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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Washington, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF MARC CENICEROS, PG&E
(JAN-5-2011)

(41 Pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	
PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC COMPANY SEPTEMBER 9, 2010 ACCIDENT SAN BRUNO, CALIFORNIA	Docket No.: DCA-10-MP-008

Interview of: MARC CENICEROS

Marriott Hotel
San Francisco Airport
1800 Bayshore Highway
Burlingame, California 94010

Wednesday,
January 5, 2011

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: RAVINDRA CHHATRE
Investigator-in-Charge

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I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

MR. CHHATRE: On the record. Good morning, everyone. Today is Wednesday, January 5th. We are currently in Burlingame, California, at the San Francisco Airport Marriott. We are meeting in regards to the investigation of pipeline rupture in San Bruno, California, that occurred on September 9, 2010. The NTSB accident number for this investigation is DCA-10-MP-008.

My name is Ravi Chhatre. I'm with the National Transportation Safety Board, and I'm the investigator-in-charge of this accident.

I would like to start by stating that everyone present in this room should note that we are recording this interview for transcription at a later date. All parties will have a chance to review the transcripts when they are completed.

I'd also like to inform, and I hope I pronounce your name correctly, Marc --

MR. CENICEROS: Ceniceros.

MR. CHHATRE: -- Ceniceros.

MR. CENICEROS: Yes.

MR. CHHATRE: -- that you are permitted to have one person present with you during this interview. That person is of your choice, your supervisor, friend, family or, if you choose, no one at all.

So for the record, please state your full name, spelling of your name, your contact information like e-mail, telephone

number, postal mailing address and whom you have chosen to be present with you during the interview.

MR. CENICEROS: My name is Marc Ceniceros. Marc is spelled M A R C; my last name is spelled C E N I C E R O S. I live at ----------, and I can be reached at mgc4@pge.com.

MR. CHHATRE: Thank you for that.

Now we'll go around the room and have each person introduce themselves. Please state your name, spelling, title and organization you represent, a business e-mail and phone number, starting with the City of San Bruno, starting with City of San Bruno.

MR. CALDWELL: City of San Bruno, Geoff Caldwell. Everything's on the card I provided.

MR. DAUBIN: Brian Daubin, PG&E. Everything is on the card provided.

MR. FASSETT: Bob Fassett, PG&E, card.

MS. JACKSON: Connie Jackson, City of San Bruno. My information's on my card.

MS. FABRY: Klara Fabry, City of San Bruno, my information on the card provided.

MR. SHORI: Sunil Shori, California Public Utilities Commission. Information is on my card.

MR. KATCHMAR: Peter Katchmar, USDOT, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, PHMSA. My information

is on the card I provided.

MR. GUNTHER: Karl Gunther, NTSB, Operations Group Chairman, e-mail karl.gunther@ntsb.gov; phone (202) 314-6478.

MS. MAZZANTI: Debbie Mazzanti, IBEW Local 1245. My information's on the card I provided.

MR. SPERRY: Joshua Sperry, S P E R R Y, with Engineers and Scientists of California, Local 20, IFPTE. My information's been provided.

MR. NICHOLSON: Matthew Nicholson, NTSB, engineer, M A T T H E W, N I C H O L S O N, matthew.nicholson@ntsb.gov.

MR. CHHATRE: Ravindra Chhatre. That's R A V I N D R A, C H H A T R E. I'm with NTSB. My e-mail is ravindra.chhatre@ntsb.gov; phone is (202) 314-6644.

MR. NARVELL: Rick Narvell, Human Performance Investigator Chair, NTSB; phone is (202) 314-6422; e-mail is narvelr@ntsb.gov.

MR. JAQUES: Dane Jaques on behalf of the witness, and my information is on the business card provided.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Karl, do you want to go first or should we start with the City?

MR. GUNTHER: Let's start on the side of the room. I'm having a coughing fit.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay. City of San Bruno.

MR. CALDWELL: City of San Bruno, no questions at this time.

MR. DAUBIN: No questions.

MR. FASSETT: Bob Fassett, PG&E, no questions.

MS. JACKSON: Connie Jackson, no questions at this time.

