

Docket No. SA-534

Exhibit No. 2-DF

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Washington, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF JOHN CORONA, PG&E GAS MAINTENANCE AND
CONSTRUCTION SUPERINTENDENT (16-SEPT-2010)

(20 Pages)

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Investigation of: *

PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC COMPANY *
SEPTEMBER 9, 2010 ACCIDENT *
SAN BRUNO, CALIFORNIA *

Docket No. DCA-10-MP-008

* * * * *

Interview of: JOHN CORONA

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

Thursday,
September 16, 2010

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to
notice, at 9:36 a.m.

BEFORE: KARL GUNTHER
Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

KARL GUNTHER, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'EnFant Plaza East, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20594

RAVINDRA M. CHHATRE, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'EnFant Plaza East, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20594

LAWSON F. NARVELL, JR., Investigator
Human Performance Group
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'EnFant Plaza East, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20594

SUNIL K. SHORI, Engineer
California Public Utilities Commission

TOM FINCH, State Liaison
PETER J. KATCHMAR, Senior Accident Investigator
U.S. Department of Transportation
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety
Administration

ROBERT FASSETT, Director
Integrity Management and Technical Services
Pacific Gas & Electric Company

GEOFF CALDWELL, Police Sergeant
City of San Bruno Police Department

DEBBIE MAZZANTI, Business Representative
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
Local 1245

JOSHUA SPERRY, Senior Union Representative
Engineers and Scientists of California
Local 20

DANE B. JAQUES, ESQ.
(Counsel for Mr. Corona)
Dombroff, Gilmore, Jaques & French
1676 International Drive, Penthouse
McLean, Virginia 22102

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of John Corona:	
By Mr. Gunther	5
By Mr. Shori	7
By Mr. Chhatre	13
By Mr. Gunther	19

I N T E R V I E W

(9:36 a.m.)

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MR. GUNTHER: Karl Gunther, from the National

Transportation Safety Board, investigating a September 9th, 2010,
accident that occurred in San Bruno, California, DCA-10-MP-008.

MR. GUNTHER: The first question I'd like to ask is you
realize you can have anyone with you you want as counsel, and have
you chosen someone?

MR. CORONA: Yes.

MR. JAQUES: And, for the record, Dan Jaques, on behalf
of the witness.

MR. GUNTHER: I'd like to quickly go around the panel
and everybody can introduce themselves.

MR. CALDWELL: Geoff Caldwell, City of San Bruno.

MR. FASSETT: Bob Fassett, PG&E.

MR. CHHATRE: Ravindra Chhatre, NTSB. I'm the
administrator in charge of the background.

MR. SHORI: Sunil Shori, California Public Utilities
Commission.

MR. KATCHMAR: Peter Katchmar, US DOT, Pipeline and
Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

Mr. GUNTHER: Karl Gunther, NTSB.

MS. MAZZANTI: Debbi Mazzanti, IBEW 1245.

MR. SPERRY: Joshua Sperry, Engineers and Scientists of
California, Local 20.

INTERVIEW OF JOHN CORONA

1

BY MR. GUNTHER:

2

3 Q. All right. The first thing I'll do is ask you your
4 name, address, and phone number for the record.

5

A. John Corona, [REDACTED], [REDACTED],
6 California 94110.

7

Q. Okay. And your job title?

8

A. Gas maintenance and construction superintendent for the
9 Bay Area Region.

10

Q. Okay. What I'd like you to do is go back to September
11 9th and just go ahead and start from the beginning and just tell
12 what you did during the day and what you saw.

13

A. September 9th, I went to my San Francisco office. On a
14 normal work day, I start approximately 6:00 a.m. until about 5:00
15 p.m. I went home that evening and watched a little football and I
16 was told that there was a plane crash by one of my family members.
17 I turned on the news and saw what was going on and I instinctively
18 decided I should go to report to the site. I only live four miles
19 away.

20

Q. And what did you then?

21

A. Based on the reports I heard from the news, that it was
22 a plane crash, and my slight familiarity with the transmission
23 lines in the area, I went to the site, looked -- evaluated the
24 situation, checked in with the battalion chief IC, acknowledged to
25 him that I was the PG&E first responder site commander, and then

1 started to make communications to control the gas situation.

