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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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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: SCOTT ROBINSON

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

Friday,
September 17, 2010

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to
notice, at 1:12 p.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
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LAWSON F. NARVELL, JR., Investigator
Human Performance Group
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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. Robinson)
Dombroff, Gilmore, Jaques & French
1676 International Drive, Penthouse
McLean, Virginia 22102

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MR. GUNTHER: All right. I'm Karl Gunther, National Transportation Safety Board. We're investigating a accident that occurred September 9th, 2010, in San Bruno, California, covered under DCA-10-MP-008.

The first question I'd like to ask is: Are you aware that you can have counsel of anyone you choose?

MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

MR. GUNTHER: And have you chosen them?

MR. ROBINSON: Yes, I have.

MR. GUNTHER: And that is?

MR. JAQUES: For the record, Dane Jaques, on behalf of the witness.

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

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

MR. FASSETT: Bob Fassett, PG&E.

MR. CHHATRE: Ravi Chhatre, NTSB. I'm the investigator in charge of this accident.

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

MR. KATCHMAR: Peter Katchmar, United States Department of Transportation, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

1 MR. GUNTHER: Karl Gunther, NTSB.

2 MS. MAZZANTI: Debbie Mazzanti, IBEW, Local 1245.

3 MR. GUNTHER: And we have one more member from the
4 Engineering and Scientists Union of California.

5 INTERVIEW OF SCOTT ROBINSON

6 BY MR. GUNTHER:

7 Q. I'd like to begin. If I could get your name, address,
8 and phone number for the record?

9 MR. JAQUES: Work is fine.

10 MR. ROBINSON: Scott Robinson. My work address is 275
11 Industrial Road, in San Carlos.

12 BY MR. GUNTHER:

13 Q. And your work phone?

14 A. My work phone is [REDACTED]

15 Q. And could you give me your job title?

16 A. Senior distribution specialist.

17 Q. Thank you.

18 Okay. First, tell me about credentials. What kind do
19 you have -- high school, college?

20 A. High school, some college.

21 Q. Okay. And training, have you had training through PG&E?

22 A. Multiple training throughout my career. I've been with
23 PG&E for 26 years, so I have -- we can go through the training
24 record at work, but I don't know the entire list offhand.

25 Q. And are you in the OQ program?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Okay. What I'd like you to do is go back to September
3 9th, just start from the beginning and just tell a narrative of
4 what you saw and what you did.

5 A. That afternoon, I was working in the San Francisco
6 office. I was on my way home from work and I witnessed the fire
7 when I was heading southbound towards my home. I live in San
8 Mateo. I saw a fire from the freeway.

9 Q. And then what were your -- what did you do?

10 A. When I saw it, at first, I thought it was a building
11 along the side of the freeway. As I approached a little farther,
12 I realized it was off in the horizon.

13 The first thing I did, I called my wife on the cell
14 phone and I asked her what was going on. And she basically said,
15 "I don't know what you're talking about."

16 I said, "On the news. What's on the news?" She said,
17 "What are you talking about?" I said, "There's a huge fire." And
18 at that point, I realized -- it looked like it was something
19 really, really big. So I hung up. I proceeded to go towards that
20 direction and I called our service dispatch and placed a call into
21 our service dispatch, to notify them of -- that some type of
22 incident, some large fire.

23 Q. Okay. And did you take any actions after that?

24 A. After that? I just proceeded up there to investigate,
25 if it was potentially -- if we were involved.

1 Q. And did you find out whether you were?

2 A. Once I arrived on scene, I actually went to incident
3 command, where the fire battalion chief or chief was set up, and I
4 asked them. And at that time, he said, "It's unconfirmed," but he
5 thought a plane was down. And my assumption was that the plane
6 was involved with us.

7 MR. GUNTHER: Okay. PHMSA?

8 BY MR. KATCHMAR:

9 Q. Were you the first to arrive, then, from PG&E?

10 A. As far as I know, I was the first PG&E employee on site.

11 Q. Okay. Did you see Chuck Martinez there?

12 A. Sometime after, yes.

13 Q. Do you know about time it was when you --

14 A. When I saw Chuck?

15 Q. No, when you got there.

16 A. When I got there, it was about -- between 6:35 and 6:40,
17 and I was writing down a time line for myself. And some of it, I
18 went back and looked at the time I placed calls on my cell phone,
19 to get a more accurate time line of events.

20 Q. And when did you see Chuck?

21 A. It was probably sometime around 8:00, somewhere around
22 there.

23 MR. KATCHMAR: Okay. Thank you.

24 MR. GUNTHER: Sunil, PG&E -- PUC, I'm sorry.

25 BY MR. SHORI:

1 Q. Scott, when you got to the scene, what actions did you
2 take in directing any staff -- PG&E personnel -- towards isolating
3 any valves or performing any response actions?

4 A. Once I arrived on scene, I tried placing another call to
5 service dispatch, to give them an update that I was there and what
6 I witnessed. And it was very difficult to place a call.
7 Multiple, multiple attempts on the cell phone were "system busy,
8 call failed." I kept trying and trying.

9 Behind me, there was a gas serviceman that had arrived
10 and I had asked him, "Call service dispatch," to see if he could
11 complete a call.

12 Q. Was he successful?

13 A. I don't know. At some point, at some point I was
14 successful getting through and I relayed the information that I
15 had at the time.

16 Q. Who was the -- do you know who the gas serviceman was
17 that you saw?

18 A. I believe his first name was Jerreau (phonetic). But
19 I'm not familiar with him. I know a lot of the other servicemen.
20 He may have been a newer employee. I don't know.

21 Q. Jerreau?

22 A. I believe his name was Jerreau.

23 Q. And so you eventually did get through to dispatch?

24 A. I notified dispatch. I communicated with the incident
25 command, the fire chief had told me that it was a possible plane

1 crash. And I requested gas crews and electric crews to report to
2 the scene, because it was a very large event.

3 Q. And what time was that, approximately?

4 A. I believe that call went through sometime around 6:40,
5 6:45, when I was able to actually get through. But that was not
6 the first call I had placed. I had placed a call on my way there.

7 Q. But that one didn't get through?

8 A. I did -- I did tell them that there was a fire and that
9 I was heading that way. But I didn't have any details.

10 Q. What time was that first call, approximately?

11 A. The first call to my wife was at 6:14, and there were
12 numerous calls to dispatch after that, that were dropping. I
13 would call, get a few sentences in, the call would drop. I'd call
14 back. I believe the call dropped a second time, if I remember,
15 and maybe the third attempt, I was able to finish my conversation,
16 explaining what I saw.

17 Q. Did dispatch tell you -- when you were able to get
18 through, that they had any knowledge on it already or what they
19 knew about it?

20 A. At that time, he told me, "We do have a call to the fire
21 and we're dispatching a serviceman there." But, again, that was
22 probably very early, and I'm assuming the serviceman that showed
23 up behind me was the serviceman they had dispatched.

24 Q. And do you recall who you talked to at dispatch?

25 A. I do not.

1 Q. And your communications taking place, was it a personal
2 cell phone or a company cell phone?

3 A. A company cell phone.

4 Q. After 6:45, you said the call went through to service
5 dispatch. Any additional calls beyond that?

6 A. After that, once we really had a better idea of what
7 went on, I remember placing a call saying, "Officially, it's a
8 reportable incident." That was some time after.

9 Q. Do you recall generally when that was?

10 A. 7:20 p.m.

11 Q. Okay. So you indicated you were having cell
12 communication difficulties?

13 A. Very difficult. On the way, I told you I was trying to
14 call dispatch early on. I'm familiar with the area. The cell
15 service is usually adequate, but the calls kept dropping. But up,
16 at the scene, it was almost impossible to get a call through. It
17 was "system busy" and "call failed."

18 Q. And did that persist --

19 A. For a long time.

20 Q. Okay. And what is your definition of a reportable
21 incident?

22 A. Well, if there's fatalities. If there -- if gas is
23 involved and there's ignition, those types of things. So, early
24 on, people are running around saying, you know, they think it's a
25 plane. So -- until we were completely sure, that's when I made

1 the call.

2 Q. And what did you continue to do the remainder of the
3 night?

4 A. We were there -- I was there with John Corona and we
5 stayed at incident command on scene. Several of the fire incident
6 commanders had told us at different times they wanted one of us to
7 be at a certain command post. Early on, they had moved command
8 post locations, so we were forced to move locations. And I was
9 keeping in close contact with John Corona. Sometimes we'd be
10 separate at different command posts.

11 Q. Can you clarify one more time who it was you told that,
12 "We have a reportable incident"?

13 A. I placed a call to dispatch -- service dispatch.

14 Q. And that was at the 6:45 call, that you mentioned
15 earlier?

16 A. I believe at that point, I just requested crews.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I don't believe I told him it was reportable at that
19 time.

20 Q. Do you recall when that call was that you told them?

21 A. Can you repeat the question?

22 Q. Yes. Do you recall the time on the call that you would
23 have told dispatch that, "I believe we have a reportable
24 incident"?

25 A. It was some time after I requested the crews. I'm

1 guessing sometime around 7:15, 7:20.

2 Q. And, again, do you recall who was at dispatch or who you
3 spoke with then?

4 A. No. The thing, completing a call there, once I was able
5 to, it was very loud. There were sirens. There was the roaring
6 of the fire. And we were relatively close. We were on Glenview,
7 close to that first incident command. So it was very difficult to
8 hear on the phone.

9 MR. SHORI: Okay. I think that's it for me. Thank you.

10 MR. GUNTHER: Ravi?

11 BY MR. CHHATRE:

12 Q. I know I was in and out of -- several times, so if the
13 question was asked before, just say "asked before." And we can
14 move on.

15 Do you go on your own to the accident scene or did
16 somebody ask you to go?

17 MR. JAQUES: That's already been asked.

18 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. All right.

19 BY MR. CHHATRE:

20 Q. What are your duties with the company?

21 A. I'm a senior distribution specialist. I work in the gas
22 measurement and regulation department. I work on standards and
23 work procedures for that equipment.

24 Q. So you wouldn't be involved in closing the valves of
25 that site -- or would you be?

1 A. Operations like that, no. But I do perform duties as an
2 on-call supervisor.

3 Q. Okay. Do you know at what time the crew went to close
4 those valves? Since you were there. I think Mr. Martinez went
5 with the crew. Did you have any discussion with Mr. Martinez at
6 that time?

7 A. After the fact. After they were closed.

8 Q. After they were closed. Okay.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Not before?

11 A. Not before.

12 Q. And since you're at the scene, what happened to the
13 flame? How long it was before the flame --

14 A. The large fire stopped burning at 7:40 p.m. I remember
15 that. I wrote the time specifically.

16 Q. When you say "large fire," was that the main, 30-inch
17 pipe burning?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. That's very helpful information for us. Because we know
20 roughly when the valves got closed. That gives us an idea how
21 long it took for the fire to extinguish.

22 Do you recall any other -- I wouldn't call it a problem,
23 but any other instances where this transmission line 132, or the
24 other two lines, had any problems -- corrosion-related problems?
25 Excavation-related problems?

1 A. No.

2 Q. So going to the accident scene would not be in your
3 normal course of duties or it would be?

4 A. Not my normal course of duties, but I do work as an on-
5 call supervisor for gas distribution. So at those times, while
6 I'm an on-call supervisor, I would go to those type of events.

7 Q. Oh, I didn't mean to imply why you went. I'm glad you
8 did, but I just want to make it clear that you went on your own.

9 A. Yes, that's correct.

10 Q. And not at somebody else's directions.

11 A. That is correct.

12 Q. When did you leave the accident scene, do you recall?

13 A. Approximately 10:00 a.m. the next morning.

14 Q. The next morning, 10:00 a.m.

15 Can you describe the activities as you saw them at the
16 accident scene? Just give me the major events, if you recall,
17 since you were at the scene.

18 A. From the time I arrived?

19 Q. No, after the flame is out. After 7:45, I guess that's
20 when the pipe stopped fueling the fire.

21 A. At that point, we tried to assess how we're going to
22 shut off the distribution system.

23 Q. So the distribution system was still going on at that
24 time?

25 A. That is correct.

1 Q. And you discussed that with who?

2 A. John Corona.

3 Q. And is it -- would that be his responsibility?

4 A. He was the incident commander on scene. He was the most
5 high-ranking PG&E person there.

6 Q. And what was his reaction? What directions you got from
7 him?

8 A. I don't understand the question.

9 Q. You discussed with John. What happened after that?

10 A. We proceeded to make a plan on where to cut and squeeze
11 to isolate the distribution system.

12 Q. So "we" meaning you and John or were other people
13 involved?

14 A. Myself and John. There may have been others involved at
15 the time. Chuck Martinez was there.

16 Q. Okay. So when the plan was drawn, what happened, did
17 you dispatch somebody or somebody went to actually do the physical
18 work?

19 A. We started assigning gas crews to specific locations
20 with instructions on what to do.

21 Q. Now, did they report back to you as they were closed?

22 A. That's correct. We were in constant communication with
23 the crews on site.

24 Q. And do you recall when the last distribution line was
25 closed?

1 A. Yes, 11:32 p.m.

2 Q. Is it reasonable to state that at 11:32, the last
3 distribution service on the main was closed?

4 A. Within a minute. I was -- I was just below the last
5 squeeze point and saw the risers stop burning. So it was within
6 about a minute of that when the risers stopped burning.

7 Q. Okay. Now, the service line that you closed, was it
8 service mains or immediate points or going to a whole bunch of
9 holes, or how was it?

10 A. We isolated --

11 Q. What was involved?

12 A. We isolated the distribution system by -- one operation
13 was a valve.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. And three operations were squeezing. There were four
16 points.

17 Q. Do you have the location of these in the documents?

18 MR. GUNTHER: Yes.

19 BY MR. CHHATRE:

20 Q. Okay. Can you tell me what you mean by you saw a riser
21 stop. Where was that?

22 A. At some of the locations. We had went to assess where
23 we needed to squeeze to isolate --

24 Q. Isolate -- okay.

25 A. Some were burning just downstream of that last squeeze

1 point.

2 Q. So pretty much at ~~operator 132~~, none of the fire is
3 being fueled by PG&E's gas. Is that reasonable to say?

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. There are putting some information in the time lines, so
6 that I will double-check.

7 Should I say 11:32 or should I say 11:33, since you
8 closed at 11:32.

9 A. You could say 11:33.

10 Q. Because you said within a minute. So I don't -- pick a
11 number that you feel comfortable. Either number.

12 A. The squeeze point was -- the last squeeze point was at
13 11:32 p.m.

14 Q. P.M., at night?

15 A. Yes. That last squeeze point.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And, yes, the fire stopped burning within a minute, so
18 11:33.

19 Q. And that would be 9/9/10?

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. Because your duties are extending more than one day, so
22 I just want to make sure.

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. Okay. Since you're at the scene, the first PG&E
25 employee, do you have any idea -- have you gone back and figured

1 out when you believe your data shows the rupture?

2 A. I believe it happened a few minutes before I saw it.

3 MR. CHHATRE: I have no more questions. Thank you very
4 much.

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

6 MR. FASSETT: No questions.

7 MR. GUNTHER: City?

8 MR. CALDWELL: No questions.

9 MR. GUNTHER: IBEW?

10 MS. MAZZANTI: No questions.

11 MR. GUNTHER: Engineers?

12 MR. SPERRY: No, thanks.

13 MR. GUNTHER: PHMSA?

14 MR. KATCHMAR: No.

15 MR. GUNTHER: Anybody have any more questions?

16 All right. One question: Is there anything that you
17 think we should know that you haven't told us, in your judgment?

18 MR. ROBINSON: No.

19 MR. GUNTHER: Would you like to make a statement for the
20 record?

21 MR. ROBINSON: No.

22 MR. GUNTHER: Thank you for your time and your
23 dedication to safety and we appreciate you being here.

24 MR. ROBINSON: Thank you, sir.

25 (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
 SEPTEMBER 9, 2010 ACCIDENT
 SAN BRUNO, CALIFORNIA
 Interview of Scott Robinson

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-10-MP-008

PLACE: Burlingame, California

DATE: September 17, 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

(m2)