MS. FABRY: Klara Fabry, no questions.

MR. SHORI: Sunil Shori, California PUC.

INTERVIEW OF MARC CENICEROS

BY MR. SHORI:

Q. Mr. Ceniceros --

A. Please call me Marc.

Q. Marc, okay. It makes it a lot easier. Thank you, although I think I could get by. Did you have any involvement in preparing this report, and I'm referring to the version 2 of the investigation and documentation report, version 2, 9/11/2010 from Gas Control?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. There's some corrective actions that were indicated in here in terms of actions taken to reduce line 300A and 300B via PLS7 and PLS7A and B, I believe, and Sheridan Road, line 303, reducing pressure out of those stations, and it says direction for this was given verbally at 17:50 with GLS documentation at 17:52. Do you know who gave that direction?

A. Yes, sir. I gave it.

Q. And what was the reason for doing that?

A. It was evidence that the regulation at Milpitas was not performing correctly and so I lowered the upstream pressures to

control them outside the station.

Q. And what gave you reason to believe that the regulation at Milpitas was not working correctly?

A. The downstream pressures, outside Milpitas terminal.

Q. What more specifically on that led you to that conclusion?

A. The pressures on the lines across the Santa Clara Valley and up the Peninsula were indicating pressures higher than we normally would control at.

Q. So when you refer to regulation, are you also referring to the overpressure protection at the facility?

A. No, I wasn't confident at that time whether the overpressure was operating yet.

Q. Did you have any reason to believe -- had you spoken to anybody at Milpitas to believe that the overpressure protection devices there were not operating?

A. I don't recall. I did not personally have a conversation with anybody at Milpitas regarding that, no.

Q. What pressure would you have expected to see at the locations that led you to make this determination to confirm that overpressure was affected?

A. For overpressure?

Q. Yes.

A. 385 pounds or so and less.

Q. So anything exceeding 385, you believed that the

overpressure wasn't affected?

A. It's downstream of the -- the pressures I was looking at are downstream of the station. So it's entirely possible overpressure protection has taken place at Milpitas but the effects have not yet been seen downstream. So I couldn't determine whether or not it had acted.

Q. It says we contacted the techs working at Milpitas to inform of the loss of data and to have them focus their work to restore it. Which techs did you -- did you speak with any of the techs at Milpitas yourself?

A. No, sir.

Q. Do you know of anyone else working for you that spoke with those techs?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And were the discussions that they had communicated to you in terms of what -- who had spoken with which tech at Milpitas?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell us who --

A. It was Barry Mitchell speaking with Oscar Martinez I believe.

Q. Okay. And did Mr. Mitchell convey anything back to you in terms of what he had learned from Mr. Martinez?

A. That Oscar was having a difficult time determining what was controlling and what was not controlling at the station, and

also spoke to the point of the loss of data communication.

Q. Was there anything indicated to you at that stage, during that conversation, in regard to the overpressure devices at Milpitas not working or not effectively performing as should be expected?

A. I don't recall specifically.

Q. Did you see the desired effect that you wanted to see after you took this step? And basically again by the steps, I mean lines 300A and B, PLS7 being reduced and line 131 at Sheridan Road and line -- let me back up -- Sheridan Road PLS and line 303 being reduced?

A. We saw the first initial responses, yes.

Q. Had you seen pressure decreasing prior to having taken that step?

A. No.

Q. What had you seen in the trend of that pressure?

A. Which pressure are you referring to?

Q. The pressure on lines 132, 109, 101, prior to your taking this step, what was the trend?

A. The trend was upwards.

Q. What other locations had you considered pressure-wise as far as pressure sensing in making this determination? Basically I'm referring to whatever SCADA points or whatever SCADA data was available to you at that point? Which SCADA points had you considered?

A. I looked on the -- I looked at the pressures at Los Astaros (ph.) which is the first station outside of Milpitas going towards San Francisco. I looked at the pressures at Sierra Vista Crossover and I saw pressures further up the Peninsula. I can't recall which ones at this point. There's six or eight points at which I could see the pressures.

