Once we
25 finally got more personnel in, one of the other things that I

1 think really facilitated the organization of the triage areas,
2 is, as silly as this sounds, just placement of fire line tape.
3 Because the number of non-injured people that were also trying
4 to corral in that area, we ended up with, I mean a virtual
5 crowd, and sort of the biggest thing we look at triage is you
6 try to sort, and just like sorting the mess on your desk, when
7 you want to put stacks of paper instead of paper all over the
8 desk, when I looked out across my treatment areas and I had
9 people everywhere, it's hard for me to get a good picture that
10 I had X number of immediates, delays and minors. So once we
11 got some yellow fire line tape up and kind of made some just
12 make-shift fences, it kept people in their assigned areas a
13 little better, and that sort of helped with some of the
14 confusion. That, and on several occasions, we had to ask any
15 non-injured people, everyone had some injury, but real minor
16 people, I kept asking to push them back against the green
17 fence, sort of the north boundary of the playing field just so
18 I got a better feel for the number of patients actually in the
19 treatment area.

20 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

21 Q. May I stop you there?

22 A. Certainly.

23 Q. Where in this -- most of us here, all of us here know
24 that there is a chain of command and there's assignments and
25 all. At this time, what was your assignment?

1 A. Treatment unit leader.

2 Q. Okay. Thank you.

3 A. Okay. And the treatment unit leader --

4 Q. So you were working for Chief Jones.

5 A. Yeah, the medical group sup.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Yeah, the treatment unit leader normally just
8 coordinates the three treatment areas and the morgue. I didn't
9 have the morgue because the morgue was actually set up, I
10 believe, on the opposite side of the train itself. So I
11 figured that would be taken care of elsewhere. Once we got all
12 the RAs through, we started to get patients moved out much
13 faster. One of the delays that at some point I think we should
14 probably look at was the capturing of some of our minors --
15 minor injury patients. Usually at a MCI, of course, our
16 priority for transport is going to be the immediates and then
17 the delayed and then the minors. We went ahead and got all of
18 our immediates transported. We -- anytime we transported by
19 ground, we'd always transport at least two people, and anytime
20 we transported by helicopter, we'd transported as many as the
21 helicopter could accommodate. In many cases, that was two
22 immediates and up to four minors at a time, which was great to
23 get six people, especially with Air 5, thank you for your guys
24 help with that. Getting six people loaded out of there was
25 great. One of the problems I think we may have encountered is

1 because the minors were the last in priority to be transported,
2 they sat around for a long, long time, probably didn't get
3 quite as much attention as they wanted to, and so I would have
4 to guess that we probably had some minors actually leave the
5 scene just because they were there so long. The question came
6 up early in the operation, maybe a couple of hours into it,
7 have we made some accommodations to start to capture these
8 folks, understanding that even if we weren't going to transport
9 them for medical reasons, we would definitely want to corral
10 them just for the investigative purpose, and in the past, I
11 know we've talked about bringing buses in, put all your minors
12 on the bus, and that way at least you have a corralable group,
13 and there was talk that buses had been requested, but I never
14 saw the buses come. And then probably two hours into it, we're
15 still looking for the buses, and then the decision was made, we
16 were going to be transporting all the minors by LAFD ambulance,
17 you know, put as many people into the back of the ambulance,
18 you know, six or so, sitting on the bench seat and then drive
19 them down to Chatsworth High School, maybe I think was the
20 relocation center where they were going to be interviewed.
21 That's something that we should probably look at. That's a
22 task that could clearly be given to maybe a non-LAFD member,
23 even law enforcement, as we look at this in the future. There
24 was an LAPD lieutenant that was identified as sort of the
25 liaison who would be handling that position. I think her name

1 might have been Braun (ph.), Braun, Braun. There was a delay
2 in me finding her to see if we could get some coordination from
3 their side to handle all those minors and to make sure that we
4 kind of got them controlled for their interviewing purposes. I
5 never did end up seeing her, and then once I found some LAPD
6 officers that could go get her, then I was reassigned to a
7 different position. So at approximately -- it was just getting
8 dark. So at approximately 2000 hours maybe, 2100 hours,
9 someplace in there, I have it written down somewhere, it was --
10 yeah. Anyway, someplace in that hour period, the IC Chief
11 Ruwada, who had seen me several times working here, told me
12 that he wanted to reassign me into urban search and rescue as
13 the USAR group supervisor. So at that point, I ended my
14 responsibility in medical group, knowing that all immediates
15 and all delayededs had been transported, and the only thing left
16 to really be handled at that point was just the corral
17 transport, either sign out or just investigative piece for the
18 minors. So that gets me out of the medical group, reassigns me
19 into the USAR group. At that point, Chief Fox I think was --
20 had been assigned as the operations leader, supervisor,
21 whatever we call them, and there was a deputy ops who was Joe
22 Castro. And so USAR group would respond to one of those two.
23 So I ended up talking to both of them a lot just to find out
24 what was happening, and Battalion Chief Jeff Marcus at that
25 time was sort of coordinating the current USAR effort under