2 Q. And who did you call?

3 A. I first contacted Brentwood Control Center and I asked
4 them if they were experiencing any type of problem and they
5 acknowledged they did. Secondly, I contacted Mitchell Kirk. He
6 is the gas M&C superintendent for the Central Coast South Region,
7 which is now what his region is called. And that was his area and
8 I advised him. He said that he was aware of it and that he was
9 going to set up his Peninsula OEC, which is an Office of Emergency
10 Center. And he declared me the deputy IC on the site -- incident
11 commander on site.

12 Q. Okay. What is your formal education?

13 A. High school, ^{Riordan} Bridgen High School (phonetic), one year of
14 City College, fire and sciences, and then PG&E.

15 Q. And what kind of courses did you take at PG&E?

16 A. It's too numerous to read off of my head, because it's
17 over 30 years' worth of training and courses. I believe they can
18 provide you a transcript of the training if you want to see all of
19 the detailed courses.

20 Q. Okay. And are you under the OQ program?

21 A. I am not, because I physically do not touch the pipe.
22 However, I am supposed to be fully knowledgeable of the OQ program
23 to make sure my supervisors properly conduct the OQ reviews every
24 year and every five years.

25 MR. GUNTHER: Okay. OPS?

1 MR. KATCHMAR: No questions.

2 MR. GUNTHER: California PUC?

3 BY MR. SHORI:

4 Q. Mr. Corona, you indicated that you contacted Brentwood
5 Terminal?

6 A. Right, with Gas Control.

7 Q. Gas Control. That facility is not normally manned,
8 though. Why would you expect somebody to be there?

9 A. Excuse me. We tend to call it Brentwood Gas Control
10 because that was the original name. It's actually Gas Control.
11 It's situated in San Francisco, downtown. We use Brentwood
12 because it's more or less of a term that slips out when we refer
13 to it.

14 Q. And what time was that, approximately?

15 A. To the best of my recollection, it was approximately
16 about 6:30 and I was driving to the location.

17 Q. And you said you asked them if they saw the event and
18 they told you they did?

19 A. I asked the operator who answered if he was aware of the
20 situation of a plane crash in the vicinity of Skyline in San Bruno
21 and did we have any pressure indications, because I knew there was
22 a transmission main there, and he acknowledged, "Yes."

23 Q. And did he acknowledge that it was basically, again, one
24 of the lines in particular that you know to be there, that he had
25 seen that on?

1 A. I didn't specifically ask to give me a line number. I
2 just asked if he was noticing a pressure problem in that area.
3 And that -- it immediately just heightened my awareness that it
4 could have been something around a gas transmission facility.

5 Q. And then you indicated -- and I was taking notes and I
6 missed it -- but you contacted someone else and you had been told
7 you remained deputy IC. And who was that?

8 A. That would be Mitchell Kirk. He's the Peninsula --
9 excuse me, I keep referring to Peninsula -- the Central Coast
10 South Region Gas M&C superintendent, and he has -- Peninsula is
11 one of his divisions.

12 Q. And as deputy IC, what does that entail?

13 A. I basically am the eyes there and I would be relaying
14 critical information to the Peninsula OEC incident commander,
15 gathering information, validating information, and getting
16 communication as to what crews and employees are being routed to
17 my site.

18 Q. Okay. I guess at some point, did you start keeping a
19 log or keeping a record of what you're aware was going on from the
20 moment you got there and whatever actions you were taking?

21 A. No.

22 Q. And where is Peninsula OEC?

23 A. 275 Industrial Road, San Carlos, California. It's
24 called the Peninsula Service Center.

25 Q. And so if you weren't -- all of the communications you

1 were doing, I would imagine, were via cell phone?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And is this a company cell phone?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And are those calls -- do you know if they're recorded
6 in any way?

7 A. All calls that I make to the load center are. We know
8 that for a fact. The calls to the Peninsula OEC or any of my
9 direct reports, I don't believe they are.

10 Q. And as far as communication and -- in regard to the
11 folks that you would be trying to contact, how did that -- how
12 smoothly did that flow, in terms of as deputy IC, whatever people
13 that you needed to contact, were you able to contact most of the
14 people that you were trying to get or did you see any issues on
15 that end?

