UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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

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 4:06 p.m.

BEFORE: KARL GUNTHER
Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

KARL GUNTHER, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
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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. Genera)
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1676 International Drive, Penthouse
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I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

(4:06 p.m.)

MR. GUNTHER: I'm Karl Gunther, from National Transportation Safety Board. We're investigating an accident on September 9th, 2010, in San Bruno, California. It's our number DCA-10-MP-008.

I'd like to advise you at the beginning that you can have anyone you want with you as a -- you know, counsel or assistant or whatever. Have you chosen someone?

MR. GENERA: Yes.

MR. GUNTHER: And who is that?

MR. GENERA: This man here.

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

MR. GUNTHER: Okay.

And I'd like to begin by asking everyone -- we'll go around the room -- to go ahead and give your name and your 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, U.S. DOT, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

MR. GUNTHER: Karl Gunther, NTSB.

MS. MAZZANTI: Debbie Mazzanti, IBEW Local 1245, Business Rep.

MR. SPERRY: Joshua Sperry, Engineers and Scientists of California, Local 20, the union for the professional and technical staff.

INTERVIEW OF JOAQUIN GENERA

BY MR. GUNTHER:

Q. Okay. I'd like to get your name, address, and phone for the record.

A. My name is Joaquin Genera. My address is [redacted]. That's in [redacted].

THE REPORTER: Sir, could you spell your name for the record, please?

MR. GENERA: It's J-o-a-q-u-i-n. The last name is G-e-n-e-r-a. And my phone is [redacted]

BY MR. GUNTHER:

Q. And what is your -- who do you work for and what is your job title?

A. I work for PG&E. My job title is Transmission Coordinator.

Q. Thank you. What I'd like you to do is describe all of the actions you took and everything you saw September 9th, 2010.

A. Well, it was a normal workday for me. I came in the morning around 6:00 a.m. I did my normal duties throughout the

day, which included monitoring the transmission pipeline, responding to alarms, making and receiving phone calls. And then in the afternoon, or early evening, we had the incident in San Bruno occur.

I worked with the people in the room to respond to it as best as we could, and make several phone calls -- or, actually, made some phone calls, received a lot of phone calls. And just worked with my team to try and resolve the issue as best we could.

Q. Okay. What kind of formal training do you have?

A. In terms of -- for my current position or?

Q. Well, high school diploma, college, courses?

A. As far as my education background, I have a high school diploma. I have a bachelor's in science from UC Berkeley, environmental science. I have a master's in business from Cal State University, East Bay. And then I received several types of on-the-job training for my current position.

Q. And could you list the types of on-the-job training you received?

A. I have received operator qualification training, which we do at least once a year, if not two or three times a year. And we -- we have different types of group trainings that are offered to us for our role as operators.

Q. Okay. And you're covered under operation qualifications for Pacific Gas?

A. Yes.

Q. All right.

MR. GUNTHER: PHMSA?

MR. SHORI: We'll go ahead and defer PHMSA for first line of questioning first.

BY MR. KATCHMAR:

Q. Good afternoon, Joaquin. Thank you for coming in today to talk to us.

When were you first made aware of -- when and how were you first made aware of the situation in San Bruno?

A. I believe that one of my counterparts in the control room had mentioned that he had received a call. I don't remember exactly who it was, but one of them had mentioned that a call had been made to the control room that reports of a fire or explosion had been witnessed in the San Bruno area.

Q. Can you explain the different types of communications you have at your disposal as a controller and when you use each one?

A. We have a -- what's called a gas logging system, which we commonly refer to as the GLS, which is an electronic format of communicating within the control room between the gas system operators and the transmission coordinators, as well as communicating with the manned stations that we have throughout the transmission system, which includes compressor stations and storage facilities -- underground storage facilities.

We also use the telephone frequently throughout the day,

and those are really our primary methods of communicating, other than inter-office through e-mails and things of that nature.

Q. Okay. We were told of something called e-page. Do you know what that is?

A. Yeah. That is a other form of communication that we use to broadcast information to other employees in the company.

Q. And you would use that for -- like if you want to talk to everyone?

A. There's certain groups of people who are on specific e-page group lists and depending on what the situation is, we select specific e-page groups to communicate to.

Q. Are you aware of any other -- are you aware of any other alarms of fire or house fire, meter fire, regulator station fire -- anything like that other than at San Bruno that occurred on that night?

A. Related to fires? No.

Q. All right. I have a text of the ~~GLFs~~ GLS, and I read through it last night, and there was actually an issue somewhere with a fire -- a fire at a house or a -- I forgot what it was. I have to find it here real quick.

It was a false alarm.

A. Okay. We do from time to time receive reports from call centers of house fires and --

Q. I'll find it here pretty soon and I can ask you about it.

A. Okay.

Q. Could you tell me what a "PLS -- lower PLS 5-A, downstream to 470 psi and lower PLS 4-B, downstream to 635" might mean?

A. Yeah. There was -- that would mean that we would -- that the transmission coordinator is asking a gas system operator to regulate or put a control into the SCADA system to have a valve operate so that the pressures downstream of those valves target those pressures.

Q. So "PLS 5-A" and "PLS 4-B" are valves?

A. Those are actually -- those are locations of a station and the "A" and "B" refer to one of the two pipes that run through each of those stations.

Q. Do you know where those are?

A. Yes.

Q. What -- can you tell me where they're at?

A. They are somewhere in the Central Valley, upstream of our Kettleman compressor station. And usually, but not always, we operate those valves to raise or lower pressure for gas that we're delivering to Southern California, at that site.

Q. That answers that.

Okay. Is there -- when this event occurred, do you remember using the gas logging system at all?

A. I don't remember using it, but it's possible that I could have.

Q. Okay. And -- well, just to let you know, it appears no one did, except for, like at 4:00 in the morning, I have a -- 4:42, actually, on September 10th, in the morning -- 0400:42 -- "Have changed high, high alarms from 378 to 340 and high alarms 373 to 330 on stations requested on GLS message," 4:16 -- "0416 due to line 132 incident. Oscar Martinez at Milpitas talked to, to change monitors for lines 109, 132, 101, on outgoing lines to 347, PSIG. Okay on PLS 4-B and 5-A orders."

So, I guess I'm asking -- I went through this whole day and that's the first real indication that you guys used this system to -- to exchange orders to raise and lower pressures.

Does that make sense to you?

A. If we were to lower the MOPs on a line, it does make sense that we would have documented that on the GLS.

Q. Okay. All righty.

Do you know if the e-page and the telephone systems are recorded or somehow or another documented, physically?

A. I believe that the phone conversations on most of the lines in the control room are recorded. And the e-page system has an option of requesting that a receipt of the message to all of the people that are supposed to receive it either received it or didn't. Similar to what you would have if you were to send a fax and you print out a confirmation that the --

Q. You don't think that --

MR. JAQUES: Let him finish his answer.

MR. KATCHMAR: I'm sorry.

MR. GENERA: -- that the communication was successful or not.

BY MR. KATCHMAR:

Q. Okay. You don't think it's just automatic?

A. I'm not sure I understand the question.

Q. Sort of like a telephone is recorded automatically, is the e-page -- do you only have the ones that you clicked receipt requested?

A. I don't -- I don't know that much about the e-page system to answer that question.

Q. That's fine.

Were you aware of the work going on at Milpitas?

A. Yes.

Q. Were you working directly with the people down there?

A. No.

Q. Do you know who was?

A. In terms of communicating with the people who were working there, it was likely one of the gas system operators.

Q. Okay. You're a transmission coordinator, so, I guess -- I guess we were already told that.

So, the senior transmission coordinator goes through you to get to the -- and then you go to the gas system operators?

A. Usually, the senior transmission coordinator and I will agree on what operations are to take place. And then, typically,

we will use the GLS to send those commands or those orders to the gas system operators.

Q. Okay. And then they get it done? And they're the ones talking to the people?

A. Correct.

Q. Okay. All righty.

So you weren't directly involved -- do you give out the clearances or do the gas control guys give out the clearances?

A. Well, I am part of gas control. Do you mean the gas system operators?

Q. I'm sorry. The -- yes, the gas system operators.

A. They receive requests from the field when a clearance is to begin and end. And then that information is logged in the GLS.

Q. And do you oversee the GLS, then, on all of that?

A. We acknowledge on the GLS that the job -- that a clearance is starting or ending or at specific stages of the clearance.

Q. Who's "we"?

A. Transmission coordinators.

So the gas system operators, on the other side of the room, are in direct communication, usually by phone, with the field techs or mechanics. And then that information is placed on the GLS by the gas system operators, and then typically the transmission coordinators acknowledge on the GLS that the job is starting or ending.

Q. Okay. Is there -- can you explain to us why this is set up the way it's set up? And I'll ask -- I'll give you a much more detailed kind of scenario question.

Do the senior transmission coordinator -- I don't know if there's more than one -- and the transmission coordinators, of which you are one -- you say you're on one side of the room. Do you have so much to do that you're just at a computer terminal working and you don't -- and then you just document things and shoot them off, orders, to the guys across the room?

A. That's one of our responsibilities.

Q. But is it the fact that you're too busy to walk over and tell them that or --

A. No. A lot of our communication is done verbally across the room to each other. But for documentation purposes, we use the GLS.

Q. Okay.

A. Also, the gas system operators had been located at another facility for several years, and we recently consolidated into one control room. And the pattern of using the GLS to document commands and operations has continued, even though we're in the same room.

Q. Okay. Now, that makes more sense. That's where I was going with that. All righty.

So when did you consolidate?

A. I think it was April 13th of this year, somewhere around

that time of the month.

Q. Okay. We understood that they installed this new SCADA system in 2006. Is that correct?

A. That sounds about right. I don't know exactly what time, but it was about, maybe three, four years ago.

Q. All right, sir. Thank you very much.

MR. GUNTHER: Sunil, California PUC?

MR. SHORI: That's the second time you've done that.

BY MR. SHORI:

Q. How much clearance are you provided to work as you're -- is there a certain advanced -- how long in advance do the clearances need to be provided for scheduled work? Is there a set policy for that?

A. Yeah, we usually ask that the clearances be submitted somewhere about 10 days in advance. So that's -- that's generally what -- when we receive a clearance before the job starts.

Q. Okay. And what's provided -- you talked about within the room a lot of things being done verbally. But how was the information provided to you as far as any clearance being issued? How is that -- who issues a clearance, first of all, but then it needs to end up with you folks?

A. The way it happens is that the person in the field works with their supervisor or foreman in drafting a description of the work that's going to take place and the clearance. And a form -- a template form is used for them to provide the details of

the work.

That clearance is then submitted electronically to our department and reviewed by someone who specifically deals with reviewing clearances. And then the clearances are approved, if they -- if they are adequately written and all of the safety requirements are met. And then the clearances are issued ~~by~~ to the people in the field for -- with an approval. And we -- a copy of the clearances are kept on file in the control room, so that when the work begins, they're readily available for us to refer to.

Q. So it's a formalized process and you have to -- and what kind -- you've seen the forms. You've used -- you've review the clearances. What kind of questions or what kind of items are generally covered on that form?

A. There's usually a synopsis description of the work on the cover page, as well as an indication of whether any alarms would be required to be changed for the work. There's usually a section dedicated to contact people with phone numbers. If alarms are required to be changed, those are listed in the clearance with the normal set points -- pressure set points -- and what the clearance set points are.

There's also a space provided for the date and time at which the alarm set points are actually changed and placed back into normal. And then there's a step-by-step description of the work, with location and valves that might be operated. And

that's -- that's basically it.

Q. So it's a pretty extensive -- pretty decent amount of information that needs to be provided, not a two or three-line type situation. It's a formalized form for every clearance?

A. There's a formalized form for every clearance.

Q. Okay. And part of that, I think you had indicated, you had to provide a start and stop time?

A. Yes.

Q. And do some of these clearances -- I mean, is there any limitation on how long a clearance can be? Or is there -- let me just put it this way:

So is there any limitation in the length of the clearance? Do they have to specify to you what the date and time or what's the longest -- what's the maximum length specified for a clearance?

A. There is no maximum length for a clearance. All clearances vary.

Q. But they do have to give you a specific start and stop time and date?

A. The times and dates are -- are to the best of their knowledge, of the people in the field, of when they think the work will start. Sometimes jobs are postponed or they don't actually start when it's indicated on the clearance, as initially written. But once a job starts, a clearance starts, there is -- it's normal practice to document that on the GLS, as well as handwriting on

the clearance hard copy.

Q. Okay. So just that I'm clear, so the form itself would specify some sort of a start and stop date and time, but it could change, and if it does change, a verbal -- or how is that communicated to you? In other words, "We didn't start at this, we're starting now, instead," how is that communicated to you? And I think you said you log it onto the GLS?

A. That's right. Most of the time, it's logged onto the GLS.

Q. For the particular clearance that was in place on line 132, on September the 9th, are you familiar if it had any kind of a stop date or what the stop date and time was on that clearance?

A. I don't know the details of that clearance. That was probably an emergency clearance, which are issued when there are emergencies. And so I don't know the details of the start and stop times.

Q. Let me clarify. I'm not talking about after the event. I'm talking about the -- some of the work that was going down in Milpitas in regard to the -- in regard to the work that they were doing prior to the event.

A. Um-hum. The Milpitas clearance, I don't remember the details of what the start or stop times of that clearance were. Sometimes clearances -- because of scheduling and manpower availability -- might just have a "to be determined" for the date and time. And so I'm not sure if that particular clearance had

specific date and times for it to start.

Q. But that's certainly -- was that any kind of an emergency clearance?

A. That wasn't an emergency clearance, as far as I remember. It was a normal, planned clearance.

Q. Okay. And with regard to the -- some of the work going on at the SF gas control, what -- what's your familiarity with what was -- was there some work going on in regard to some -- at the control center itself?

A. Yeah, we -- the control had been undergoing some renovations in the last several weeks, and it was scheduled to finish the weekend following the event. And so we had planned to relocate our group -- our operations to our alternate site in Brentwood, which was to take place at the end of the shift that day.

MR. SHORI: That's it for me. Thank you.

MR. GUNTHER: Okay. PG&E?

MR. FASSETT: No questions.

MR. GUNTHER: City?

MR. CHHATRE: I have questions.

MR. GUNTHER: All right. Do you have any questions, City?

MR. CALDWELL: No. Thank you.

MR. GUNTHER: All right. Go ahead.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. Okay. What is your title, please?

A. My job title is Transmission Coordinator.

Q. And what does that mean in layman's terms? What do you do?

A. We're basically responsible for monitoring the transmission pipeline.

Q. And how do you accomplish that?

A. Primarily we use SCADA.

Q. Okay.

A. And we -- we work with the gas system operators and the senior transmission coordinator to remotely operate the valves or compressor stations, in order to manage the inventory of gas in the pipeline.

Q. And what is your work location?

A. 77 Beale Street, 16th Floor.

Q. Is that the control room that we visited the other day?

A. That's the control room, yeah.

Q. When you say you monitor the work, what do you do? What do you actually monitor? Obviously, monitor and controls.

A. Well, basically, we -- we ensure that the -- we try to ensure that the pressures in the transmission system are high enough to meet the minimum demands of the customers. And we also try to prevent over-pressurization of the valves -- I mean of the pipes.

We -- the SCADA provides us with volumes of gas in the

different segments of the network of pipes, and depending on what our operating targets might be for any given day, we may choose to activate compressors to move gas from one location to another.

We also communicate with other pipeline operators, which we are receiving gas from or we are delivering gas to. That's --

Q. With your counterparts in other locations?

A. Yes.

Q. No -- now are your lines pretty much back? Who's backing the lines?

A. I'm not sure that I understand your question.

Q. Gas being compressible, how much of backing -- if you were to lose compressor stations, how long would your gas would supply -- continuous supply in it, do you know that? If you don't, then that's fine.

A. I think your question is too general to give a specific answer to.

Q. That's fine. And how do you control -- I think you said control volumes in the places. How do you control that, actually? Control, you mean, what do you do?

A. Well, the volumes -- well, we depend on the compressor stations to provide higher pressure gas, to move gas from one direction to another. We also operate valves to either lower pressure, in order to allow gas to move from another location to the lower pressures.

Basically, it's just using the valves at compressor

stations to create high or low pressures in order to move the gas to the demands of the customers.

Q. Now, are these valves all that you can control from remote locations or do you ask somebody to open or close?

A. Some valves are able to be operated remotely from the control room. In other situations, we may have to communicate with people in the field to operate manual valves.

Q. So on line 132, between Milpitas and -- Martin? Is it Martin? On that pipeline, do you know the rough length of that?

A. I don't know -- I don't know specifically how long. But I know it runs the length of the peninsula.

Q. In that -- do you call it segment? What do you call it, segment?

So in that segment, how many valves are there?

A. I don't know specifically, but the --

Q. Okay.

MR. FASSETT: Point of clarification, we have provided the entire line drawing system from Milpitas to the end of this pipeline. All of that valve spacing information is there. Can we defer to that, please?

MR. CHHATRE: And does that also provide the remote control versus manual, that map?

MR. FASSETT: We've also provided all of the valve cards. If any of them are remote-controlled, it would be stated on the valve cards.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay. That's fine.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. So on the day of the incident, were you on duty at the time?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you describe the events -- meaning usual and unusual -- an hour prior to the event and maybe after about 30 minutes after the event? From, let us say, from the fire blast until 7:00 that evening.

A. One unusual event which occurred before the event were a number of high-high alarms in the San Jose area and along the peninsula.

Q. And what does that indicate to you? And where did that happen?

A. I don't recall the specific locations, but I remember that they were in the general vicinity of the San Jose area and the peninsula, which are fed from Milpitas. A high-high alarm tells us that the pressure has reached a level above the maximum operating pressure.

Q. And that would be, over 500 or 400? Actually, the MOP in your system, is what I'm asking.

A. I believe the MOP for Milpitas is 375 or 378, somewhere around there.

Q. So it was a 378 was a high-high alarm that came in and that's unusually high?

A. To have a number of high-high alarms in a general vicinity is unusual.

Q. Do you recall how many of those?

A. No, not specifically.

Q. If you don't, that's fine.

A. No, I don't remember. I know there were several.

Q. And do you know at what time it happened?

A. I don't remember the time. I know it was before reports of an explosion.

Q. Okay. And after that high-high alarm, what other unusual events did you notice?

A. I think the high-high alarms were probably the only unusual thing I remember occurring before the -- we reported the explosion.

One other unusual occurrence was the pressure drop at Martin Station. I don't recall if that was before or after the report of the explosion.

Q. Do you, by any chance, recall how much the pressure drop was?

A. I believe it was somewhere around 300 pounds.

Q. It dropped by 300 pounds or it dropped to 300 pounds?

A. By.

Q. Okay. And that was before the rupture?

A. I don't remember the timeframe, the sequence, in comparison to the rupture.

Q. Okay. Do you know what time the rupture occurred?

A. No.

Q. Did you see anything on your SCADA to indicate that there was a rupture?

A. Nothing. The only indication of a rupture was by phone from the call center.

Q. And do you know when that happened?

A. No.

Q. So did that phone call occur before you saw the pressure drop or after? I understand, I'm just trying to narrow it down. I'm not trying to put you on the spot. I'm just trying to figure it out.

A. You know, I don't know. I think that the -- I know that the SCADA -- the pressure drop time is available somewhere, because all of that is documented to the second. So, from my own recollection, I don't remember which happened first.

Q. And do you understand that all of the phone conversations are also recorded through SCADA? That we can get a copy of your phone logs and maybe we can resolve that.

A. The phone logs should, I believe, have some type of time stamp associated with them.

Q. Okay.

MR. CHHATRE: Yes, sir?

MR. FASSETT: Just clarification.

BY MR. FASSETT:

Q. So all you have is pressure recordings, correct?

A. Yes.

Q. You do not have flow measurement between Milpitas to the end of the system?

A. There is no flow measurements that I'm aware of between Milpitas and Martin Station.

Q. So absent flow measurement, you couldn't use the classic method of determining rupture, which would be pressure dropped, the volume increased, correct?

A. Correct.

MR. FASSETT: Thank you.

BY MR. ~~SHORI~~: CHHATRE

Q. So if pressure drops by itself, what does that mean to you? What about the information about the pressure drops, what does that mean to you?

MR. JAQUES: You're going to have to be more specific on that question.

BY MR. ~~SHORI~~: CHHATRE

Q. I'm just if you see a pressure drops -- I think what Bob said was short of -- I'm just saying what that does a pressure drop mean to you?

A. It could mean a malfunction of a valve. We've had SCADA at times give us incorrect values of pressures, making drastic increases or decreases because of --

Q. Has that happened in the past?

MR. JAQUES: Let him finish his answer.

MR. GENERA: Yes. It's not unusual to see pressures drop or increase outside of normal operating pressures on SCADA.

BY MR. ~~SHORT~~: CHHATRE

Q. Of that magnitude of psi?

A. Correct.

MR. GUNTHER: Bob Fassett, PG&E?

BY MR. FASSETT:

Q. But it would be safe to say that a pressure drop is an anomalous condition that you would further investigate?

A. Correct.

Q. And did you further investigate?

A. We did.

MR. FASSETT: Thank you.

MR. CHHATRE: You took my question.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. So what actions would you take after you see something like that? For me, you said it might be a malfunction of a valve. And I don't know what that means. And you said something else. So what does malfunction of a valve mean?

A. Sometimes valves will not operate according to -- some of these valves are old and sometimes get stuck. We've had to dispatch mechanics to locations throughout the system to check on valves that appear to be operating unusually.

Q. And is that log available some place? We would request

that you prepare that information. Would that be stored some place?

A. Those types of communications are in the GLS when they occur.

Q. I'm sorry, what is GLS?

A. Gas logging system.

Q. I'm sorry?

A. Gas logging system.

Q. Oh, GLS?

A. Yes.

MR. CHHATRE: Thank you.

MR. GUNTHER: Bob?

BY MR. FASSETT:

Q. When you say sometimes a valve gets stuck, you mean sometimes control valves, not the valves that are required to be operated manually by a mechanic in the first place?

A. Right, correct.

Q. Thank you.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. Now, on line 132, do you recall a situation like this that the valve was stuck and the pressure dropped -- I would say, so that it's not an open-ended question -- over the last couple of years?

MR. JAQUES: I'm sorry. I just didn't understand what that question was. Can you repeat it?

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. Okay. Do you recall in the last couple of years on line 132, which ruptured, do you recall any incidents where the pressure dropped by 2-300 psi because the valve was stuck?

A. On line 132?

Q. Yes, sir.

A. Not that I can remember.

Q. Thank you.

Do you recall on the other system lines in the past couple of years where the pressure dropped like that because the valve was stuck? And those lines would be 101 and 109.

A. Not when I was on duty.

Q. Yeah, that's all you can answer. Okay.

Now, what happens when you change your shift in your control room? What procedure do you have in a shift change?

A. From normal?

Q. From normal.

A. Normally, it involves a transfer of a written summary from one shift to the next.

Q. Okay.

A. We also, by normal practice, review the GLS for the shift preceding.

Q. What is GLS?

A. Gas logging system.

Q. Okay.

A. And that would have any material events that would be worth --

Q. Okay.

A. -- noting.

There's also a verbal debriefing --

Q. Okay.

A. -- of the day's events or the shift's events, rather, between operators.

Q. Yes, sir.

And typically how long it takes? I'm sorry, I didn't want to interrupt you.

A. It takes usually between 10 to 15 minutes. Sometimes longer if there's more activity.

Q. Depending on the activity, then.

If I recall correctly, there are three control room operators in San Francisco or are there four?

A. There's normally three.

Q. Okay. Per shift?

A. Per shift.

Q. And what are the typical shift hours?

A. 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Q. And how are -- are the people constantly on each shift, or do you rotate shifts?

A. Any ~~give~~ given operator or transmission coordinator could work anywhere from one to four consecutive shifts.

Q. But would they be all morning shifts or night shifts?
A. In any given stint of shifts, it would either be exclusively day or exclusively night.
Q. So, once again, one to four consecutive morning shifts and consecutive night shifts?
A. Correct.
Q. And how do you switch -- or do you switch at all from morning to evening shift? When I say you, I mean the controllers.
A. We have a six-week schedule, and the schedule for one person usually includes a combination of day and night shifts.
Q. So during your tenure, I guess, as far as the vast majority goes, do you recall any time during the shift change, communications -- anybody mentioning it to you about a specific drop of 2-300 psi on lines 132, 109, or the sister lines?
A. No, I don't remember that ever being mentioned.
Q. And since you mentioned that the valves can get stuck occasionally on different locations and different lines, do you have any recollection of how does the valves on 132 -- do you recall any unusual situations of them getting stuck as compared to the other two lines --
A. Can you repeat the question?
Q. Sure. Do you -- the answer you gave is sometimes the valves get stick -- like 2-300 psi. And my question is I'm trying to compare these three lines with their sister lines, in my opinion, these would be the same construction, the same location,

coming from the same compressor station. I'm just trying to get a feeling as to whether --

MR. FASSETT: A point of clarification. I would not classify -- I would not classify these as similar lines. They were built over various, long periods of time for different reasons, out of different materials and different well classifications, different construction methods, from 1930 through 1990.

MR. CHHATRE: We'll just call them T-lines radiating from Milpitas with using the same MOD. Would that be reasonable?

MR. FASSETT: That would be reasonable.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. So on those three lines, how do you compare the events, like a drop of these, because of a valve problem, getting stuck, leaving open -- whatever -- on these three lines? Which of these three lines would have more events versus less events?

A. I don't think I can answer that. I wouldn't know.

Q. Do you recall these events occurring on all three lines in the past?

MR. JAQUES: I object. He's asked and answered that. He said no, he doesn't recall any.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay, all right.

MR. JAQUES: We're going to be a long time if you ask the same things again.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. Briefly, once you got a phone call about the fire and rupture, what action did you take, if any?

A. If we suspect that it could be related to a line, we would call the division foreman and alert him of the possibility of an event.

Q. And did you do that?

A. I didn't make any of those calls. Normally, that role would be something that a gas system operator might do.

Q. Okay. The last question: Did you know if a gas system operator made such a call?

A. I believe a call was made.

MR. CHHATRE: Thank you very much.

MR. GUNTHER: Okay. Any more questions?

MR. SHORI: I've got some follow-ups, unless somebody else has to clear first.

BY MR. SHORI:

Q. This -- I guess in regard to the 300 psi G-drops on SCADA that you see, it seemed to me that you're saying that that's a very common occurrence in terms of seeing that on SCADA? I mean, it seemed to be -- it didn't seem to be an unusual event to you, the way you characterized it. Do you see this often?

A. I wouldn't characterize it as common, but it's not unusual. We have at times for unexplainable reasons, our indication on SCADA might deviate for a matter of seconds, from the -- what is registering and I could probably best characterize

as blip -- as a blip. And these happen from time to time. And sometimes occur in a range higher than 300 pounds.

Q. Okay. Any particular line in particular or it could be any line where you see these types of blips?

A. It could be any line.

Q. The 300 psi that we were talking about, was that on line 132?

A. That was at Martin Station on line 132.

Q. Okay. And the valve malfunctions that occur -- that cause these?

A. They are usually remote valves, valves that we can operate from the control room. Manual valves usually seem to maintain a steady position.

Q. Okay. And I understand that. But in terms of those remote valves, is it common for them to move -- to change to some level that would cause you to see that change? I mean if a valve is causing the change that you said you're seeing, what would cause the valve to change to see that? I mean, wouldn't it be controlled in order for that to happen? So is it doing that on its own that you would see that? Can you explain that?

A. Well, a manual valve wouldn't likely do that.

Q. Right. But an automated valve -- a control valve that you do have a remote control, would it do that?

A. It's not common, but occasionally a remote valve could get stuck in any given position and might require a -- a visit

from a field person to check on -- to see if it's, indeed, stuck or not.

Q. Does that -- is that saying, then, it was in open and then somehow it reduces itself to the point that you -- that it requires that kind of a trip?

A. Usually it -- where I've seen it happen is a valve is in a specific setting or location and we're asking the valve to move remotely, and the signal is sent, but the valve might have oil or debris or something that's physically preventing it from moving to the desired location.

Q. And earlier -- basically when you saw that condition, when you saw that abnormal condition in terms of the pressure reduction, you indicated you took actions in response to that on line 132 on September 9th. What actions did you take?

A. In response to what?

Q. Do you consider the fact that you saw the 300 pound drop or that you saw pressure reduction on line 132, would you consider that as an anomalous condition or an abnormal condition?

A. Yeah.

Q. In response to that, what actions did you take?

A. I believe what I did in response to that was I called the -- I can't remember if -- I called a -- I think I was asked to call a transmission system planner that would be available. I think by the time we -- I had noticed the pressure drop, there was suspicion that there was a line break. And what I did was I

pulled out -- or accessed a geographical information system which shows the location of the transmission pipes, to see if the report of an explosion -- the location of the reported location was anywhere near the -- any of our transmission lines.

Q. So that suspicion that you had that there was a line break, was that prior to you getting a call from the gas call center?

A. No, our first indication of a possible line break was the call from the call center.

Q. Where did you log your actions in regard to that?

A. The actions of?

Q. Well, you're having an abnormal condition. You're responding to it. Where would you log it -- either then or after the fact, where would you log what you did?

A. The actions of any types of communications were handwritten by myself. As far as my actions to confirm the location of the pipe in relation to the event location, I -- there wasn't any documentation of that, per se. That is something I just did.

Q. So you have handwritten notes available?

A. I took handwritten notes of calls that I made and received once we began to suspect that there was a line break.

Q. What is the Vox logger? What does that refer to?

A. The Vox logger?

Q. Um-hum.

A. I don't know what that is. That might be the phone recordings.

Q. And I think at some point you had indicated that incidents that come into you aren't logged into the gas logging system? You don't log incidents that are reported to you?

A. When we receive calls from the call center of reports of events that might be related to the transmission system or our distribution system, even, those -- that information is put into the log.

Q. How come there's nothing in the log for the -- for the incident of the rupture, for that time?

A. I don't know -- I don't know. I don't -- normally, when someone receives a call, the person who receives the call is -- makes notation of the information.

Q. You said you received a call from the customer call center or somewhere?

A. Our control room did. I didn't personally receive a call.

Q. Okay.

MR. SHORI: That's it for me. I think you have one or two.

MR. KATCHMAR: I have just a couple -- DOT.

BY MR. KATCHMAR:

Q. You said you just -- you all just moved in together. Has there been any problems with that or is it better --

A. No.
Q. -- or not as good as it used to be or what?
MR. JAQUES: Personal opinion.
MR. GENERA: I think it's better.
BY MR. KATCHMAR:
Q. Any problems with the control system, ongoing stuff that happens over and over and over and over?
MR. JAQUES: I'm sorry. I'm not sure what you're asking.
Do you understand the question?
MR. GENERA: No. Can you restate?
BY MR. KATCHMAR:
Q. Any abnormal situations with the control center that occur repeatedly?
A. No.
Q. Okay. Where is your storage, gas storage?
A. Our underground storage facilities?
Q. Yes.
A. We have one -- we have three. We have one at McDonald Island near Stockton. We have one called Los Medanos and another one called Pleasant Creek.
Q. Los -- spell that last one?
A. It's L-o-s, space, M-e-d-a-n-o-s.
Q. And I guess I'm asking for where are they on the earth? Are they in between -- are they in between Milpitas and Martin?

A. No.

Q. Okay. On this log -- I found it -- on the gas logging system, at 6:12 -- which is when we understand the event occurred, okay? Just to let you know. We understand that it occurred 6:11, 6:12 -- there's an acknowledgment at 6:04. There's a "K-4 off line," at 6:12. And then at 6:12 somebody says, "Thanks." And then at 6:30:27, Valenti says, "Just received a call from the Concord Dispatch informing us of a house fire in San Ramon caused by a gas meter explosion. GSR en route."

And then -- that was 1630. And then 1659, Valenti says, "Per incident in San Ramon is false. Per on-call supervisor Joel Hart there were cardboard boxes stored near gas meter. Somehow cardboard caught fire and the heat caused the indexes to melt. There was no release of gas, no damage to structure, and meter is being replaced at this time. Whew!" W-h-e-w, exclamation.

And I guess my question is, if they put that in there, why wouldn't there be anything about this San Bruno event?

A. It sounds like the event you're referring to is at least an hour before the explosion occurred.

Q. You're right, 16. That's 4:00. You're absolutely correct. I'm sorry, I get that 24-hour thing mixed up.

But, still, they log that one, okay? And so it tells me that they are logging things.

MR. KATCHMAR: Yes, sir?

MR. FASSETT: Point of clarification, if it doesn't

pertain to this gentleman, how would he know why somebody did something? It's kind of like saying he knows what's in their head and what their intentions are.

MR. KATCHMAR: No, I'm asking him about the log itself. And he said we use it. But then there's nothing in here about the San Bruno event.

But I did find this one earlier that's in there.

So I'm just asking the question --

MR. FASSETT: I understood --

MR. KATCHMAR: -- they use it --

MR. FASSETT: I understand it as a legitimate question. I don't understand how this gentleman, who did not take the call, could answer that question.

MR. KATCHMAR: Okay, I'm done.

BY MR. KATCHMAR:

Q. I've got one last question: Is there anything we have not asked you here today that you think we need to know about?

A. The only thing I might add is it seemed -- it seemed that the explosion on the line was not clear to us. It wasn't clear to us immediately after it happened that it might have been a gas line explosion. I think there were some reports that a plane had crashed. And so, although we received that information, we were still investigating and researching as if it could be a line break on one of the peninsula lines. But, for some time there was uncertainty as to what this catastrophe actually was.

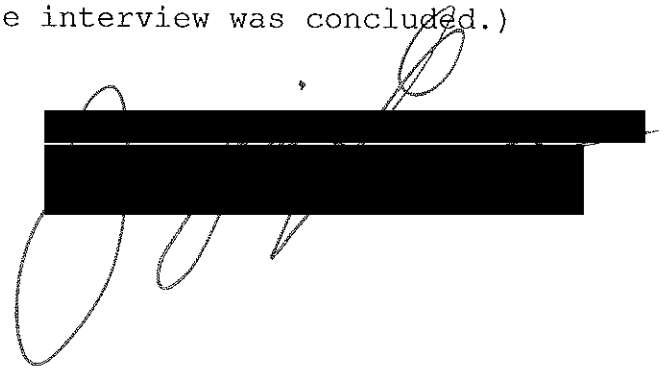
Q. All right. Thank you very much.

MR. GUNTHER: I'd say one more -- I guess would the interviewee like to make a statement for the record?

MR. GENERA: No.

MR. GUNTHER: Thank you for being here. I appreciate your time.

(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 Joaquin Genera
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.

[redacted]
Richard Friant
Official Reporter