Q. Do you know how far the Los Astaros SCADA point is from Milpitas?

A. Approximately half a mile.

Q. And it indicates on here, in this report, that the pressure at 18:00 hours at Los Astaros was 392 psig. Would you agree with that?

A. I believe that's correct.

Q. Based on your experience, would you have expected the pressure at Milpitas to be higher than 392 psig?

A. No, it should not be.

Q. Again, let me back up on my question. If you're seeing 392 psig at Los Astaros --

A. Uh-huh.

Q. -- would you expect the pressure at Milpitas to be higher than that?

A. Oh, I would expect it to be similar.

Q. Had you communicated, prior to taking this corrective action, had you communicated, had you spoken at all with Mr. Martinez or any of the gas techs at Milpitas?

A. No.
Q. Do you believe absent your taking that corrective action, the pressure at Milpitas would have decreased?
MR. JAQUES: I'm going to object. That calls for speculation.
BY MR. SHORI:
Q. at 19:07, there's an indication in here that you requested Mr. Kaziminsky to call Martinez and Boyd.
A. Yes.
Q. Which -- are we talking about Mr. Oscar Martinez in that Martinez?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Did Mr. Kaziminsky make that call do you know?
A. I don't know.
Q. What discussions beyond that, after that corrective action, did you have with Mr. Oscar Martinez?
A. None.
Q. Thank you. That's it for now.
MR. KATCHMAR: Peter Katchmar, USDOT.
BY MR. KATCHMAR:
Q. Marc, do you -- were you involved in lowering the pressures on these pipelines 132, 101 and 109? Were you involved in that at all?
A. When?

Q. After the incident?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. Do you know -- are you familiar with a hard setpoint change and soft setpoint change?
A. Not by those terms.
Q. Okay. In my definition, hard setpoint change would be a mechanical change in the field.
A. Uh-huh.
Q. So that the control center could not change the setpoint up from the control room. Has that been done?
A. I'm not really sure I understand the question.
Q. Okay. Can you tell me how does the control center ensure that the lines that have been asked to be reduced by 20 percent are reduced by 20 percent?
MR. JAQUES: Are you asking what he did? Why don't you start with that? That's confusing to me as well. Okay. Just ask him what he did and if he's aware of anything else that was done. I think you'll get the answers you're looking for.
MR. KATCHMAR: Okay.
BY MR. KATCHMAR:
Q. What did you do to ensure that the lines were dropped by 20 percent pressure?
A. We dropped the lines by 20 percent significantly after the event.
Q. Yeah, I understand that.

A. Okay.
Q. You were ordered, PG&E was ordered to drop the pressures on certain lines by 20 percent.
A. Right.
Q. Can you tell me how you were involved with that and how they did that?
A. No. I do not -- when that happened, when PG&E got that order, I don't believe I was involved in that.
Q. Okay. Thank you. Are there any other inflows into line 132, 101 or 109 downstream of Milpitas Station?
A. By which you mean supplies to those lines?
Q. Uh-huh.
A. No, sir.
Q. Okay. Thank you. That's all.
BY MR. GUNTHER:
Q. Could I get your title and affiliation?
A. I'm a senior gas transmission coordinator, and I work for Pacific Gas & Electric Company.
Q. And what duties do you perform?
A. I oversee the shift activities of the transmission coordinator and the gas supply operators. I do the gas planning for the gas day and several days to come.
Q. Can you give us your education, credentials --
A. I'm a high school graduate, sir.
Q. Okay. That's all I have.

MS. MAZZANTI: I have no questions.

MR. SPERRY: No questions.

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. I have a couple of questions. I don't have a clear understanding. Who reports to you?

A. The transmission coordinator and the gas supply operators as far as operational needs.

Q. Is there just one gas coordinator under you per shift?

A. Normally.

MR. NICHOLSON: I'll hold my other questions at this point.

MR. CHHATRE: Ravi Chhatre, NTSB.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. Are you aware of various crossties and how many between 101, 109 and 132?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Within the Milpitas and San Francisco?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Another market I guess.

A. I'm sorry. I didn't hear you.

Q. Another market. The lines don't go to San Francisco (indiscernible) San Francisco to Martin Station for the (indiscernible)?

