Docket No. SA-534

Exhibit No. 2-BS

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Washington, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF FANYEE HONG, PG&E
(JAN-5-2011)

(26 Pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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

Interview of: FANYEE HONG

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

My name is Ravin Chhatre. I am with National Transportation Safety Board in Washington, D.C. and I'm investigator in charge of this accident.

I'd like to start by notifying everyone present in this room that we are recording this interview for transcriptions at a later date. All parties will have a chance to review the transcripts when they are completed. Also I'd like to inform Ms. Fanyee Hong that you are permitted to have one person with you during today's interview. That person is of your choice; a friend, supervisor, family member, or if you choose nobody at all. So, for the record, please state your full name, spelling of your name, contact information like telephone, email, postal mailing address and whom you have chosen to be present with you during this interview.

THE WITNESS: Okay. My name is Fanyee Hong, F-a-n-y-e-e H-o-n-g. My address is San Francisco, California, 94177. I would like to have Dane represent me.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Thank you for that.

Now we'll go around the room, have every person introduce themselves; name, title, affiliation, official email and phone number, starting with the city.

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

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

MR. FASSETT: Bob Fassett, PG&E, information on the card.

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

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

MR. SHORI: Sunil Shori, California Public Utilities Commission, my information is on the card provided.

MR. KATCHMAR: Peter Katchmar, United States Department of Transportation, Pipeline Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, PHMSA and my information's on the card.

MR. GUNTHER: Karl Gunther, NTSB Operations Chair, karl.gunther@ntsb.gov, phone 202-314-6478.

MS. MAZZANTI: Debbie Mazzanti, IBEW Local 1245. My information is on the card.

MR. NICHOLSON: Matthew Nicholson, NTSB, spelled M-a-t-t-h-e-w N-i-c-h-o-l-s-o-n, matthew.nicholson@ntsb.gov.

MR. CHHATRE: Ravindra Chhatre, NTSB, email ravindra.chhatre@ntsb.gov; phone 202-314-6644.

MR. NARVELL: Rick Narvell, Human Performance Investigator with NTSB out of Washington, D.C. Phone is 202-314-6422. Email is narvelr@ntsb.gov.

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

MR. CHHATRE: Thank you.

INTERVIEW OF FANYEE HONG

BY MR. GUNTHER:

Q. Could you please -- Karl Gunther --

MR. CHHATRE: Identify yourself.

BY MR. GUNTHER:

Q. -- NTSB. Could you please give your job title and affiliation?

A. I'm a senior gas engineer in PG&E.

Q. And what are your professional credentials?

A. I have a Master's degree in computer science.

Q. Okay. And what are your duties?

A. My responsibility is to provide adequate information and tools for gas operation. Generally, I'm working closely with the SCADA support and also operation engineer to make sure SCADA information, real time SCATA information is available for gas operations.

Q. And could you describe what you did on the day of the

accident?

A. I start that day 7:30 and I remember that day we planned to transfer operation from San Francisco to Brentwood around 6:00 p.m. so about around 4:20 that afternoon I started to prepare for transferration [sic] -- operation transferration to Brentwood so I look at ramp, SCADA system, and I noticed the Milpitas -- we lost the information from Milpitas. So I walked to the control room and talked to operator and certainly at that time they already noticed that and they were in communication with Milpitas technician.

So I went back to my office and continued to prepare for transfer. And I -- basically from, you know, five to six o'clock I was working that task. And about 6:20ish I went back to the control room again and I saw Larry, Larry Ruccholz. He said there is a fire. And I -- at that time all the operators started to -- trying to find out where is the source of the problem and trying to resolve the problem.

Since I'm not a engineer, not operation, so I won't be able to give direction or any advice to the control room. However, I remember we still don't have the Milpitas information so I started to call station engineer. I called Mark Kazimirsky and also I called Wayne Fong and to tell them about the event and ask them to go back to -- to go to Milpitas station to try and to troubleshoot and get the station on line. And I stay around that day. I think I leave -- I left the office around nine to ten

o'clockish (sic).

Q. Okay. That -- (indiscernible).

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

MR. DAUBIN: No questions.

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

MS. JACKSON: No questions.

MS. FABRY: Karla Fabry, no question at this time.

MR. SHORI: Sunil Shori, California PSE.

BY MR. SHORI:

Q. You said you did -- you had some discussions with staff down in Milpitas?

A. Yes. I made a phone call to Mark Kaziminsky --

Q. Uh-huh.

A. -- and Wayne Fong, station engineer. I know they are the expert in those area --

Q. Uh-huh.

A. -- so I did mention that, call them.

Q. Were either one of them at Milpitas at the time when you talked to them?

A. No.

Q. And what discussions did you have with each of those gentlemen?

A. I mentioned that to them there is a fire in San Bruno and at same time, we know, we still don't have Milpitas'

information.