16 A. My role as incident commander was not to be the one
17 person to make the phone calls to various different employees. My
18 main focus was to communicate with the battalion IC on site and
19 relay him the best information I can on the operations that we put
20 in place to control the gas.

21 Q. So were you involved in any way, then, in terms of
22 control efforts related to the rupture?

23 A. I had more control on the efforts to control the
24 distribution system, the transmission system. I didn't personally
25 talk to my San Francisco transmission and regulation supervisor,

1 but I knew he was on site in the valving operations. I had
2 involved one of our employees, Scott Robinson, who happened to be
3 in the area, and he was doing a lot of the communication phone
4 calls back and forth, relaying information to me. My phone was
5 ringing, basically, off the hook with vice presidents calling me,
6 Mitchell Kirk calling me -- that's usually what happens. So it
7 was difficult for me to actually talk to some critical folks. So
8 I relied on Scott Robinson to relay the information, to which he
9 acknowledged that they were in a valving operation.


10 Q. And so you indicated, also, earlier that you --
11 essentially you saw this and proceeded to the scene. Were you on
12 an on-call management in any way that night?

13 A. A superintendent's role is to respond to any gas event
14 within your area, whether it's my area or something I can support.
15 The Peninsula -- I live in the Peninsula area. It was four
16 minutes from my house. I knew I could get there faster than
17 Mitchell Kirk, so I responded.

18 Q. I understand that. And -- but as far as is there a
19 rotational on-call in terms of routine scheduling of on-call
20 assignments?

21 A. Not at the superintendent level because we basically are
22 on-call 24/7. However, we do have on-call supervisor rotations
23 for the specific divisions.

24 Q. And what time were you there until -- after you got
25 there? I can imagine it was late.

1 A. Until yesterday -- no. I ^{WAS} ~~would~~ have relieved Friday 
2 morning at approximately 9:30 in the morning, if I had been there
3 a complete shift.

4 Q. And who relieved you?

5 A. Kelly Ball. He is a distribution gas superintendent,
6 Mission or Hayward Region. I'm not quite sure.

7 Q. After you got to the scene at 6:30, did you convey any
8 information back to anyone that the event was gas -- or did you
9 have -- again, I want to -- as you indicated earlier, you had seen
10 different reports that it was an airplane crash and other things.
11 At some point when you got to the scene, did you get any more
12 detailed or any particular information that it was gas, that you
13 conveyed back to anyone?

14 A. That evening when I drove down San Bruno Avenue, I made
15 a left turn -- I believe it was Glen Court, the main thoroughfare
16 through where the blast occurred. And I got as close as I could
17 before it became unsafe. I anticipated to see airplane debris,
18 seats, assuming it was still a plane crash. I saw none. I,
19 immediately, to see whatever burst, parked up at the top of the
20 hill. I was asked to park down closer to the site with the
21 operations incident commander. He requested that I stay by his
22 side the whole time and I did so.

23 Q. So, Mr. Corona, I don't want to put words in your mouth.
24 So, at that stage did you believe it was gas?

25 A. I knew it was gas because of the volume of the gas and

1 the fire ball that was coming out of the pipe. And one of the --
2 I don't know who he was, but an official person wearing an
3 emergency services jacket approached me and said that it was not
4 an airplane crash.

5 Q. And did you convey that information, again, to anyone at
6 PG&E?

7 A. I believe I did. I believe when our vice president,
8 Bill Hayes, contacted me, I gave him a quick briefing. He
9 understood the sense of urgency and that my phone was going to be
10 ringing. He just wanted a quick recap. Again, I'm trying to
11 recall the best I can, and I believe I gave the information to the
12 Peninsula OEC. At that point we started experiencing cell phone
13 interruptions because everybody in the area was using their cell
14 phones. It was making it difficult to keep a call connected.

15 Q. Are all of the calls that you made that night, are they
16 still on your list on the phone?

17 A. I believe I was looking -- some of them drop off,
18 because it got so full, but I think you can probably go back and
19 get some.