A. Correct.

Q. Can you tell me how many crossties are there and can you

tell me which lines are cross tied?

A. Not without checking the maps.

Q. Okay. Do you know the number of crossties?

A. No. There's --

Q. Is it more than two?

A. Yes.

Q. And are they between 101 and 109, 101 and 132 or 109 and 132, three lines and two different ties? Identify which lines are tied to what?

A. There are multiple crossties.

Q. Okay. Amongst all three of them.

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And are those crossties normally open or normally closed? Normally meaning almost every day except maintenance and that kind of issue.

A. Open.

Q. They're all open. They're all cross tied to each other.

A. Probably not all of them are open, but there are many open.

Q. Many open.

A. Yes.

Q. And many open between all three lines?

A. Yes.

Q. So 132 and 101, whatever. And are they partly or fully open?

A. If it's open, it's fully open.
Q. Fully open.
A. Yes.
Q. So if you get one pressure read, (indiscernible) is different, but are there typically pressure reads are different? (indiscernible) be the same? Are the pressures in these lines different at same location?
A. Yes.
Q. Yeah. Now do you know if pressure differs to size only or the demand? I have no knowledge of that.
A. My experience is that you can have multiple transducers in a very short space and they'll all be calibrated and they'll all give you different pressure readings.
Q. And how different they will be?
A. A pound or two.
Q. So it's not big difference?
A. No, sir.
Q. Now if you see a pressure increase between Milpitas and let's say Martin, the last station on 132 --
A. Uh-huh.
Q. -- would that be a concern to you?
A. Not necessarily.
Q. And would you elaborate?
A. If the pressure is low and it increases and I'm adding gas, it makes sense.

Q. Like packing (ph.).
A. Yes. If it's -- if it was a cold morning and now it's turning into a warm afternoon, the load's backing off, pressures are packed.
Q. Okay. It's packing.
A. Yes.
Q. But any point you should not go more than 375.
A. Correct.
Q. What level of increase beyond 375 will be a concern for SCADA?
A. Any.
Q. And these are a procedure or kind of established by operations procedure what they should be doing at small increase, like let's say 375 (indiscernible). What would be a number beyond the (indiscernible).
A. If it exceeds 375, we will be analyzing it to determine why it's doing it and taking measures to reduce it.
Q. But at that time, are they required to look at the pressure chart?
A. We do not have a chart.
Q. Display I mean.
A. Yes.
Q. Are you required to --
A. Yes.
Q. -- (indiscernible) by procedure?

A. Yes.
Q. Were you there on September 9th, on this shift at 6:00 when things happened --
A. Yes, sir, I was.
Q. -- (indiscernible)?
A. Yes, sir, I was.
Q. And do you recall if you were the person looking and monitoring that line, look at the pressure chart at that time?
MR. JAQUES: What do you mean by pressure chart?
BY MR. CHHATRE:
Q. I'm sorry. I said pressure chart. I mean pressure display.
A. At what time?
Q. Around 6:11 when the pressure (indiscernible). I think it was 6:00 and 6:11 is when the pressure started increasing and 6:11 I believe the pressure dropped.
A. I was looking at many different pressures.
Q. Okay. At 6:11, when the pressures dropped, at that time --
A. Uh-huh.
Q. -- did you look at the pressure display?
A. Which display?
Q. Line 132.
A. Line 132. Where?
Q. Well, I'm not (indiscernible).

A. There's --
Q. Let's say Martin. Maybe that will be a better way.
A. Until the alarms, I don't recall.
Q. Okay. But after the alarms --
A. Yes.
Q. -- the pressure display was looked at?
A. Yes.
Q. And with I guess your experience and the operators who were monitoring 132, what conclusion was reached when you saw the pressure display?
A. I don't think we reached a conclusion yet. We were still fact finding.
Q. At that time?
A. Yes.
Q. Do you recall the amount the pressure dropped? If you don't, you don't.
A. No, it's -- it was significant.
Q. It was significant.
A. Yeah.
Q. Let me ask it a little bit different way. With that kind of significant drop, what other reason would there be besides rupture that you can get a pressure drop like that necessarily?
A. You could have unreported maintenance in the field taking place. You could have bad communications. You could have a faulty transducer.