Q. Was there anything else communicated back to you in terms of what they were doing in regard to that, or --

A. No.

Q. Was there anybody else at Milpitas that you spoke with other than Mr. Kaziminsky and Mr. Fong?

A. No.

Q. And you said you didn't provide any direction in terms of operations or gas control or in terms of reducing pressures or anything on line 132?

A. Correct, because -- can I offer the reason? Because --

Q. Sure.

A. -- in the control room if the supervisor's not there, the Senior TC is the -- is in charge.

Q. And who would that be at that time?

A. Mark Ceniceros.

Q. Okay. I don't have any further questions. Thank you.

MR. KATCHMAR: Peter Katchmar, USDOT PHMSA.

BY MR. KATCHMAR:

Q. Ms. Hong, when you said you were getting ready for the transfer from San Francisco to the back-up control center, what does that entail?

A. I look into information, make sure the SCADA -- the pressure, the pipeline information are synchronized, make sure the alarms, everything is synchronized.

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

MR. GUNTHER: I have no more questions.

MS. MAZZANTI: No questions.

MR. SPERRY: No questions.

MR. NICHOLSON: I've got some questions.

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. This is Matt with the NTSB. I want to be sure I understand. You're the Control Center Engineer. Does that -- is part of your responsibility is designing the screens or building the graphics or --

A. No. Basically I wanted to say when your new station get built, it's built by your engineer department. They have design criteria. They would design the screen and then they also be able to do the testing, installation. And basically my involvement is make sure the requirements meets operation standard, meets operation needs, make sure the data accuracy, make sure it pass through the acceptance test.

Q. Okay, like a point to point test or --

A. Correct. I -- I'm not involved in the point to -- point by point test.

Q. Okay.

A. But my job is to make sure it has that to process the acceptance test.

Q. Okay. Do you select devices?

A. No.

Q. Okay. Do you have input on where devices are placed on the system?

A. I'm part of the design criteria review.

Q. Okay. Do you have input on alarm set points?

A. I don't have any, I -- no, I'm not involved in the setting alarm limits.

Q. Are you involved in setting alarm severity limits?

A. No.

Q. Okay.

A. That's operation.

Q. And let me rephrase that. I might have asked that incorrectly. Do you -- if -- operations might say we're going to have a high pressure alarm. Do you assign a severity to that alarm?

A. No.

Q. Okay.

A. There is a policy to assign that severity, so it's not --

Q. Okay.

A. -- it's not a information person like I am to set that priority.

Q. Okay. Earlier you said you noticed we'd lost communications at Milpitas; this was some time after you'd come in around 4:00? Is that correct?

A. Correct.

Q. How -- what alerted you to the loss of communications?
A. Because the alarm summary has a lot of alarms.
Q. Okay. Specifically alarms that say loss of communication? What would that alarm read?
A. Well, I -- I'm sorry -- it -- it's those data points in alarm state. I did not say it's -- okay. I'm sorry. I should not say lost communication. It's we lost the control of that unit.
Q. Okay.
A. And we got a lot of alarms.
Q. Okay. So you just noticed a lot of alarms out of Milpitas?
A. Correct. Correct.
Q. Okay. And that prompted you to talk to the operators?
A. Correct.
Q. Okay. I wanted to clarify something else. I thought I heard in an earlier interview that the Gas Control Room Supervisor was out of town that day or not in the office, and you were the Acting Supervisor; is that correct?
A. That -- I'm -- my job, my function that day is -- I'm trying to direct important information email --
Q. Uh-huh.
A. -- to the field people because they are not be able to read their email. That -- so that's part of my assignment that day.

Q. And I'm sorry, I'm not sure I -- that -- and as -- and performing those tasks would then make you Acting Supervisor? Is that something the supervisor would normally do?

A. I'm not sure I'd give that title --

Q. Oh, okay.

A. -- that assignment.

Q. I get it.

A. But I didn't give direction. I should have read through the email, make sure if there's important message I should have directed to the correct person to handle.

Q. Okay. But the person that would actually give direction to a controller or an operator would be the Senior Coordinator?

A. Correct.

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

MR. CHHATRE: Couple of clarifying questions.

MR. GUNTHER: If you could identify yourself?

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. In your job --

MR. GUNTHER: Identify yourself.

MR. CHHATRE: Oh, Ravin Chhatre, NTSB.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. You said you support the SCADA operations in -- as your job function?