20 Q. And this last question: About what time was it that you
21 spoke with Bill Hayes?

22 A. I'd have to look at my phone. Probably around -- time
23 was passing so fast, it was probably around -- after 7:15, 7:30, I
24 believe, when he contacted me first.

25 Q. And what is Bill Hayes' title?

1 A. He's a Gas M&C vice president.

2 Q. Okay.

3 MR. SHORI: That's it. Thank you.

4 MR. GUNTHER: Okay. Ravi?

5 MR. CHHATRE: Yes. Thanks.

6 BY MR. CHHATRE:

7 Q. I'm not going to ask some of the questions that CPUC
8 asked, but they're on my list. I just want you to know that, but
9 I want further details.

10 And you said somebody told you that there was a plane
11 crash. And who was that? Was it PG&E or private? And if it was
12 PG&E, I need to know, and if it was private, I don't.

13 A. It was based on the news report, when they put it on.

14 Q. And I know the question was asked, but what time,
15 approximately, did you arrive at the scene? I think you said
16 6:30-ish?

17 A. Again, I'm trying to recall. I believe I left my home
18 approximately at around 6:25. I made a few phone calls as I was
19 driving. I got there fairly quickly. I do have a flashing yellow
20 light on my truck and an emergency placard. People were very
21 courteous in getting out of my way because they knew I was heading
22 towards the big pile of smoke. So I would say I got there right
23 around 6:30.

24 Q. Okay. Just taking apart that piece of information so we
25 have a timeline -- we can add it here if we have confirmation from

1 your phone. So if you can kindly -- if that phone number and time
2 is still there, when you made the phone call to Mr. Hayes, it will
3 help kind of -- this is not a critical time, but it will show a
4 response from PG&E. So if somebody had arrived at 6:30, we'd like
5 to review that.

6 A. I believe the records are all acquired.

7 MR. FASSETT: I think he said Mr. Hayes called him.

8 MR. CORONA: Correct.

9 BY MR. CHHATRE:

10 Q. Oh, okay. I'm sorry. I just need a time, so that would
11 be useful. And we can correct that as to who called whom.

12 You didn't see plane debris and you were told it was not
13 a plane. Did you immediately realize it was your line or are
14 there any operators whose gas lines would be there?

15 A. I am not aware of any other gas facilities in that
16 neighborhood.

17 Q. Are there any petroleum facilities there? Did you
18 believe it was petroleum and not gas?

19 A. I do not know.

20 Q. So by 7:15, with your discussion with Mr. Hayes, was it
21 pretty much confirmed that it was a gas line and it was PG&E's gas
22 line? You may not know which line, or it was still kind of
23 unclear?

24 A. It was clear that it was a gas transmission leak, not a
25 distribution leak.

1 Q. Okay. And it was PG&E's line or it was still not clear
2 at that time?

3 A. I was about 99 percent sure it was a PG&E gas
4 transmission line.

5 Q. Okay. I am saying there were no other operators to the
6 gas line and gas is confirmed -- that it's a transmission line?

7 A. I was standing directly above a transmission line
8 marker.

9 Q. Okay. Now that you knew it was a gas line -- PG&E --
10 when it was confirmed that it was 132 and not the other two, and I
11 will use the word "systems," but the other companion lines there.
12 There are three lines running in the same vicinity, are there not?

13 A. Two transmission lines and a distribution line.

14 Q. Okay. And when did you find out that it was 132 or did
15 you at all?

16 A. I did not realize what numbered line it was until the
17 maps were brought to me.

18 Q. Okay. Now, when you saw it was a gas line of sorts, was
19 there any discussion or decision made that "we need to close all
20 valves in the location," rather than waiting for the --

21 A. The battalion chief incident commander that I checked
22 into made it explicitly clear to me that I had to shut the gas off
23 because it was hampering his relief rescue and fire abatement
24 efforts.

25 Q. Do you recall the approximate time of that?

1 A. 6:30, 6:35.

2 Q. So at 6:35, pretty much you knew that you had to close
3 all of the valves on all of the lines?

4 A. I didn't realize what the valving scheme -- because,
5 again, I did not have any of the maps of the valves. However, the
6 information coming to me through Scott was that our transmission
7 people and my transmission supervisor from San Francisco were on
8 it. So I was very confident that they were going to have the
9 transmission valves for that area secured shortly.

10 Q. Okay. And did you make the decision to ask someone to
11 send a technician to close the valves or who made that decision?

12 A. My transmission and regulation supervisor, Chuck
13 Martinez, is an expert -- subject matter expert. I fully trusted
14 he was going to do the right thing.

15 Q. Okay. So you didn't make a call to Mr. Martinez about
16 the requirement that the incident commander had given you?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Now, in your duties does that include SCADA? You live
19 in San Francisco?

20 A. My transmission and regulations supervisor, Chuck
21 Martinez, has duties that surround that SCADA unit.

22 Q. So I don't understand your chain of command structure.
23 So it can be under your umbrella of --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Now, can you tell us on the SCADA, now, what kind of

1 training procedures are in place?

2 MR. JAQUES: I just want to say I don't think you're
3 talking about the same thing.

4 MR. CHHATRE: I thought it was SCADA, San Francisco,
5 that we're talking about.

6 MR. JAQUES: I don't think he said SCADA was under his
7 responsibility directly. I think he said something else. Perhaps
8 he can clarify.

9 BY MR. CHHATRE:

10 Q. Sure, that would help.

11 A. My transmission and regulations supervisor reads the
12 SCADA reports. Our technician is involved in it. But he's solely
13 functional. I have nothing to do with the actual SCADA unit or
14 monitoring it.

15 Q. I understand that. That part, I understand. But as a
16 supervisor of the unit, is there -- do you get any information or
17 are you involved in making sure that the employees are properly
18 trained --

19 MR. FASSETT: Point of clarification. He's referring to
20 read-only information. Your question is about trimmer controls
21 and all of that, pertains to the Milpitas facility. It does not
22 pertain to anything that they maintain.

23 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Then I thought that facility can
24 control remotely.

25 MR. FASSETT: You're talking about San Francisco Gas

1 Control, the facility you toured the other day, on the 16th floor
2 of --

3 MR. CHHATRE: Right.

4 MR. FASSETT: That is not the San Francisco Division or
5 the Peninsula Division --

6 MR. CHHATRE: Maybe I'll try to find out. Okay.

7 MR. FASSETT: -- maintenance operations facility.

8 MR. CHHATRE: So that is not under his chain of command?

9 MR. FASSETT: That's correct.

10 MR. CHHATRE: That's all I -- that's the last question.

11 I'm glad you have clarified, because the way you described, I
12 thought you don't deal directly, but it's still under your
13 umbrella. So, thank you.

14 MR. FASSETT: You're welcome. I am here to help you
15 out, Ravi.

16 MR. CHHATRE: Thanks. No more questions.

17 MR. GUNTHER: Okay. Mr. Fassett, PG&E?

18 MR. FASSETT: No questions.

19 MR. GUNTHER: City of San Bruno?

20 MR. CALDWELL: No questions.

21 MR. GUNTHER: IBEW?

22 MS. MAZZANTI: No questions.

23 MR. GUNTHER: And any follow up, Peter?

24 MR. KATCHMAR: No, sir. Thank you.

25 MR. GUNTHER: Sunil?

1 MR. SHORI: Nothing. Thank you.

2 MR. GUNTHER: Ravi?

3 MR. CHHATRE: I did the most talking. I don't have any
4 more questions.

5 MR. GUNTHER: Does anybody else have a question?

6 MR. CALDWELL: Other than just saying thanks for going
7 there. You went there on your own. Thank you for doing that.

8 BY MR. GUNTHER:

9 Q. Okay. Is there anything that you haven't told us that
10 in your judgment you think that we should know?

11 A. Not at this time.

12 Q. Would you like to make a statement for the record?

13 A. No.

14 Q. We would like to thank you for coming here and your
15 commitment to public safety and we hope that you all get this
16 straightened out as soon as you can.

17 A. Thank you.

18 (Whereupon, the interview 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: PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC
SEPTEMBER 9, 2010 ACCIDENT
SAN BRUNO, CALIFORNIA
Interview of John Corona

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-10-MP-008

PLACE: Burlingame, California

DATE: September 16, 2010

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.


Richard Friant
Official Reporter

10-5-2010

JOHN CORONA