Q. Would --
A. You could have a sensing line fail.
Q. That sharp a drop, that suddenly.
A. All of the above could cause that.
Q. It would do that.
A. Yeah, all of the above could cause that sort of drop.
Q. Okay.
A. Yes.
Q. At that time, do you have capability of looking at the flow display?
A. Yes.
Q. And did you look at the flow display at Martin.
A. We did.
Q. And can you elaborate on that?
A. It dropped.
Q. Significantly?
A. Yes, significantly.
Q. Now all these scenarios you described earlier, could both these things happen on the scenarios you described earlier?
A. Possibly.
Q. It can?
A. Possibly. It depends on the hardware in the site.
Q. Okay. Did possibly a rupture --
A. Yes.
Q. -- came to your mind?

A. Yeah, absolutely.
Q. And with all the scenarios, how would you go about eliminating one at a time or whatever?
MR. JAQUES: Why don't you ask him what he did instead of what he would have done.
MR. CHHATRE: All right.
BY MR. CHHATRE:
Q. Why don't you tell me what you did then based on both the displays?
A. I directed my crew to start making contacts.
Q. Can you be more specific?
A. Contacts for the Peninsula supervisor to let them know that we had a problem out there.
Q. Okay. So to think through in my mind --
A. Uh-huh.
Q. -- the four or five scenarios that you already told me, that can give you both drops, I can't remember all of those --
A. Uh-huh.
Q. -- what help supervisor can provide you on those scenarios while you're (indiscernible)?
A. He can send a tech to the location and have him investigate the equipment.
Q. And with a drop, can you tell where it might have occurred?
A. Where what had occurred?

Q. On line 132 --
A. Yes.
Q. -- between Milpitas and Martin Station --
A. Uh-huh.
Q. -- when you get the sensor which says Martin --
A. Yes.
Q. -- but that reading in that location, would that tell you where along this line that you would have problem?
A. No. No, it -- not precisely, no.
Q. How long does it typically take you to go through all these different sensors? I'm just trying to understand what the procedure would be?
MR. JAQUES: Well, why don't you just ask him what he did. You know, you're trying to -- you're starting to ask him hypothetical questions --
MR. CHHATRE: Okay.
MR. JAQUES: -- and that's really not appropriate.
MR. CHHATRE: Okay.
MR. JAQUES: Ask him what he did here.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can we go off the record please?
MR. CHHATRE: Off the record.
(Off the record.)
(On the record.)
MR. CHHATRE: Back on the record.
BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. So what else you did after contacting the supervisor?
A. I did not make the personal contact. I had others do it. I sent an epage to my management that we had had an event on the line, and I attempted to contact my direct supervision to involve them, sort of -- I instructed my crew to take copious notes.
Q. Now who dispatch -- let me back up. When did you decide that you have a rupture or you did not decide at that time at all?
A. Very soon thereafter.
Q. This should be the last question depending on what you tell me. Who dispatches the crew to the suspected location?
A. The supervisor in the field.
Q. And how would the supervisor in the field know that an event occurred?
A. We would tell him that we have a pressure and flow condition at Martin, that suggests -- by then we had received telephone calls with reports suggesting and we relayed all of the above to the supervisor and he would call a crew.
Q. And who initiated that call?
A. I don't recall.
Q. Okay. That's all for me.
MR. NARVELL: Rick Narvell, NTSB.
BY MR. NARVELL:
Q. Marc, I just have a few questions based on our discussions here this morning, and for the record, I'd like to

reflect that earlier I was able to obtain some human performance information that was unable to be obtained when we were on site back in September. So thank you for that. Can you identify on the night of the incident, when you were there, how many people including yourself were in the operation by name if you know?

A. Yes. There was -- in the control room in San Francisco --

Q. And their position and title.

A. -- it was myself, senior gas transmission coordinator. Joaquin Janara (ph.), transmission coordinator. Larry Roccholz, R O C H H O L Z, a relief gas supply operator. Barry Mitchell, gas supply operator and Michael Valenti, V A L E N T I, gas supply operator.

Q. Okay. Thank you. So there was a total of five PG&E employees in the SCADA area at the time of the incident?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Okay. Great. I believe Ravi had alluded to what time you kind of become aware of the rupture. Would you attach a time when you did know and when did you -- were you able to attach a time that you had a rupture?

A. It was very soon after the rupture occurred per the trends. We received telephone calls and got the alarms for that fall very close in time.

Q. Do you have access to news media in the center there, television news, et cetera?

A. There is a system by which we can turn television on but we did not do so.

Q. Okay.

A. And then there's -- we have Internet capabilities.

Q. So at some point when the pressure dropped significantly, you came -- did you come to a conclusion that there had been a rupture?

A. Yes, probably.

Q. And did you know that it was at the incident location in San Bruno?

A. We presumed so.

Q. Very good. Thank you. That's all.

MR. CHHATRE: City?

MR. CALDWELL: No further questions.

MR. CHHATRE: PG&E?

MR. DAUBIN: No further questions for me.

MR. FASSETT: Bob Fassett, no further questions.

MS. JACKSON: Connie Jackson, City of San Bruno.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q. Could you explain the last comment you just made. You presumed that the rupture was in San Bruno. Did I understand that correctly?

A. No. At the time I had reports of an incident. I didn't -- it was related to Skyline and Sneath I believe, and I did not know that it was in San Bruno. I just recognized the street

names.

Q. Okay. So let me make sure that I understand. I think what I'm piecing together is that your system, your reads on the SCADA system don't tell you precisely where. They showed you that the pressure had dropped.

A. Uh-huh.

Q. But -- and you determined at some point that there was likely a rupture.

A. Yes.

Q. But your system would not tell you precisely where that was.

A. That's correct.

Q. And so you determined that based on, you weren't watching TV.

A. No.

Q. So you determined that based on having heard from the telephone calls that there was an incident in San Bruno? Is that correct?

A. The reports were telephone calls and initially some of the GSOs checked the Internet.

Q. Okay. Thank you.

MS. FABRY: Klara Fabry, no questions.

MR. SHORI: Sunil Shori, no questions at this time.

BY MR. KATCHMAR:

Q. Marc, Peter Katchmar with DOT. How long have you had

this job that you've got right now? When did you start?

A. Approximately three years as a senior in this role.

Q. Okay. So 2007?

A. That sounds about right.

Q. Okay. Have you been on duty when they've isolated line 132 and brought the pressure up?

A. I don't --

MR. JAQUES: Up to what?

MR. KATCHMAR: Up.

MR. JAQUES: Above what?

BY MR. KATCHMAR:

Q. Above 375.

A. I don't recall.

Q. Okay. Do you know that they bring -- they isolate that line and bring it up to 400 pounds every 5 years?

A. I know that we do it on our pipelines. I don't recall it on 132.

Q. Okay. Okay.

MR. GUNTHER: No questions.

MS. MAZZANTI: No questions.

MR. SPERRY: No questions.

MR. NICHOLSON: Matt Nicholson, NTSB.

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. Looking at your prior testimony, on page 6, it says before the explosion, I was aware of work. I became aware of the

work going on at Milpitas. What work are you referring to and how did you become aware of it?

A. They were performing work at Milpitas to -- I'm not sure of the exact nature. I don’t recall it. I think it was on the power supplies, and I became aware that they were having issues out there. I knew that the work was taking place. I heard the conversation in the room previously, earlier in the day. And then it was in the afternoon that I became aware that they were having trouble with it.

Q. I'm trying to figure out, who told you they were having a problem? How did you become aware of it?

A. The open conversation in the room and I heard it.

Q. Just overheard it.

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Someone referred to your position as being a technical expert in the control center. Is that an accurate statement?

A. I hardly think so. I have as much or more experience than most people there.

Q. Okay. Do you have a control center engineer or someone else you can refer to if you've got unexplainable trends or pressure drops and whatnot?

A. We have gas operations engineering staff but for the sort of things you're just stating there, I would seldom, if ever, need their input.