A. Correct. I work very closely with SCADA team.

Q. Now, does that involve trouble shooting to the SCADA?

A. We do.

Q. Okay. So if a person is not sure the alarm he or she -- not an alarm. If a person is not sure the display they are seeing, what they can attribute that display to, that there are multiple possibilities for that display to show up, who they would go to?

A. They would go to the SCADA Team.

Q. Okay. They'd go to SCADA (indiscernible). Now, I also heard in the past that there are occasions where a sudden pressure drop display will show up on the screen and that could be attributed to either loss of communication or could be a rupture. And if that is the case, I was also told that you can -- I'm going to make sure -- you can demand the communication -- force the communication?

A. Correct.

Q. Correct? And then with your support system knowledge and background, if you get the reading by forcing the communication, what does that mean to an operator? Is that something you are involved with or you're not?

A. So normally the demand scan is used when the operator think their master station is not communicating with the RTU.

Q. Right.

A. So they will be able to do a demand scan. Then they will get the reading back.

Q. Right. And what does that -- if they get the reading

back that show the same reading they got before, what does that mean? Are you involved in that kind of analysis or support or not?

A. They will try to trend the -- different data points and try to analyze what might be -- what's that possible cause of that. So sometimes they -- if they think -- they get a few reference point and they think this is possible, some instrument failure, they will start to call the field support people.

Q. Now, with your support of the SCADA, is this something that can be -- that requires one click, two clicks, or to send the demand scan or demand information? How many clicks that involve for the operator to do that?

A. They will do -- say there's a vector (ph.), an RTU. Then they will do a right click and bring up that RTU and then they -- there's a demand button they can just send demand scan.

Q. And how long, typically, it takes to get a pressure read?

A. It -- normally our scan rate is about like 45 seconds, so they should be able to get a response back. It would also have a indication show if the command send out or not and how many times the command send it out.

Q. Okay.

A. So there will be indication on that.

Q. So I guess since you're just troubleshooting more for PG&E, is it reasonable to say like in two minutes or less than a

minute they should get some information back?

A. Correct.

Q. Now if the readout, the false (ph.) data shows them that whatever they're seeing on the screen is what the false data is showing, what does that mean to them? Does that build the confidence in the first data or not necessarily?

A. Not necessary. There is many possible things --

Q. That it --

A. -- correct. They needed to have more reference point to even -- to analyze that.

Q. Okay. And what kind of reference point you are referring to?

A. They possible look at the different pressure points.

Q. Like different transducers along the system?

A. Correct.

Q. Okay. And as a support person, do you know how many locations they can get the information from between Milpitas and Martin?

A. I do not know.

Q. Okay.

A. Because I don't have full knowledge --

Q. Oh, that's fine. I'm -- I -- I'm just asking if you know or not. I understand that you are in support mode. Uh-huh. And how many of those data inputs you will need to come to some kind of a reasonable conclusion that it's -- it is or it is not a

communication problem?

MR. JAQUES: I -- I'm going to object because I think you're getting outside her area of expertise and into operations.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay. That's fine.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. What is the real -- do you know as a support person the level of problems with the communication problems? Information coming to SCADA?

A. I'm sorry, can you repeat?

Q. Okay. How frequent is the communication error signals or communications problems with the transducers?

A. Well, I, you know, we have a -- RTU status reports to indicate a communications during a period of time and I can't tell you if I can, you know, provide written documents or -- I can't answer the question at this point.

Q. Okay. Okay. Now if -- let's just say it's a chronic problem. Who would be trying to fix it?

MR. JAQUES: Chronic problem with what?

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. Of communication signal -- error signals coming to screens?

A. It will be our telecom communication department.

Q. So that is different than your responsibilities?

A. Correct.

Q. Okay. Between 4:20 and 6:20 p.m., the two-hour window

that you were in your office trying to prepare for transfer on September 9th, did anybody from control center and came in and told you that we have some problem, that there's a rupture, there's a fire or we are not getting any signals -- any kind of trouble or problem situation in the control room?

A. No.

Q. Nobody? So you were not even aware until 6:20, until you went back, that there was a fire?

A. Correct, because I heard Larry talk about.

Q. Okay. No more questions. Thank you much.

MR. NARVELL: Rick Narvell with NTSB.

BY MR. NARVELL:

Q. Ms. Hong, there's been a -- just to clarify, and I believe I heard this right, but I'd like to hear it from you. You're not involved in either engineering operations or operations in there? Engineering or operations; is that correct?

A. Correct.

Q. You're more involved --

A. Information.

Q. What are re -- information. And this would be, I guess, more in line with your Master's degree in computer science; is that correct?

A. Correct.

Q. Okay. Very good. Thank you very much. That's all I have.

MR. CHHATRE: Any final questions?

MR. SHORI: Yes. Sunil Shori. One quick follow-up.

BY MR. SHORI:

Q. You said -- was your email system down or were you just transferring emails for somebody that was -- that you were substituting for at the time of the -- at 4:20 -- when you were on shift. Was the email system down?

A. No.

Q. Okay. So again, you were asked to just forward emails based on whoever you were substituting for in terms of emails that were coming to them?

A. Correct.

MS. FABRY: Karla Fabry, a quick question.

Do you recall if the -- at the time when the empty vessel (ph.) came back you were in the control room?

MS. HONG: Was in the control room, yes.

MR. CHHATRE: Sure.

MR. SPERRY: This is Joshua Sperry with Engineers and Scientists of California Local 20. Sorry I missed the introductions. My information's on the card provided.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

BY MR. SPERRY:

Q. I did have a question about mapping. All right, the gas mapping department maintains all the records of the physical gas transmission system in their gas map GIS program, right? Does

that also contain all the characteristics of the SCADA system?

A. You mean the real time data?

Q. No, I mean like the location and characteristics of SCADA devices.

A. The GIS does have the location of the RTU.

Q. Okay, and the characteristics of the RTU, what it measures?

A. No. I don't believe so. It just has a location where is the RTU.

Q. So the schematics of the SCADA network which is connected to which and what they report, who maintains those schematic diagrams if it's not the mapping department?

A. It's mapping department maintain those GIS system, GIS map.

Q. Right.

A. And SCADA building developed a function is taking that GIS map to make it a SCADA map. So if there is any change, say that design criterias get changed, so that's going to be goes through the GIS and also goes to the SCADA gets changed.

Q. I think that -- I was asking about the SCADA network itself, not the gas network that it's controlling, but for instance the locations of SCADA-type devices like RTUs or power supplies. Are those in the gas map program or are those kept on a schematic, like on a wiring diagram that someone else maintains?

A. Can you repeat one more time?

Q. Okay, yeah.
A. I'm sorry.
Q. Are the -- is the wiring diagram of SCADA, of the SCADA system, maintained in gas map or is it maintained separately?
A. It's maintained separately.
Q. Okay, and who maintains that diagram?
A. Station engineer.
Q. Okay. Thank you.
MR. CHHATRE: A quick -- Ravin Chhatre.
BY MR. CHHATRE:
Q. You said it is maintained today. Was it the same case as September 9th?
A. Correct.
Q. Okay. Thanks.
BY MR. GUNTHER:
Q. Just for the record, what is RTU?
A. It's Remote Terminal Unit.
Q. Okay.
MR. CHHATRE: Peter? No more questions?
MR. NICHOLSON: I've got a question.
MR. CHHATRE: Anybody else? Okay, Matt?
MR. NICHOLSON: Couple of questions.
BY MR. NICHOLSON:
Q. Is there -- do the devices in the field -- this is Matt Nicholson. Do the devices in the field have just a single mode of

communication to the network or other back-up?

A. It depends.

Q. Okay.

A. In most -- if it's in most in the remote area, and it's a single connection.

Q. Okay. And if it's not in a remote area, it's multiple?

A. There would be maybe multiple. Depends on --

Q. Okay.

A. -- the location or the function of the units.

Q. Okay. So it's location dependent, not necessarily how critical that device is?

A. Depends -- it's --

Q. Okay.

A. Yes.

Q. Okay.

A. That's one of the factor too.

Q. Okay. We talked to Mark Kazmiris (sic), the station manager, I think, at Milpitas.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Kaziminsky.

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. Kaziminsky, I apologize, thank you. And he indicated that there were some SCADA points that are collected but not necessarily displayed to the controllers on their screens. This would be, for instance, on a flow meter that might have pressure and temperature compensation. Are you aware of those types of

points?

A. Correct.

Q. Okay. Is an operator or -- if an operator would want to see those points as part of a trouble shooting type diagnostic, could he or she come to you to get to those points?

A. No.

Q. No? Okay.

A. They would go to the station to personnel to find out.

Q. Okay.

A. Possible technician.

Q. So you couldn't retrieve those from the control center?

A. Correct.

Q. But they're on SCADA, right?

A. Well, those -- there's some information is not on the SCADA. It's stay in that station.

Q. Oh, it stays local?

A. Yes.

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

MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Any other questions? If not, thank you so much for coming and helping us in this investigation. We are off the record.

MR. GUNTHER: All right, thank you.

THE WITNESS: Thanks.

(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 INCIDENT SAN BRUNO, CALIFORNIA Interview of Fanyee Hong
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.

_____

Patricia Noell
Transcriber