1 what he was terming extrication group, and the extrication
2 group at that time was basically working from the top of the
3 two-story car we'll call it, right at the impact site between
4 the locomotive and the car. They were basically burrowing down
5 right at that point because it seemed like that's where we had
6 the biggest collection of patients, where all that debris was
7 pushed back. And he was working with some teams that were up
8 on top of the car doing that piece. I informed him at that
9 point that the direction be given that I was going to be taking
10 over the USAR group and that he would be under my command, and
11 shortly thereafter, I also found out that LA County had two of
12 their engines, USAR engines there, which they were termed to
13 use our task forces there. And so then I worked sort of hand-
14 in-hand with the LA County Battalion Chief, Tom Ewald,
15 E W A L D, who I had also known from other USAR applications.
16 So then Tom and I then sort of walked around. He gave me a
17 little orientation as to what the plan had been, what kind of
18 obstacles the guys were reaching, and then we talked about the
19 continuing plan for what I would look at as the end of that
20 operational period. The word had slowly gotten out that at
21 about midnight or someplace in there, there was going to be a
22 crew rotation, and someplace in that area, 2100, 2200, Chief
23 Ruwada told me that he was going to keep me on for the whole
24 night as the USAR group and scale everything else back and that
25 I would pretty much be in charge then of the operation at the

1 train itself. That being said, as the, as the USAR group at
2 that point, at about 2200, my main concern is we had guys now
3 that I knew had been working already all day on their regular
4 field rotation, and then these same guys now had been working
5 for probably five hours doing pretty strenuous stuff, and we
6 clearly had guys that were tired. I mean, I could see guys
7 standing up on top of the train yawning, and I knew as much as
8 they're driven right now by just adrenaline and emotion,
9 clearly a factor of fatigue setting in, and so safety which
10 always kind of concerns me, talked a lot to the field safety
11 officer there who at the time was John Vidovich, Chief John
12 Vidovich, just to identify some of our safety concerns with
13 that. Someplace close in that same timeframe, between 21 and
14 2200, sort of the main emphasis was the extrication of the LAPD
15 officer. That took us a while to actually get her extracted,
16 and then the whole procession out sort of slowed down the
17 operation a little bit, and someplace right in that same time
18 period, I think it was probably through conversation with Chief
19 Quintanar, we had discussed bringing in some of the heavy
20 equipment resources that, I don't know if it was Southern
21 Pacific or one of the rail authorities was able to bring in,
22 which clearly was something that I knew we were going to need
23 early in this operation. We continued to talk about it, and at
24 the time, in meeting with some of those reps, their initial
25 thought was that they were going to have to approach this

1 incident from the south. That being said, all of our heavy
2 apparatus that were in that area directly adjacent to the train
3 would have to be moved so they had better access. And at the
4 same time, they also thought they would have to come across
5 this main lawn to get there. I had no idea how big the things
6 were at that time. So that would mean having to completely
7 demobilize all the patient care areas, which I didn't know if
8 they still were active or not at that point. So the decision
9 was made that since we were going to be feeding crews at
10 sometime in that near future, we were still looking for food
11 roughly around 2200 hours, we figured at the time that we
12 started pulling people off of the operational area to feed
13 them, that would probably be the best time to maybe bring this
14 heavy apparatus in. Then as conversations went on within the
15 next half hour to hour, there was talk about seeing whether
16 they could be brought in from the north, and then as it turns
17 out, I guess through the dozer that LA County Fire brought in,
18 they were able to improve the dirt access road in from the
19 north to the point that they could bring all the equipment in
20 from the north, which was a huge help for us again in that we
21 didn't have to stop this operation here. We had backup fire
22 companies already that were on the site, and so we were able to
23 take some of the -- transition some of the companies that were
24 still working out, feed them, and put some of those backup
25 companies in, and this is still during that -- what we were

1 looking at as the first operational period prior to midnight.
2 Someplace in there, we ended up talking about, I think it was
3 through conversation with both LA County Search and Rescue and
4 with my boss, came up with a plan on what we'd end up keeping
5 for the night and how I intended to maybe change the operations
6 a little bit at nighttime, again realizing the fact that
7 anybody that we brought in, even if they weren't there already
8 for the evening, they had also been working for the entire day.
9 So that in itself always plays in my mind a little bit. So the
10 plan was that we were going to bring four fresh USAR task
11 forces in. For us, that's roughly 12 people with their
12 equipment. We brought four fresh USAR task forces in and then
13 some other fire resources, medical resources, and rapid
14 intervention resources that would sort of back those folks up,
15 and initially the discussion was that we were going to keep LA
16 County Fire's resources, USAR resources on scene as well, and
17 that was through conversation with their Assistant or Deputy
18 Chief John Tripp and with their BC who was on scene, Tom Ewald.
19 We ended up having a scheduled briefing right about 12:30, 1:00
20 in the morning, someplace in there, we had a briefing at the
21 command post, and I think the reason that ended up being pushed
22 back, we initially shot for midnight, but I think it took time
23 to get all the fresh resources to the site. So we kept people
24 working at the site. They continued to try to work on some of
25 the body extractions right at the impacted area. So we had the

1 briefing, at which point then we were told that LA County and
2 all outside resources were going to be released. We also have
3 Ventura County USAR team there that was also working with us.
4 So we did a status update for all the new coming people in,
5 gave them a period of time where all the new guys coming in
6 could go out and brief with the off-going shift to kind of find
7 out what had happened, what the operational plan sort of was
8 during the prior operational period, and at the same time I
9 briefed the crews coming in on how I intended to use them for
10 the night. At the same time, Chief Quintanar was working with
11 the railroad heavy equipment people to kind of get their plan
12 and their capabilities and what we could do, and then shortly
13 after that, we had talked, and it was guesstimate that it would
14 take approximately an hour and a half time to do at least a
15 majority, not all, but a majority of the movement of some of
16 the impacted cars that were off the tracks above the level of
17 the two locomotives and the major impacted Metrolink car. We
18 figured at that point, because crews were still changing out,
19 it probably would be best to go ahead and start that process,
20 knowing that while that was going on, we could not have people
21 actually working on the train because we were afraid there
22 could be some movement or something that could cause some
23 further problems. So we went ahead and we started that
24 process.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: By the way, I want to

1 interject here. We obtained permission from NTSB to allow us
2 to do that. So in conjunction with LAPD, the Sheriff's
3 Department, Fire Department and Metrolink and the contractor,
4 with NTSB's approval, we made that decision.

5 THE WITNESS: Yeah, that's very important. Yeah.
6 And that's something we had actually talked about pretty early
7 in the operation, maybe about 2200, 2300 of the first day.
8 Having been on a couple of different kinds of crashes, I know
9 that the whole scene presentation, investigative piece, is
10 absolutely a factor in how we will continue our operations,
11 secondary to life safety, you know, if we're still looking for,
12 you know, the potential of saving lives. One of the big things
13 in USAR that we're always kind of real cognizant about is the
14 chance of rescue in void spaces, and we were not confident that
15 there would not still be void spaces. So until I could rule
16 out the chance of anybody possibly being alive in a void space,
17 we wanted to do anything we could to aggressively create those
18 void spaces, pull the cars apart, et cetera. We discussed that
19 with the NTSB rep on scene, and I don't recall his name, but
20 I've got to tell you, extremely helpful, helpful rep. I mean,
21 the working relationship that we had, all in all, I mean all
22 the working relationships, but particularly with the NTSB rep
23 and with the supervisors from the heavy equipment folks, there
24 were probably three or four of us that continued to meet, you
25 know, every half hour or hour through the night. I cannot, I

1 cannot give enough kudos to that working relationship. It
2 really worked out well. And I explained to him that really
3 with that concern being for void space and being for the chance
4 of still finding live patients, I recognize what he needed to
5 do for scene preservation, and he gave us the blessing to do
6 whatever it took until we could say that we're no longer in the
7 rescue mode, that we're in the recovery mode. That being said,
8 for the entire night, I told our IC that we would stay in the
9 rescue mode until we could say for sure that there was no
10 chance for anything further. We ran the heavy equipment, the
11 cranes, for the majority of the night, occasionally stopping
12 for maybe a half an hour or an hour max at a time, during which
13 period I would put my USAR folks back up into the operational
14 area to work on some extractions. We did not put any of the
15 teams back up. After the midnight, we didn't put teams back up
16 into the top application, the top hole. Most of the extraction
17 efforts at that point were focused on the side, which I guess
18 would be the east side of the train. I think it was the east
19 side of the train. Because we had a number of fatalities
20 visible there, so we wanted to see if we could get those out.
21 What else, John?

22 CHIEF QUINTANAR: Great job. We'll probably ask you
23 some questions, some follow up questions.

24 MS. SANZO: I'll let you start.

25 CHIEF QUINTANAR: Okay.

1 BY CHIEF QUINTANAR:

2 Q. You mentioned you went from treatment in the medical
3 group to USAR. You were reassigned. But in the time you were
4 in the medical group treatment, how many, just guesstimating,
5 air transports did we handle? Do you know that?

6 A. How many ships in and out or how many patients?

7 Q. Both.

8 A. Wow, this is going to be a guesstimate.

9 Q. Yeah, just guess.

10 A. I would have to guess that we probably saw LAFD air
11 ambulance transports probably, I'm guesstimating, probably 10
12 LAFD air ambulances, probably 5 to 6 County fire, and probably
13 maybe 2 to 3 Air 5. We had the request at one point for Mercy
14 Air to bring some of, you know, their private air ambulances,
15 which we turned down because we had such a constant influx of
16 municipality birds. So whatever that adds up to.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Roughly, you know, 18 to 20.

19 Q. Well, just for your information, we were told that
20 there were more in the 30 range, and we were told that, and if
21 that's the case and you have multiple patients on a helicopter
22 transport, then how many ground transports did you do? Because
23 there were somewhere in the neighborhood, we went to OCD and
24 interviewed Chief Greengard, and the figure of 87 private
25 ambulances assigned to that along with the 25 LA City resource

1 ambulances. That was amazing. I mean -- and I'm assuming that
2 not everyone transported a patient.

3 A. No, no. And I'm not happy to tell you this, we saw
4 less than 10 private ambulances actually at the site. I would
5 probably guess closer to five at the site, and I did hear the
6 numbers that we had dozens of private ambulances at one of the
7 staging areas, but unfortunately we never saw those up at the
8 treatment areas.

9 Q. So it seemed like there was disconnect between the
10 staging area where you staged either fire resources, ambulance
11 resources and so forth, and then coming in the impact area,
12 picking up a patient and taking them out, that little daisy
13 chain type thing, that was never established. What was the
14 problem? I'm just --

15 A. Now, I'm, I'm guessing what the problem is --

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. -- because I have the same question I think that I
18 hope everybody does. My understanding is we had a good
19 commitment of both LAFD and private ambulances at whichever the
20 other staging area was, and the parking lot of the school
21 itself is -- I didn't know again where we had another staging.
22 So this is kind of what I was looking at. Let's make this an
23 ambulance staging, and as many times as, you know, I was going
24 back and talking to Chief Jones to say, hey, we need to get
25 some rescues here, when we finally got rescues, I think he had

1 said we got 10 or 15 rescues. So -- and those were all LAFD
2 rescues. At that point, I didn't see any more privates come
3 in. Maybe a few but, yeah, less than 10 privates total did I
4 see at the site itself.

5 Q. Yeah, when I, when I came in, I arrived at about
6 8:00, and you could just barely get through because of all the
7 resources. I'm talking about police and fire. So -- do you --
8 have you heard the final count on how many were transported?
9 And if you don't, because it was updated.

10 A. No.

11 Q. I think it's something up to 99, 99 patients were
12 transported.

13 A. Transported to hospitals?

14 Q. Yes.

15 A. Okay.

16 Q. Yes, transported to hospitals.

17 A. Good.

18 Q. And, of course, 25 individuals, not all in the morgue
19 because I think a few died at the hospital.

20 A. Right.

21 Q. But -- and, and getting there when you got there, it
22 was probably late in the game also, but what would you estimate
23 the walking wounded that left, the people, the individuals that
24 were not treated but left because our figures shows that
25 somewhere in the neighborhood of 222 passengers were on that --

1 on those three trains when the accident occurred. If you look
2 at 99 plus 25, you know, that gives you roughly 125. What
3 happened to the remaining 100? You know, it's --

4 A. Yeah, I know. I don't know when, at what point they
5 would have left. I would say at the most crowded that I ever
6 saw that minor treatment area, there may have been 75 people
7 there, but keep in mind that that also then includes, you know,
8 a lot of converging volunteers that are starting to move in,
9 and as -- I would still say uncontrolled as the triage area,
10 and this whole treatment area was, because we had a lack of
11 LAFD people to really maintain security there, and everyone was
12 pretty much I think focused more on trying to assist with the
13 rescue operation, we didn't have enough people to manage those
14 treatment areas and the security of the treatments areas, nor
15 did we have enough PD there to keep those people in. So I
16 don't know at what point people may have come into that area
17 from the outside trying to help, because I know a lot of people
18 were coming in, and I don't know at what point people may have
19 left that treatment area.

20 Q. Were you aware of a patient, I should say a
21 individual on the train that was thrown from the train and
22 treated by either LAPD or fire department resources?

23 A. I was not made aware of that incident. I became
24 aware of that I think a day later.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. How about knowing the engineer from the freight
3 train? Were you aware of any rescuing of --

4 A. No, I was not.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. No, other than when I did my recon and checked the
7 damage to the freight train and the damage to the locomotive
8 from the Metrolink, it would appear, and again it was just a
9 guesstimate, it would appear that he probably walked away, the
10 freight train engineer walked away whereas the other one was a
11 fatality, but I never saw him or had him identified to me as,
12 you know, the engineer.

13 Q. When you went from treatment in medical group to
14 USAR, the fire had already been knocked down?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. And the majority, of course, they released you from
17 the treatment area because the majority of patients have
18 already been taken care of. So now you're into the rescue or
19 possibly body recovery?

20 A. Correct.

21 CHIEF QUINTANAR: That's all I have.

22 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

23 Q. When you were assigned to the search and rescue, you
24 said that someone told you about some of the obstacles
25 encountered in extricating people. What were some of those

1 obstacles?

2 A. I described it as if you've ever seen a bale of metal
3 recycling, how tightly packed that is, we had bodies in the
4 middle of metal that was compacted that tight, that tight, and
5 so our normal urban search and rescue tools and techniques, you
6 know, which really rely on being able to pry of something solid
7 or cut something that's going to give you some sort of a
8 sizable release that you can then make entry through, that
9 impact area was packed in so tight that none of those
10 traditional methods worked, and basically we were clipping, you
11 know, with different machines. We were clipping little pieces
12 of that compacted debris away from those bodies. So in a
13 regular rescue it may have taken a third of the time, it was
14 extremely slow going because of having to take small little
15 pieces of metal off, you know, at a time, cut them off and that
16 metal then was twisted in different directions. So just really
17 timely. It took a long, long time.

18 Q. Okay. Thank you.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's all I have.

20 MS. SANZO: Questions?

21 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

22 Q. You mentioned that the relationship with the heavy
23 operators and the fire department along with the railroad
24 worked very well with you. Do you think -- is there something
25 else that the railroads can do to improve that, make sure that

1 we work with you? I know you mentioned they worked well. Do
2 you see anything that we can do better to assist you in the
3 future?

4 A. At that incident, I think the biggest benefit we had
5 was having Chief Quintanar there because he has really the
6 established relationships with a lot of those people. If we
7 didn't have John there, I think it would have been a little bit
8 tougher to start to make those contacts and know, you know,
9 which people to pull out of that group to be our go-to people,
10 but short of that, I cannot see the incident being improved by
11 any better relations or anything else as far as the go-between
12 between railroad, NTSB and (indiscernible). I thought that was
13 absolutely flawless. I really appreciate that work effort.

14 Q. Thank you.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's all I have.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have one more question.

17 MS. SANZO: Okay.

18 BY CHIEF QUINTANAR:

19 Q. When you were removing people from that Metrolink
20 passenger car, cutting little pieces of metal and this and that
21 to help them, did you ever come to a point or did your guys
22 ever come to a point where you needed somebody like from the
23 railroad to let you know about the equipment that was there?

24 A. Excellent question. Thank you. Yes. When I first
25 got into the USAR -- when I switched into the USAR mode, so

1 it's 21 or 2200 hours, at that point we still had what I would
2 look at as roughly a 30- to 40-foot long piece of what would be
3 the side skin of the car. The car is lying on its side. So
4 the top piece, which is sort of an overhang, creating sort of
5 like a false roof, which turns out to be the side skin, there's
6 about a 30-foot piece hanging over the top of the car which was
7 all exposed. So in talking with my county fire USAR
8 counterpart, we were looking what are some of the hazards we
9 might be addressing to, you know, help our guys, and that was
10 one of the things we talked about, was how can we get that big
11 overhang either pulled back or removed so that that doesn't
12 become a problem, and then we also looked at for the efficiency
13 of the rescue, rather than guys just continuing to borrow down
14 from the top like they had been doing for the first couple of
15 hours, we wanted to start looking into how we could de-skin the
16 car so that we could kind of have more access points to get to
17 the car to see where else we might have fatalities. And we
18 decided that we, of course, didn't want to start cutting into
19 the side of the car until we knew, you know, any additional
20 hazards that may still be apparent in the car, as well as any
21 structural problems and so that's a great point. What we
22 looked for there was some of the Metrolink expertise as to
23 where can we cut this thing so we don't have the wrong release
24 of energy and have things fly loose or, you know, compromise
25 the integrity of the rest of the car, and I can't remember the

1 gentleman's name, but we did find the Metrolink, I'll call him
2 engineer, just for lack of -- construction engineer, who gave
3 us the information that pretty much at anyplace in that car it
4 would be safe to cut because there really wasn't a problem with
5 the metal being under tension, that outer skin, that it would
6 just cut like aluminum. So that was one of the first sort of
7 USAR operations that we pushed for, and once I took over prior
8 to midnight was the county task forces worked on sort of de-
9 skinning the one major area there on the east side, while we
10 left the city people working from the top down in the hole. So
11 that would answer your question. Now, one of the things I
12 don't think I got a chance to mention, you brought up a great
13 point, the next morning it was probably just light, one of our
14 concerns was to do as much of the real gruesome rescue as
15 possible at night before we had a lot of helicopters up in the
16 air because we don't want them filming this stuff and then have
17 some poor family member see, you know, their loved one being
18 extricated. We ran into some problems with that just because
19 of the amount of work that had to be done. So the light -- the
20 sun did end up coming up, and then we did have the helicopters
21 up there. So we tried to provide several different types of
22 blockages, you know, from the news helicopters. We put an easy
23 up against the locomotive because the Metrolink engineer was
24 actually trapped hanging out of his window and the locomotive
25 was on top of him. Again using Chief Quintanar's relationship