Q. What are the low setpoint changes that operators make? What's that used for?

A. What kind of setpoint?

Q. Well, as I understand it, there's a low and a low low on pressures.

A. Those are alarm setpoints, alarm thresholds. We have a policy that prescribes the low low and high highs, and the low and high setpoints are at the operator's discretion.

Q. And can you tell me, you were an operator once --

A. Yes.

Q. -- yourself.

A. Yes.

Q. As an operator, what would you typically set that to? What are you using that threshold to tell you?

A. I would use it to monitor the performance of my system, especially on a cold day or a day of high demand. So I would bracket where the pressure is at so that it would inform me as it's moving up or down and give me a first look at the fact that it's merely active, that the system is dynamic at that point.

Q. So you said there's a policy I thought I heard you say.

A. There's a policy for the low low and the high highs and the policy states that the lows and the highs are at operator discretion.

Q. So there's nothing that states that they have to set it within 10 percent?

A. No, sir.
Q. So I could set that thing down 50 pounds on a 375 pound line and that would be okay?
A. You could not set it below the low low alarm.
Q. Okay. And what is the low, low on that line, line 132?
A. I don't recall precisely without checking. I would be guessing.
Q. But you're telling me 50 pounds is low.
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. So what would be a typical as an operator?
A. A typical low low pressure would be 265 pounds, sir.
Q. That would be a typical low low.
A. Low low.
Q. Where would -- as an operator, where would I set my low on September 9th?
A. It would have -- it would depend on which pressure we had chosen to operate the Milpitas mixer at. For example, if we chose to operate it at 350, then as an operator personally I would bracket 350 pounds plus or minus 5 or 8 pounds.
Q. Okay.
A. But again, I have to stress they're at the discretion of the operator.
Q. Okay. Thank you. Does the operator have to receive an alarm to question a pressure drop in the system?
A. No, certainly not.

Q. Is there a procedure that he will go to for an extreme pressure drop that did not alarm?

MR. JAQUES: I'm sorry. An extreme pressure drop that did not alarm?

MR. NICHOLSON: Yes, you heard me correctly. Right.

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. If it didn't hit an alarm --

A. If the operator saw an extreme pressure drop prior to it reaching an alarm, he would react to it in the same way as if he had received a low alarm, and that would mean he would trend it, he would analyze it. He would look up and downstream.

Q. Is that a procedure? I'm sorry.

A. That's a common practice. It is a procedure. It is a written procedure.

Q. Okay. Thank you. That's all I have.

MR. CHHATRE: I have a follow-up question. Ravi Chhatre, NTSB.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. Again I'm going back to the packing discussion we had on the line, pressure going up and down.

A. Uh-huh.

Q. Do you recall the (indiscernible) pressure either displayed on the SCADA or the mixer pressure at Milpitas?

A. The mixer pressure at the time of the incident.

Q. Yeah, but you have a display to begin with.

A. Yes.
Q. You do. And what (indiscernible) 6:11?
A. I don't recall.
Q. You don't recall?
A. No.
Q. What is the maximum pressure it can have? Do you know that?
A. 375.
Q. My question is looking at some of the information that PG&E provided and we have had a chance to look at, the pressure, I think it was Martin, was 386 --
A. Uh-huh.
Q. -- and was rising I believe.
A. Uh-huh.
Q. What action did the person looking at the SCADA took?
A. We --
MR. JAQUES: Who are you talking about? I don't think we've established anybody was looking at that. Are you asking what he did or if he's aware of somebody else --
BY MR. CHHATRE:
Q. Who was monitoring the screens for line 132 at that time?
A. The GS --
Q. -- between the times, between 5:00 and 6:00?
A. The GSOs are primarily responsible for monitoring the

lines. The transmission coordinator does so as well, overseeing their work and I do so as well overseeing the rest.

Q. Almost everybody was looking at (indiscernible). Is that correct?

MR. JAQUES: You're talking about looking at it, and I don't think that's what he's saying.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. Who was monitoring? Are all people monitoring the line 132?

A. At that time, we were -- the pressure in the line 132 along with the other outgoing lines, we were all paying very close attention to them because we had already had taken action to reduce the pressure on the upstream stations of Milpitas, and we were waiting for the pressure reduction to take effect downstream. So we were all, we were all actively monitoring. I may not have been looking at it at that precise moment but --

Q. So --

MR. JAQUES: Do you have more or are you done?

THE WITNESS: I'm done.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. So pressure increased to 386 psi. Was that discussed, mentioned to you, brought to your attention by the person who was monitoring it?

A. I don't recall how I became aware of that. It was -- I became aware of the alarm and then I looked at the display.

That's how that happened.

Q. Okay. Was anybody monitoring the line between 5:00 and 6:00, 132 operation --

A. Yes.

Q. -- (indiscernible). I (indiscernible) displays.

A. Yes, we knew we had had the problem at Milpitas. We knew the regulation was compromised in some way because it wasn't doing what we were -- what it was supposed to do. So we had lowered the pressures upstream and we were watching the pressures downstream of Milpitas, all the way up the Peninsula actively waiting for the pressure to disburse. So we were all involved in it continuously.

Q. So what did the pressure increase when you are trying to drop the pressure at Milpitas --

A. Uh-huh.

Q. -- means to you as an operator?

MR. JAQUES: I'm going to object. That's been asked and answered.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

MR. JAQUES: You already asked him how he reacted to it and why.

MR. CHHATRE: No, I didn't ask how he reacted. I said what did he interpret that?

MR. JAQUES: He already talked about what he interpreted it as, as a possibility. We've already been through that.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. Do you -- would you expect the pressure to increase at Martin more than Milpitas Station at any time, not that day, any time?

MR. JAQUES: I'm going to object. That calls for -- it's hypothetical. Calls for speculation.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. Would the pressure at the end of the line 132 be expected to be higher than the discharge pressure at Milpitas?

MR. JAQUES: Same objection. It's calling for speculation. You haven't talked about any conditions or other factors. It's an incomplete hypothetical.

MR. CHHATRE: I'm not sure exactly to ask it. He's monitoring the line and he has been doing that for years. I'm just saying --

MR. JAQUES: Ask him what he's seen then.

MR. CHHATRE: I'm not talking about that day. I'm talking about any day would he expect to see higher pressure at Martin than at discharge pressure is.

THE WITNESS: It can happen.

MR. CHHATRE: That's all I have.

MR. NARVELL: No more questions. Thank you.

MR. CHHATRE: PG&E?

MR. DAUBIN: Just one quick question.

BY MR. DAUBIN:

Q. When you talked about alarm limits being the operator's discretion, is it general practice that those alarm limits would be set by the operators to deal with clearances, system clearances so that you can set parameters that you know lines are being worked on?

A. When clearance work, when clearance work means that there will be specific conditions, then the clearances will specify which alarms are to be set and at what range.

Q. So they're used as a precautionary measurement to ensure that notifications are given to the operators?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you.

MR. FASSETT: Bob Fassett, PG&E, no questions.

MS. JACKSON: No questions.

MR. FABRY: No questions.

MR. SHORI: Sunil Shori, no questions.

MR. KATCHMAR: Peter Katchmar, USDOT.

BY MR. KATCHMAR:

Q. Marc, how can Martin Station have a higher pressure than Milpitas discharge pressure?

A. It depends on the dynamics of the system. If you have demand that backs off suddenly, and it's down at the end of the system, then the pressure will rise there initially and it'll back all the way down the Peninsula to Milpitas.

Q. Okay. Thank you. That's it.

MR. GUNTHER: No questions.

MS. MAZZANTI: No questions.

MR. SPERRY: No questions.

MR. NICHOLSON: No questions.

MR. CHHATRE: Thank you very much for coming again, and sorry you were waiting longer.

MR. CENICEROS: No problem.

MR. CHHATRE: Off the record.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC COMPANY SEPTEMBER 9, 2010 ACCIDENT SAN BRUNO, CALIFORNIA Interview of Marc Ceniceros
DOCKET NUMBER:	DCA-10-MP-008
PLACE:	Burlingame, California
DATE:	January 5, 2011

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.

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Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber