UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
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ENBRIDGE OIL SPILL	*	Docket No.: DCA-10-MP-007
MARSHALL, MICHIGAN	*	
	*	

Interview of: BRIAN WHITTAKER

Conference Room
Holiday Inn Express
630 East Chicago Street
Coldwater, Michigan

Thursday,
July 29, 2010

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice, at 12:05 p.m.

BEFORE: KARL GUNTHER
Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

KARL GUNTHER, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
[redacted]

MATTHEW R. NICHOLSON, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Railroad, Pipeline, &
Hazardous Materials Investigations
[redacted]

JAMES BUNN, General Engineer
BRIAN PIERZINA, General Engineer
U.S. Department of Transportation
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials
Safety Administration
[redacted]

JAY A. JOHNSON, Senior Compliance Specialist
Enbridge Energy Company, Inc.
[redacted]

TOM TIDWELL
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
[redacted]

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

(12:05 p.m.)

MR. GUNTHER: I'm Karl Gunther, National Transportation Safety Board. We are investigating an oil spill in Marshall, Michigan on July 26, 2010.

INTERVIEW OF BRIAN WHITTAKER

BY MR. GUNTHER:

Q. Could you please give your name, address, and phone number for the record?

A. Brian Whittaker. My address is [redacted] Phone number: [redacted]

Q. And could you give your job title and company affiliation?

A. I work for Enbridge. I am the station technician.

Q. Can you describe what you did during the oil spill, you know, before the oil spill and afterwards?

A. Okay, basically, I came into work in the morning there. It must have been around 7:30. I went to the PLM. I always go in there and discuss with the mechanic what's going on for the day, see what he's got going. Anyway, they told me --

Q. What day is this at 7:30?

A. This is 7:30 in the morning on Monday the 26th.

Q. All right.

A. Okay. And they told me they had heard that there was low pressures out a Marshall station, so I immediately called the

control center, asked them, you know, if they've had problems. And they said they had. They called it a column separation, and they asked me if I was at the station. I said, "No, I'm at the Marshall PLM, but I'm on my way right now."

And it took me maybe five minutes to get -- it's just around the corner. And I got to the station, went over and seen the pressure on the panel view, and seen that there was like two pounds of suction, four pounds of discharge. And then called the control center and let them know that I was on site and what I'd seen.

And from there, I went into the pump house, checked all my pumps and down the pits, make sure there was nothing, no gaskets blown out or anything like that. The pump house was fine. I checked my transmitters. Everything seemed to be working fine with them. Checked all of my underground and closures, maked sure there was nothing leaking there, and those were all fine, and did a perimeter around my station inside the station fencing.

So, and then came back inside. Basically called back the control center and said that, "You know, I haven't found nothing here at the station that would say that there was a leak here or anything, so the station looks good." From there, I guess -- I think I proceeded to call Darrell Carter because I knew he -- we were in the middle of a pig run, and I knew that they were, you know, wanting to get that pig moving, and I was just seeing if -- getting an update for when the time would be when it would

probably be passing my station. So Darrell and I just talked, just kind of, you know, kind of what was going on, and kind of like that.

So I was at the station, I'm trying to think, must have been around 10:00 -- excuse me, 9:00 I got a call from Kelly in the control center. Kelly asked me, "Are you sure everything's okay?" And I said, you know, "Yep." And I'd even went around again to check everything because that's just the way I am, and I said, you know, "Everything looks good here at the station." I says, "What do you want me to do? Is there a plan of what we're going to do?" And he just says, "I just want you to stay there at the station." So I said, "That's fine." So I stayed at the station.

I guess I told -- I'm not sure of the time when I was -- I called my boss and I talked to him for a while just on the, you know, what was going on, and I asked him if he thought it was okay that I go and maybe just go out and just check some of the right of way or check something. I was just going to go maybe down to the Kalamazoo River valve that was downstream farther of the station, and then go one up from upstream the station at Leroy. He said, "Confirm it with the control center to make sure it's fine with them." And they said, "Yeah, that's fine."

So I guess, basically, from there I called the PLM to ask them what they -- you know, if they've heard anything, what was going on, and I talked to John. I don't know his last name.

He was in there from Enbridge, one of the guys that had been inspecting. He said that the PLM was already out looking, I guess.

So, I went down the road, down Division, and I decided for some reason to look to my right. There's an industrial park there and I seen the trucks there, so I went down there just to catch up with the guys, see what was going on, and that's when the Consumers Energy people were coming out and said, "Yeah, it's not us; it must be you guys," because they had oil on their boots. So them guys went back to check back there. I'm not sure exactly who it was, if it was Ben and Phil and --

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, we kind of talked to them already so we got their record, so you don't have to guesstimate.

MR. WHITTAKER: Okay, all right. I called my boss, Brian, and, you know, "It looks like we've got an emergency." What I wanted to do was -- and I had heard it was in the creek, so I went back to Division and I wanted to see where exactly the creek came out because I really wasn't sure.

Well, as I got on Division, the fire department was already there. So, I went right there and talked to -- I think it was the Marshall chief there. And, you know, the oil coming down pretty good then, so I told them -- and Ben had come by then behind me, and I told Ben that I would go down to the mouth of the Kalamazoo where the Talmadge Creek enters and check to see what the situation is there, so that's where I went. And when I got

there, you know, it was just like kind of rainbowish. It was nothing -- really a whole lot of nothing there yet, so I was really hoping that we had caught it by then.

So I talked to Ben, you know, they were already on their way with the boom trucks and stuff, and we put some absorbent booms down, and I actually went to the next farm because I used to live there, and threw some more absorbent boom in farther upstream. And we were then trying to find a good spot where we could -- you know, where the heavy stuff would be, where we could put some trucks and -- with a suck truck that was on 15 Mile, I believe, and that's where they started their response there, the suck truck, I guess, so --

I'm trying to think after that I was in communication with Mick Collier because I wanted to see, I went down to the -- no, I got to take that back. I think the guys were on 15 1/2 Mile Road; that'd be the next one upstream of A Drive. That's where the guys were putting in at. So I went down to the bridge at 15 Mile and I could see it looked like some residue coming down, so I contacted with Mick, and basically from there on I was just working with Mick Collier.

We were just trying to go and try to stay ahead of the slick. We were in the Squaw Creek subdivision for a while looking around, looking for anywhere where we could put boats in, put booms, stuff like that. Then he had me go down to the Ceresco Dam. I think it was the Battle Creek Fire Department was already

there with their HazMat team, and I stayed with them for quite a while, I think at least till 4:00. And then we decided -- Mick found another spot further down at the county park is where we decided to put the booms in. So, I went and helped them put the boom in down there, and that's basically where I was the rest of the night till 11:00, so --

BY MR. GUNTHER:

Q. What formal training do you have?

A. I've been a pipeliner for 15 years. I was a line locater for 5. I started the station technician job back in 2006. As far as, I mean, I've had all the Enbridge training. I've had some classes. All of the -- well, I guess what the Enbridge training would be, let's see, what do we call it HAZWOPER training. I've had that for, I guess, as long as we've had it, so --

Q. Are you qualified under the OQ program?

A. Yes.

Q. How many years of experience? I think we covered that.

A. I have 25. Well, 24. It will be 25 next year.

Q. Let me ask you a question. When you first called the control center and you reported everything was okay, did you tell them that you had no suction pressure?

A. I told them what the pressure was.

Q. Yeah. All right. Then, you know -- or like two pounds or you know?

A. Yes.
Q. Yeah. Okay, so they were aware of that?
A. Yes.
Q. And what time was that, roughly?
A. I guess it probably would have been, well, right when I got there around 7:45 I guess. You know, some of my times -- I don't carry a watch, so --
MR. GUNTHER: Right. Okay. All right. Well, I don't have any more. PHMSA?
MR. PIERZINA: Bear with me one moment, Brian.
MR. WHITTAKER: Sure.
BY MR. PIERZINA:
Q. So in relation to the pressure problems that they mentioned at -- you got to the PLM shop about 7:30?
A. Yes.
Q. And somebody had mentioned there were pressure problems?
A. They said they were low pressures at the station. That's what they said.
Q. Low pressure at the station. Do you recall who that was or was it --
A. Actually, I think it was Jim Meny, yeah, because I'm not sure who talked with -- I don't know how he found out, but Jim was --
MR. JOHNSON: And he's a mechanic?
MR. WHITTAKER: He's a mechanic, so --

BY MR. PIERZINA:

Q. Were you called out by the control center?

A. Called out? No, I wasn't.

Q. If there was a station problem, is it the control center that calls you out, or who calls you out?

A. Yes, it is.

Q. You get notified by a control center?

A. Operator, usually, yes.

Q. And they just say, "We've got X going on somewhere," and you go and investigate?

A. That's right. And actually, I would have been just getting done with my shift for that week. I had the week prior that I was on call, so there would have been a new person starting that morning, actually.

Q. And I'm glad you brought that up. So during -- is there any normal working hours for abnormal conditions, or it is always the on-call person?

A. It's always the on-call person.

Q. Okay, so somebody's on call for a week, and they cover how much area?

A. Well, how we work is the on-call person will get called. It depends on -- if this is what you're asking, and then whosever [sic] is responsible, we call that person, and if they can't, you know, go out, we go out.

Q. Then you go. Okay. Yeah, and that's important to

understand.

BY MR. JOHNSON:

Q. So in this case, if you got called being the on-call person --

A. I would have went anyway because that's my station.

Q. But at Niles, then you would have called up Darrell?

A. I would have called up Darrell, yes.

Q. And if he couldn't go, you'd have had to travel there?

A. That's right.

Q. All right.

BY MR. PIERZINA:

Q. So roughly 7:45, you're at the station and you see the low pressures that people talked about when you got to the PLM shop and just are investigating to find anything at the station that you can see as a problem?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you smell crude oil at any point?

A. No, I didn't.

BY MR. JOHNSON:

Q. So, I mean, we kind of work together.

A. Yes.

Q. So when you go down Division --

A. Yes.

Q. -- so the crude oil was to the right. Your station was to the left. Is that how you go down --

A. Where the rupture, or whatever it was, would be on my left-hand side as I was going to the station on Division.

MR. PIERZINA: Division's also on the left.

BY MR. JOHNSON:

Q. Okay. I wasn't quite sure. I haven't been out there --

A. Well, you can come in from two different ways, too.

Q. But the way you'd normally go is Division, right?

A. Yes.

Q. So that was on your left?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. Sorry, Brian.

A. And, I don't know, I mean, I didn't have my windows down. It's been hot.

MR. PIERZINA: Sure.

MR. WHITTAKER: I had the air on so I didn't, you know.

MR. JOHNSON: There's nothing wrong there.

MR. WHITTAKER: Yeah.

MR. JOHNSON: We just didn't know.

MR. WHITTAKER: I'm just saying that's -- probably had I maybe had the windows down maybe I might have.

BY MR. PIERZINA:

Q. I might not have kept up -- so when you and Mick were trying to get ahead of the spill, was oil already in the Kalamazoo River at that point?

A. There was like a sheen. It wasn't like it was right

now. Nothing there like that. It was just kind of coming around. It wasn't very wide. Just a small kind of a trickle coming around so we knew apparently it was coming.

Q. It's coming.

A. Yes.

Q. And what time would you put to that?

MR. JOHNSON: Ballpark.

MR. WHITTAKER: Maybe around anywhere between noon and 1:00 maybe. Well, I can't say that. It might have been -- maybe it was around 1:00, you know. Like I said, I lost all track of time once it started because I was running basically.

BY MR. PIERZINA:

Q. So if we say ballpark 1:00?

A. Mick might have a maybe a better --

BY MR. JOHNSON:

Q. We'll talk to Mick tomorrow.

A. Okay. All right.

Q. So ballpark at 1:00, plus or minus an hour? And verify with Mick?

A. Okay. All right.

Q. Is that fair?

A. That's fair enough.

Q. We won't tie you to that either.

A. No, I'm just saying I did; I lost all track of time afterwards because --

MR. PIERZINA: No cell phone for a watch?

MR. WHITTAKER: What's -- yeah, I didn't have a phone and, well, yeah.

MR. GUNTHER: Well, you had one. It was just at the bottom of the river.

MR. WHITTAKER: I had one at the time -- well, yeah.

MR. JOHNSON: Use it for a boom maker.

BY MR. BUNN:

Q. So if the control room had noticed a problem at Marshall station Sunday night, they would have called you?

A. I would hope so.

Q. You were the on-call person?

A. I was the on-call person, yes.

Q. So you were the one to notify if they determined there was a problem?

A. Yes, they would have -- yep. Because I was still on-call that night.

BY MR. PIERZINA:

Q. That would be for any abnormal condition, right?

A. Yes.

Q. So in this instance you've got a tool in the line, you know, that's moving down the line, and so they've got Darrell Carter heading to Niles station to isolate the station?

A. Yep.

Q. That's kind of normal, so they would -- you would expect

them to be communicating with Darrell for any responsibilities that he would have associated with that?

A. With Niles?

Q. Right.

A. Yes.

Q. So were you prepared for, you know, the tool coming towards Marshall or Stockbridge or --

A. I was. I mean, that's when I called Darrell just to see if there was any updates on any times and anything. I just talked to him with what was kind of going on, so -- you know, and the pig wasn't moving, so it was like we had no idea when it was going to be coming through in Marshall.

BY MR. JOHNSON:

Q. Did you have a prior estimate of time from the control center when the tool was going to land in Marshall?

A. You know, I did, and I'm trying to think when it was.

Q. And I don't want to speak for you, was it, because you didn't come out early --

A. No.

Q. -- so it probably wasn't during your dayshift --

A. No. It would have been -- actually, I think it had moved back so far, I think, the times had, that it was going to be on the following -- the next day, on Tuesday morning like around -- I think it was around 6:00 or 7:00 local, and I wasn't going to be there to catch it anyway because we were supposed to

go to some tech meetings. They were actually going to have some other people from Griffith come out. I think it was Dennis Gabrielle was going to come up and isolate my station for the pig, so --

BY MR. PIERZINA:

Q. Dennis Gabrielle?

A. That's who I was keeping in contact with.

Q. So a coordination for catching the tool at Marshall might have been going on with somebody else because you weren't --

A. Because technically I wasn't supposed to be --

Q. -- you weren't going to be there?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. And Dennis Gabriella is?

A. An Enbridge technician.

Q. An Enbridge technician out of Griffith?

A. Yes.

Q. So you guys run tools. So you're experienced in receiving or catching a tool?

A. Bypassing.

Q. Just bypassing the station to allow the tool to go by?

A. That's right.

Q. Can you describe how that process works generally?

A. Generally, all I'm doing is closing the station's suction and discharge valve, and it's usually like a half-hour prior to the pig coming to the station, so --

Q. That's all prior to the pig arrival?

A. Yes.

Q. And who and how do you communicate those steps?

A. With the control room operator. When they shut the pumps off, then I call them up, "Are we ready to isolate the station?" They say, "Yes, go ahead." I shut both the suction and the discharge valve, and I go out and verify it visually, and then I come back and I call the control center to let them know that the station is bypassed so we're ready for the tool. And then they do have pig trackers that are tracking the pig.

Q. Is that a situation where you'd lock out those valves?

A. Lock them out?

Q. Right.

A. No, I don't lock them out.

Q. Okay. So during that operation there, you also have a mainline valve?

A. Yes.

Q. And so you would want to make sure -- is a part of that process to make sure that the mainline valve is open?

A. A visual. I make sure visually, yes.

Q. You say make sure --

A. I mean, the station has just been running and the mainline valve is right there, you know, just down from the discharge valve.

Q. Is there a written procedure for what we're just talking

about?

A. I don't have a written one at my station. I'm trying to think as far as --

MR. PIERZINA: Jay, you're welcome to help.

MR. JOHNSON: I believe that would be a control center procedure. Their procedure is to call up the technician and have him isolate the station.

MR. PIERZINA: So it isn't in a certain book one, two, three, four?

MR. JOHNSON: It would be in the control center in the ECC database; isolate which -- enter it into control center database, which, like I say, they were interviewing them yesterday. Something that you've been -- I think during some of the audits, I'll bring that up and the guys will talk. It will say isolate a station, and it will tell them the steps. It will say shut the pumps off, contact the station technician and close the valves, verify that the valves are closed. So that's where the procedure would come in. What his procedure is is he's got a, if you will, a stand-alone procedure is how to close a valve.

BY MR. PIERZINA:

Q. Yeah. And I guess the procedure I'm talking about would be to ensure that prior to isolating the suction and discharge valves that you ensure that the mainline valve is open, right? Because if you shut -- you know, isolate the station with the mainline valve closed, then you're --

A. You've got problems.

Q. -- against a valve.

MR. JOHNSON: In their situation, again -- and Brian and I got the time in in how the stations are operated in Minnesota, if you will. Down here, the line can't run with the station. Their station valves closed because of the orientation of the valve. It's not in between the suction discharge tees. So, you know, if your tees are here, Brian, and the valve --

MR. WHITTAKER: Yeah.

MR. BUNN: Again, for the record, we're drawing a picture.

MR. JOHNSON: The valve's down here, so you're used to the mainline valve being in here. His valve is just downstream.

MR. WHITTAKER: Or up -- downstream?

MR. JOHNSON: Downstream of this, right?

MR. WHITTAKER: Yes, it's downstream.

MR. JOHNSON: So he's running like this, so if the main line is running, which it was, just shut the pumps off, this has to be over -- and they couldn't run the main line, where as here, this valve can be closed. Or is it the bypass valve like you're used to, so you would open this and close these two to run a pig by it?

MR. NICHOLSON: But you're saying you don't have that bypass?

MR. JOHNSON: Not down on 6B.

MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: Here, the bypass valve was -- probably you're aware, and Brian and I are, is here.

MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah.

MR. JOHNSON: It's not a bypass valve.

MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah, it's just either/or.

MR. JOHNSON: It's a main line sectionalizing valve. So when they're calling him up there saying, "Well, okay, we want to close these two valves," not assuming this is a straight chunk of 30-inch pipe, and we close these so there's no suction on the main line which might stick a pig in that tee. So that's why we're isolating here.

MR. BUNN: Got it. Yep.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. So, like I said, the control center is -- you know, they've got a procedure for running a pig by -- isolate a station. Their procedure then will tell call up Brian, "Okay, we need you to isolate those valves." So just like he talked about, and then verify back to them. So his procedure would be how do you close a station valve. So that's a maximal procedure on how to close a valve or open a valve.

MR. NICHOLSON: How -- does the control center get status from a main line valve?

MR. JOHNSON: I believe they've got status on it also.

MR. WHITTAKER: They should have status on the station suction --

MR. JOHNSON: Discharge.

MR. WHITTAKER: -- and discharge.

MR. NICHOLSON: Why do they have a technician physically shut the suction discharge? Why wouldn't those be remote? The main line is remote, right?

MR. JOHNSON: In some areas we have that. I don't honestly know that.

MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: And it may be they want verification.

MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: You know, we don't want a pig stuck in a line.

MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, I see.

MR. JOHNSON: So I'm just guessing now that they're like, uh-uh, it's too big of a risk. We want Brian's eyes on -- you know, because they can see the remote indication and image it, but they're not seeing where that stem is like Brian is. Because not only did he shut them -- and you saw indications locally, they saw them remotely -- he saw the stem was down.

MR. NICHOLSON: Was down. All right.

MR. PIERZINA: Thanks, that helps a lot.

MR. GUNTHER: Makes a big difference.

MR. PIERZINA: I'll defer questions. Until I come up with another one.

MR. BUNN: So just to clarify, the mainline valve was

normally open?

MR. WHITTAKER: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: In this area. You know, we've got a lot of lines in a lot of different circumstances. On line 6B the mainline station valve is open. You know, if I take you on line 5 in another part of Michigan, it's going to be a bypass valve and it's normally closed when the line is running because we're pulling through the station.

MR. NICHOLSON: This is getting maybe off subject, but how do you -- when do you determine when to start Niles station and when to bypass it? You run your system on pressure? When you're operating the pumps you're maintaining pressure --

MR. JOHNSON: I want to say, yeah, it's pressure. I mean, you want to maintain whatever pressure. Not being a control center operator, you know, basically we operate in pairs; we need this discharge pressure and this suction pressure.

MR. NICHOLSON: Okay, all right.

MR. JOHNSON: On all these sections, and in order to keep those pressures, you know, we'd need higher discharge and then the same thing on the suction, on the downstream station you're going to have discharge, so you're pulling away.

MR. NICHOLSON: No, I understand.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay.

MR. NICHOLSON: But you do, yeah, you control the pressure?

BY MR. PIERZINA:

Q. And then the case of a tool in the line, you know, that's planned out, it's basically orchestrated by the control center, right?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. They've got the pig tracker communicating with them, and --

A. With the control center.

Q. And they tell you when they're shutting --

A. Well, I mean, we keep in contact with the control center for the schedule and everything, and then --

Q. But you don't --

A. When I'm there?

Q. Right. You don't shut the station valves until they've got the station shutdown, right?

A. No.

Q. So you're kind of flowing through the station with no pump pressure, and you're just --

MR. JOHNSON: You said they shut the units down?

MR. WHITTAKER: Yes, as soon as --

MR. JOHNSON: The units go down --

MR. WHITTAKER: That's my key. Usually the next -- that's usually when I end up calling them. Usually when I hear the station -- you know, the pumps go down, I call them, say, "Are we clear to isolate?" They says, "Yes, go ahead." You know, I

then go ahead and close both valves. And then, like I said, go out and visually check.

MR. NICHOLSON: So the pig clears the station and then they just start the pump back up?

MR. WHITTAKER: We have to --

MR. JOHNSON: He's going to --

MR. WHITTAKER: That's when we have to open it, you know.

MR. JOHNSON: They're going to tell him, please --

MR. WHITTAKER: De-isolate. Yeah, "Please de-isolate the station."

MR. JOHNSON: So then he does it in reverse.

MR. NICHOLSON: In reverse. I got it.

MR. GUNTHER: All right.

MR. NICHOLSON: I caught this late. I apologize.

MR. JOHNSON: And just so you know, earlier, you know, in between the Darrell conversations, if you would, he was able to isolate a station quite in advance of the pig coming in.

MR. NICHOLSON: Darrell?

MR. JOHNSON: Darrell.

MR. NICHOLSON: Right.

MR. JOHNSON: And then sometimes based on the line pressure and the needs, we can skip a station.

MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: Sort of like, "You know, we're not going

to need that station because of the pressures we're operating at" --

MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah.

MR. JOHNSON: -- "so go ahead and shut it down and go to the room instead of, you know, being 15 minutes ahead of it." So sometimes --

MR. NICHOLSON: I think you just answered my question.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Because I can see that I'm confusing you because it caught me off guard a little bit too. You know, and there's times we'll run the line depending on the throughput we need, without -- you know, we'll drop a couple stations off or pumps as you were asking.

MR. NICHOLSON: So, then I heard Darrell say he shut his station down right at, this has probably been talked about already, at 5:00?

MR. JOHNSON: Nope, nope.

MR. NICHOLSON: Or 6:10.

MR. JOHNSON: Well before the pig would have got there.

MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah, well, but then I heard you say you weren't expecting the pig till Monday or Tuesday or something, so --

MR. WHITTAKER: Well, with the changes in the times and everything, because like I say, it had gotten backed up from when -- I don't know. Every once in a while there are periods where they actually shut the line down, so, you know, they'll just

shut the line down and that will throw off the whole schedule again.

MR. NICHOLSON: So they just let Darrell shut down much earlier because they didn't need that station?

MR. JOHNSON: That's my understanding. I think part of it will come out in the control center interviews, you know, so what stations they needed and when. You know, if they have a chance that, you know, Darrell or Brian are on site during their normal hours, just like, you know, rather than calling you out in six hours, it's okay to take your station down now and isolate it, and they don't have to call them six hours later.

MR. NICHOLSON: So that might explain the discrepancies in the --

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. That, you know --

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. And then when I came back in I heard you guys talking about first response to the site? Something -- the controllers we heard in an earlier interview shut the valves remotely. That's what -- I forget who it was, Jeff or one of the earlier interviews had said -- right, they called the station. The station said, "We have isolated a line; there's oil." In a case like that, if they had isolated a line they knew it was near the Marshall station, so it should be a call to you --

A. I wouldn't -- you mean the mainline valve?

Q. Yes.

A. Unless the operator told me to shut the mainline valve.
Q. Well, they shut it remotely it sounds like.
A. Yes, because while -- you know, by the time they called, I was already out at the station. I had went down to start assisting with what was going on with --
Q. They did call. Okay.
A. Yeah, they made the call, so the operators would have, you know, would have shut the mainline valves.
MR. JOHNSON: So if the operators -- and like I say, part control center interviews, if an operator senses a leak and shuts valves in, he calls the district manager, the region manager --
MR. NICHOLSON: Who is?
MR. JOHNSON: Tom Fridel.
MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.
MR. JOHNSON: Or his designee, Bill Burdeau. But they called Tom in this case, and then Tom, then he will contact the pipeliners, if you will, the pipeline maintenance, not necessarily a technician unless -- depending on who they're going to use --
MR. NICHOLSON: So Jeff. Was it Jeff?
MR. JOHNSON: You know, if it's over at Niles, they're probably going to call Darrell because Darrell can get there faster than a pipeliner can. In this case, you've got a station technician, Brian; and a pipeliner, Jeff; and/or Ben. They're within a mile, and it's very uncommon to have that situation.

You're going to call the person to go out and verify the leak that's closest to that. That's the first thing you're going to do. At the same time you're letting the pipeline maintenance know that we are investigating a possible leak, be ready.

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. So you did get a call and that call was on -- I must have missed it. When did you receive the call from the operations center?

A. I didn't receive a call personally from the operation center, no.

Q. Okay.

A. No, no.

Q. Yours came from --

A. Basically what I did was -- you mean when I went out of the station to go start checking on things?

Q. Right.

A. It was basically my own -- I called my boss to see if it'd be okay if I could go down and check the Kalamazoo River valve downstream and then check the Leroy valve, which was upstream, and but I didn't even have to make it that far.

Q. Okay.

A. And I had confirmed it with the control center and let them know that I had -- you know, that I was leaving if it was okay with them, you know, that I left the station. They said, "Yeah, that's fine."

Q. How many pumps are in Marshall station?

A. We have four pumps. Actually, it's a fifth unit too, so five pumps but only two actually run.

Q. You guys got a lot of redundancy.

MR. JOHNSON: Well, there's a --

MR. NICHOLSON: Are they staged?

MR. JOHNSON: At one time this line was looped out, so as years have gone on, the capacity needs weren't there. We idled the loops.

MR. NICHOLSON: I see.

MR. JOHNSON: So, you know, pump stations were pumping, you know, essentially two 30-inch lines at one time.

MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah. Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: And then even since then capacity's gone down, and we've got some pressure restriction in place due to our -- what's been found in the tools that we run. Because we've got an ongoing maintenance program right now, so there is restrictions on that, so that's part of the reason that's the way we run the pumps.

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. Are they variable speed?

A. Yes.

Q. Are they running auto against pressure? I mean does the speed vary with the line pressure?

A. Well --

MR. JOHNSON: You have variable -- you have a VFD drive?

MR. WHITTAKER: No, I don't have a VFD, actually. No, I don't have a VFD at the -- I mean they can control --

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. So would run against a pressure control valve?

A. Yes, pressure.

Q. You just throttle the discharge, or is that on suction?

MR. JOHNSON: No, it's on discharge.

MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: We have some units, and that's why I asked you, we've got some stations with both VFD drives and that -- and it's a lot of, well, we need the pressure control valve because the VFD doesn't respond quick enough.

MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: But the VFD will give us a softer start and allow us to valve things in from an energy management standpoint.

MR. NICHOLSON: Good.

MR. GUNTHER: All right, any more questions? All right, cut it off.

(Whereupon, at 1:30 p.m., the interview in the above-entitled matter was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	ENBRIDGE OIL SPILL MARSHALL, MICHIGAN
	Interview of Brian Whittaker
DOCKET NUMBER:	DCA-10-MP-007
PLACE:	Coldwater, Michigan
DATE:	July 29, 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.

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Amy Shankleton-Novess
Official Reporter

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Kristen Shankleton
Transcriber