1 with the heavy equipment folks from the railroads, we talked
2 about different ways that we could lift that locomotive up and
3 then crib underneath it to provide a safe area so that our guys
4 could start working on getting him pulled out. That ended up
5 taking a sizable quantity of time, probably from start to
6 finish of that particular operation was probably two hours, two
7 and a half, three hours because as it turned out, we were able
8 to use the heavy equipment. I think we used two different
9 loaders to lift it up, and then I wasn't comfortable with just
10 using loaders. So then we had -- I believe the railroad
11 probably had brought some heavy timber, I don't know if that
12 was ours. We had some 12 x 12 or 14 x 14 x 2 foot or 3 foot
13 timbers that we used to make some cribs, some box cribbing
14 underneath the locomotive just in case the hydraulics were to
15 fail because they actually had their buckets holding the train
16 up off the -- the weight off the deceased engineer.
17 Unfortunately, what had happened is someplace as the train
18 rolled over and he started to go out the window, his foot
19 wrapped around a bracket underneath the seat, and based on
20 that, our guys were unable to pull him out. So it took a
21 little bit longer. So I still didn't want a guy to crawl
22 underneath the train and back in that window just in the event
23 that we had any occurrence. So we had guys get to a point
24 where next to the cribbing, they could get their arms in there,
25 but it was too much of his body weight hanging on that foot to

1 be able to free his foot, untwist it from underneath the seat
2 where it was. So a decision was made that we were going to use
3 one of our USAR cutting torches. We have a specialized torch
4 which cuts much faster than a standard torch, and we were going
5 to cut the outside of the locomotive to create an access port
6 that we could get into him to actually get in there and free up
7 his foot. So that was the direction I had given, we were going
8 to use one of our torches, and if I had anything constructively
9 to add, it's that one of the -- I don't know which agency,
10 railroad agency from one of the railroad construction people
11 had a torch there. Now, mind you, we were working under a
12 nylon tent right now, and when he hears that we're going to cut
13 it out, he comes over and without asking, he sparks up his
14 torch and throws out a 14-inch flame working under a nylon
15 tent, and I about had a fit. So I tell him to back out. He
16 puts his torch out, and I'm still sending my guys to go get the
17 torch. I walk over to find out, you know, what the delay is.
18 Different people with equipment comes over. When I walk back,
19 he on his own had come back over and, yes, there are
20 firefighters there, but I was the only chief in that area, and
21 he was using his torch cutting that thing. At that point I
22 wasn't going to stop him because now he was effectively
23 starting to make a cut, not as efficient as the cutting torch
24 we would have used, but clearly outside the direction that I
25 had given my guys and kind of working -- we're still now

1 working underneath the nylon tent. So we had some increased
2 hazards. I wasn't happy about that guy. That would be the
3 only thing I could say constructively that didn't go as planned
4 was that he was a do-gooder, and I know everyone wanted to get
5 the job done, but I don't know that he was thinking about the
6 same thing as I was as far as safety of all the guys working
7 there.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have a -- may I? Are we
9 into the question mode?

10 BY CHIEF QUINTANAR:

11 Q. Two things. One is I was -- this discussion was
12 discussed amongst ourselves, and we were -- the gentleman here
13 was looking at more safer, better trains, you might say, belts.
14 So we were looking into belts and so forth, you know, possible
15 whatever. So the question came out was a reason why it took us
16 so long to extricate the engineer was because he was wearing a
17 belt. That's what I heard. Can you comment on that? Were you
18 aware of that? I know you were right in the thick of things?

19 A. A question did come up that we actually talked about
20 a little bit, and that's do they have seatbelts because
21 initially when the train was lifted up those two feet and we
22 cribbed it up, we were able to get his upper body loose enough
23 that the guys could try to pull him out. I guess I neglected
24 to mention how we were going to pull him out. Again, I was
25 concerned about having any of our members get into a position

1 where they might be under the train at all. So before we even
2 started to lift the train, we put two webbing slings on his
3 wrists, and we took pipe holds which are long-handled six foot,
4 basically a hook tool, and we hooked onto the webbing slings so
5 our guys could now be roughly eight feet away from the train.
6 And so once it was lifted, we saw that his upper body was
7 loose. We had hoped that we could then take those hooks and
8 just basically pull him out by his arms. That's when we
9 noticed that he was kind of hung up. So for a little bit, they
10 kind of would move him around a little bit to see if we could
11 maybe get whatever was hung up to release and get him to then
12 maybe drop out that window. When he didn't drop out, the
13 question came up, well, could he have had a seatbelt on? And
14 so they found, I guess some of the Metrolink folks that were on
15 scene to inquire whether the engineers normally wore seatbelts,
16 and I can't recall definitively what the answer was, whether
17 they normally wear seatbelts, but one of the guys did end up,
18 you know, poking his head in there and looking and seeing that
19 there was no seatbelt on the driver. So he was not hung up by
20 the seatbelt.

21 Q. So when someone mentioned to me that a belt was cut,
22 that I must have not, you know, at 5:00 in the morning, after
23 12 or 15 hours there, I guess I imagined that or something.
24 And you're right because --

25 A. I don't --

1 Q. -- because Jesus here was saying that they do not,
2 and the reason why is that they need the capability of escaping
3 if need be.

4 A. The only conversation I ever heard about cutting
5 something was because it was figured that a heavy boot was
6 lodged underneath the thing, I know the guys did go in with a
7 knife and try to cut his shoe laces because they were going to
8 see if they could get his foot to slip out of his boot. But
9 short of that, I don't remember a knife ever going in to cut
10 anything else other than his shoelaces.

11 Q. Okay. What I'd like to do is state for the record,
12 and you mentioned that there was delays as we were going, but
13 for the most part, and you said that the contractor did one
14 heck of a job, what was a major delay that they encountered was
15 they started welding the track itself to get the track to cut
16 the track and remove it so they can slide these cars out, train
17 cars out, and what they did is they exposed some type of
18 hydrocarbon and/or fire -- sometime of -- something that would
19 burn. I'm not sure exactly what it was, but it ended up --
20 they ended up starting a pretty decent fire --

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. -- and what happened is the fire department had to
23 come in and extinguish the fire, extend lines and so forth. So
24 it took quite a long time to do that, half an hour, 45 minutes,
25 an hour maybe. So that delayed the process of moving those

1 trains out.

2 A. One of the -- I guess one of the delays with that is
3 we had fire protection hose lines pulled as soon as we got to
4 the scene, but those were just pulled to the actual impact
5 area, and as you know, because we did have that locomotive fire
6 initially, we had enough hose. Normally what we try to do is
7 we pull hose enough that we can work -- go all the way around
8 whatever our target would be. So we had hose on both sides of
9 the Metrolink car, the impacted car and the locomotive but, of
10 course, that's not enough hose to stretch the distance of
11 probably three or four more cars further up the track. As it
12 turns out, the fire that Chief Quintanar was talking about was
13 several cars up the track, and so that was our delay was we
14 still had those hose lines charged and out, but we had to go
15 and retrieve additional hose to extend those lines, the hose
16 lines, up far enough to get to the fire. So we did have a
17 little delay there.

18 BY MS. SANZO:

19 Q. So was this in the vicinity of the freight train
20 then, the freight train cars?

21 A. It was one of the freight train -- I don't remember
22 if it was one of the freight train locomotives, but it was part
23 of the freight train vehicles.

24 BY CHIEF QUINTANAR:

25 Q. You mean --

1 A. The fire.

2 Q. -- the initial fire.

3 A. Yeah, the fire -- no, the fire that night. The fire
4 that was caused by the welding.

5 Q. Actually it was on the side of it. They were trying
6 to address a car that was on the south side of the track. So
7 by welding and trying to get -- move the car away and also
8 cutting the rail, somehow it exposed some type of fire product,
9 something that would burn along with they had fuel in there and
10 all that, and so it kind of flashed.

11 A. Yeah. In fact, now that you asked that question
12 about what could have made things better, one other thing that
13 I think could have been addressed a little bit sooner that
14 probably could have been assisted by the railroad was we had a
15 sizable diesel fuel spill. Of course, everyone was walking in,
16 you know, four or five inches of thick mud, you know, mixed
17 with diesel fuel, and that's something I really think should
18 have been addressed as close to immediately as possible because
19 we're exposing our guys to a whole, another level of hazard.
20 Our hazmat guys, you know, did a continuous check for
21 combustibility, and they're looking for all kinds of different
22 things. So we didn't have a problem with combustibility. It
23 was a cold night, et cetera, et cetera, but we still had the
24 off gas from the diesel fuel, which we know is carcinogenic,
25 and if nothing more, we have a slip and fall hazard that we

1 exposed the guys to. That's something that could have been
2 addressed with maybe a dump truck of sand that could have been
3 brought in the same route as all the heavy equipment from up
4 canyon.

5 BY MS. SANZO:

6 Q. Just going back to treatment unit --

7 A. Uh-huh.

8 Q. -- a previous interview talked also about five
9 physicians that were on scene. Would you be able to tell us
10 about their role?

11 A. Yes. Right -- let's see. I had heard at some point
12 -- several hours into it, I had heard that there may be some
13 physicians flying in. I think I just heard that, someone else
14 was talking about it, and at that point, we already had a
15 pretty good transportation system going, and so if we had
16 physicians there immediately, there'd be a lot of use for them.
17 Once we had a good system of getting our immediates, you know,
18 categorized and moved, there wouldn't be as much need for a
19 physician there. So I was really starting to wonder, we're
20 probably past the limit where we're going to need physicians
21 here, but nonetheless I heard at some point that a group of
22 five physicians were coming out, and I believe I heard that was
23 going to be via Air 5 was going to transport them in. It was
24 actually right -- I think right at the point that I was going
25 to be moved to the USAR group or maybe shortly before that that

1 they did come in and they started filtering the area, and I
2 corralled them back up and said, hey, I want you guys to stand
3 by here and let me give you a contact, and I put them in
4 contact with our medical director, Dr. Epstein, so he could
5 give them some direction on what to do. And they worked for a
6 short amount of time. I'm not sure what task he gave them, and
7 then next thing I know, probably within a half an hour, now I'm
8 working the USAR group. They're basically looking for a way to
9 get back to the hospital. So I talked to someone to see if we
10 could get them a helicopter ride back to the -- I think they
11 were from County.

12 Q. And during discussions about USAR, you mentioned
13 working with a Metrolink engineer that was able to provide you
14 help on the rail cars. Was that somebody that was available to
15 you long-term over the course of the evening and afternoon?

16 A. I did not actually work with him at all for the rest
17 of the night. The only contact that I had with him was when we
18 were checking on the integrity of the car for cutting and both
19 myself and Chief Ewald from LA County talked to him, but that
20 was about it. Yeah, I guess again, if we were to look --
21 stepping back and looking perfect picture, that probably would
22 have been a good contact for me to have someplace in my hip
23 pocket with John so that not only could we talk to the heavy
24 equipment guys but maybe also that same person there, but after
25 we knew that it would be safe to skin the outside, we didn't

1 really have any other technical questions about, you know,
2 structural integrity, but if we had, that's a great point
3 because I wouldn't have known who to go back to because I don't
4 recall who the guy was.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I add something to that?

6 MS. SANZO: Certainly. Go right ahead.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: As a matter of fact, at one
8 point, he was attached to Chief Quintanar's hip along with
9 myself. So if you would have had questions, he would have had
10 the answers right away, and Craig Eberly (ph.) was his name.
11 Very knowledgeable guy and as a matter of fact, I was there
12 when he was briefing you on the, on the structure of the car.

13 CHIEF QUINTANAR: Oh, okay.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Very knowledgeable guy.

15 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

16 CHIEF QUINTANAR: Yeah, and I think the reason why we
17 didn't -- I mean you met him, but you had your hands full.

18 THE WITNESS: Oh, yeah.

19 CHIEF QUINTANAR: That was one of the things that you
20 didn't need to do that, you know, Chris and I were, you know,
21 had this -- that issue taken care of.

22 THE WITNESS: Everything worked, especially because,
23 you know, we have a designated liaison for all those problems.
24 So, I mean, if I had to know I mean anything about the train,
25 and I didn't have a rep there, I know John would know who the

1 rep was. So that's Monday morning quarterbacking myself is not
2 remembering the face.

3 BY MS. SANZO:

4 Q. Well, if you were -- what kind of advice would you
5 give to other departments in planning or planning a response
6 like this or any advice you could give to any departments to
7 help them make this a successful operation if they had to do
8 so?

9 A. You know, we do a lot of drilling. All departments
10 do a lot of drilling and practicing for MCI. Because of the
11 variety of different incident types that we try to train for, I
12 don't know that we train often enough, but that's by nature of
13 the fact that there's so many different things we need to train
14 on. I think operationally, I don't think any inaction
15 negatively impacted patient care. I feel really strongly about
16 how well patients were triaged, and even by the speed with
17 which they were transported out, thankful to the relationship
18 with the other agencies that had air ambulances available and
19 our air ambulance fleet. Had it not been for that, the ground
20 transport thing would have been an issue. So I would probably
21 say the biggest thing that I would really advocate is multi-
22 agency drills that are carried out long enough. We usually
23 don't plan eight-hour drills with people actually, you know,
24 doing a lot of the physical stuff that's involved with a couple
25 of hundred patients. It's hard to find a couple of hundred

1 volunteers, you know, to put on a drill like this, but if, if
2 agencies had the time, money, manpower, et cetera, to do a full
3 melange drill, it looked like a drill when I was there because
4 patients were in such a varied state of physical injury, it
5 almost looked like a really well-planned drill to me, the way
6 things kind of fell into place.

7 MS. SANZO: Anybody else like to ask any more
8 questions?

9 (No response.)

10 MS. SANZO: Thank you very much for your time in
11 doing this for us today, and that will conclude the interview.

12 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled
13 matter was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: HEAD-ON COLLISION OF A METROLINK
 COMMUTER TRAIN WITH A UNION
 PACIFIC FREIGHT TRAIN
 September 12, 2008,
 Los Angeles, California
 Interview of Chief Timothy Ernst

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-08-MR-009

PLACE: Los Angeles, California

DATE: September 17, 2008

was held according to the record, and that this is the
original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been
compared to the recording accomplished at the hearing.

Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber