

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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PIPELINE RUPTURE NEAR *

HUNTINGTON BEACH, CALIFORNIA * Accident No.: DCA22FM001

ON OCTOBER 3, 2021 *

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Interview of: MICHAEL CONNER, VTS Watch Stander Supervisor
Marine Exchange of Southern California

Via telephone

Wednesday,
October 27, 2021

APPEARANCES:

ANDREW EHLERS, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

██████████, Investigator
Department of Homeland Security/United States Coast
Guard

I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:12 p.m. CST)

1 MR. EHLERS: All right, the recording has started.

2
3 MR. [REDACTED]: Okay. So, today is Wednesday, October the 27th,
4 2021, and the time is 9:12 p.m., Central Standard Time. My name
5 is [REDACTED], U.S. Coast Guard investigator COE, and the spelling
6 of my last name is [REDACTED].
7

8 Drew?

9 MR. EHLERS: And this is Andrew Ehlers, E H L E R S, I'm a
10 marine accident investigator with the NTSB.

11 MR. [REDACTED]: And this evening we're going to be visiting with
12 the VTS watch stand supervisor of the LALB region. And if you
13 could please state your name and spell the first and last of your
14 name, please?

15 MR. CONNER: Michael Conner, M I C H A E L, second
16 name -- last name is Conner, C O N N E R.

INTERVIEW OF MICHAEL CONNER

17
18 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

19 Q. Good evening, Mr. Conner, and thank you for joining us. We
20 appreciate it. You are a civilian employee of the Marine Exchange
21 VTS, LALB, correct?

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. Okay. And how long have you been an employee with that unit?

24 A. I was hired in 2004, but I reported here in the Coast Guard
25 in '99.

1 Q. Okay. Do you have any prior experience at any other DTS
2 units?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Okay. Are you a qualified watch stander?

5 A. I am a qualified watch stander and supervisor.

6 Q. And when were you qualified as a watch stander?

7 A. It would've been 1999.

8 Q. Okay. And what about as a supervisor?

9 A. Probably would have to go back through the records. It's
10 longer than I've been hired here as an employee, so it would've
11 been 2000, 2001-ish probably. I could track that down if you need
12 it specifically. I don't know off the top of my head either.

13 Q. Okay. And Mr. Conner, what was the process that you went
14 through to become a qualified watch stander?

15 A. At the time, there was -- we (indiscernible) and the Marine
16 Exchange had a watch qualification program that consisted of the
17 operations manual, captain to port instructions, and orders. I
18 had to stand a certain amount of hours of watch and I had to know
19 the local area, familiarization myself with the equipment at the
20 facility here.

21 Q. Okay. And are you IALA certified?

22 A. Yes, I went to -- back in '99 the Coast Guard did not have a
23 MITAG school. I went to a -- Seattle had the Coast Guard vessel
24 traffic school and I went to that one and then was basically
25 grandfathered in.

1 Q. Okay. Did you ever attend the course at MITAG?

2 A. No, I have not.

3 Q. I got you. Okay, and what means did you have to go through
4 to become qualified as a supervisor?

5 A. I was here for at least eight years, I know -- there was no
6 time kept. It was just that they asked me if I would like to be a
7 watch supervisor, I said sure. I had to go through a more
8 extensive -- everything that I did as a watch stander, but on a
9 more extensive level as far as knowing the location of rules and
10 regulations. I had to stand more watches as a watch supervisor, I
11 had to be signed off by numerous other watch supervisors, my boss,
12 I went through a board with the Coast Guard concerning -- to get
13 qualified for a board consistent with the Marine Exchange and the
14 Coast Guard back at the port. It was just a -- basically, it was
15 a more extensive -- instead of being able to refer to the watch
16 supervisor, I had to know the material to where I was -- because I
17 was the one in charge of knowing it. I don't know.

18 Q. Okay, got you. And what is your routine schedule for watch?

19 A. I come in and I stand my two hours on the radar, I go over
20 and I stand two hours on the desk. I spend most of the night on
21 the desk. As a watch supervisor, I feel it's important to be on
22 the watch floor and to be there for when there are
23 instances -- stuff that I feel it's important for me to be out and
24 observe the stuff. So, I stay out most of the night. If I need a
25 break, I get relieved, and take a break. It keeps me fresh and

1 that way if I have to fill in for somebody for bathroom breaks or
2 if there's an incident and I'm actually there, I'd see that and be
3 able to make my reports based on what I see and not third-hand
4 information and (indiscernible) and not being present. It allows
5 me to be out there and actually be a supervisor as I'm being paid
6 to do.

7 Q. Okay. And what is your actual work schedule?

8 A. My work schedule?

9 Q. Yes.

10 A. As far as -- I work three days on, three days off. Three
11 nights -- excuse me, three nights on, three nights off.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. From --

14 Q. Days and night?

15 A. No, sir, I stay on nights. I've been on nights for, I think,
16 22 years.

17 Q. Okay. And how many people do you supervise per watch?

18 A. It's just myself, another civilian, and a Coast Guard member.
19 So, it would be two members and myself on watch.

20 Q. Okay. So, the Coast Guard member comes under your
21 supervision, right?

22 A. Correct, but with the exception of when it comes to talking
23 to port authority when we both have to be in concurrence to do it.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. But yes, I am responsible for the watch.

1 Q. Got you. All right, do you recall being on watch -- on duty
2 January 25th, 2021?

3 A. Yes. I mean, yeah, that was the night of the craziness, so
4 yes. Hard to forget that night.

5 Q. Good. Okay, why don't you share with us what that craziness
6 was and why you remember it so well?

7 A. Well, it was a standard night and around 2:00 in the morning,
8 the winds came up, but we were anticipating winds for that day.
9 We sent a heavy weather bell early in anticipation of the winds at
10 2:00 in the morning. We did our first broadcast to the ships to
11 let them know that there was an anticipated high-wind event and
12 asking the ships to have their anchor at the ready and the second
13 engine in standby. Then we -- from there, about 3:00, 3:30, the
14 winds exceeded 35 knots, which according to our standards of care,
15 required us to shift to the heavy weather bell, which we were
16 already in, and notify my on-call Marine Exchange representative
17 of the wind and everything. And we proceeded to monitor all of
18 the vessels, and monitor anchor arms, and the wind conditions, the
19 current weather conditions, make sure the ships weren't dragging.
20 If they were dragging, we would notify them of our alarms and ask
21 them to verify.

22 Q. Got you. When you said based on the weather information that
23 you had received, how do you receive that weather information,
24 where does that come from?

25 A. We have multiple services we use. We use local media, we use

1 the National Weather Service, we use Coast Guard broadcasts, we
2 have multiple different sources. We have a computer here that
3 tracks the swell for us so that I can see what the swell is doing.
4 We have onsite weather equipment that when the ports of Los
5 Angeles and Long Beach have a (indiscernible) that has monitors on
6 the break water, and (indiscernible), and different
7 stations -- water stations throughout the harbor where I'm able to
8 correlate all of the information to come up with when I need to
9 shift to the heavy weather bell.

10 Q. Got you. And who normal would be responsible to gather that
11 information -- to receive that information in the watch -- within
12 the watch?

13 A. On the watch, it's everybody's responsibility, however, it's
14 ultimately my responsibility and I go on the webpage and I look at
15 the ports constantly throughout the night. I monitor -- we have a
16 monitor up on our display that displays the weather. We have a
17 monitor on the wall that displays it on our radars. We also have
18 an environmental section that displays the wind conditions, and we
19 have windows all the way around the building, and we have a
20 flagpole and the flag blows. So, we're able to -- there's
21 multiple sources for my observations.

22 Q. Okay. And when you get this information, what do you do with
23 it, do you share that with your watch standers?

24 A. I do. That's one of the advantages of when I stay out there,
25 I'm able to track it and notify the watch standers as needed. I

1 can have the watch stander go out and call out to a ship and ask
2 weather conditions on scene, I can see the flagpole, the building
3 makes a distinct noise as the wind comes up. There's multiple
4 assets to determine the weather conditions of it, and when I need
5 to, take action for it.

6 Q. Right. Okay, so you received the information, you pass that
7 information to your watch standers, make them aware, and then does
8 that information get sent out by -- how does that get sent out to
9 the vessels in general or does it?

10 A. When the winds exceed -- well, when we -- if it's been
11 forecasted by National Weather Service, and other agencies, and
12 the director, and the operations manager of the vessel traffic
13 center here -- the general manager, if they anticipate and it's
14 been forecasted, we can anticipate when we're going to start out
15 wind advisory and our heavy weather bill. If it's not and it just
16 comes up out of nowhere, it's a determination by myself and then I
17 will notify the on-call representative and my operations officer.
18 If the wind has increased and I'm sending the heavy weather bill,
19 I also notify the Coast Guard that I'm sending the heavy weather
20 bill, I make log entries concerning sending the heavy weather
21 bill, and from there I proceed with the procedures of the heavy
22 weather bill.

23 Q. Got you. Okay, so that information is disseminated through
24 broadcasts, is that right?

25 A. It is started out through broadcast, yes, sir.

1 Q. And what channel would that be sent out on?

2 A. Channel 14.

3 Q. Okay. What channels do you all monitor in the station by the
4 watchers?

5 A. I monitor 13 -- 12, 13, 14, 16, 73, 74, channel 11 for a
6 secondary frequency if we have to talk to vessels off of the
7 marine -- if marines change channel. Those are the ones that I
8 typically monitor and they are in our radio under scanning, so
9 they're constantly being scanned. We have one radio that's fixed
10 on channel 14 and the other radios are scanning.

11 Q. Okay. When vessels are approaching your AOR and their
12 intentions are to go to an anchorage, can you walk us through the
13 process of how a vessel -- how does -- is this the first
14 communications in the process or the procedures you all use as far
15 as designating or directing a vessel to an anchorage and which
16 anchorage they would go to? How is that done?

17 A. Personally, I report a vessel whenever it approaches. We
18 have to -- with our Maris system we are able to see that the
19 vessel will be approaching, with C-Scope, I'm able to monitor it
20 approaching. I like to plan ahead, so I go out to -- I look at
21 all of my information as far as draft, type of vessel, where the
22 vessel is heading, the length overall of the vessel, and from
23 there, I'm able to come up with a basic position of where I would
24 like to put this vessel.

25 When the vessel actually checks in with me, I will ask the

1 vessel where -- what his destination is and if he says he needs
2 anchorage or if he doesn't need an anchorage. From there, I will
3 ask the vessel if he's cleared his prearrival checks, I will
4 verify his draft. From there, I will assign him an anchorage
5 based on the type of vessel he is, if he's more than 200 meters,
6 then he can't go in the first row. We have a standard list of
7 standard of care of where the vessel can be placed. So, based
8 upon his draft is where we would place him and the type of vessel
9 would determine where I would place the vessel.

10 In some cases where, like, a car carrier, I don't personally
11 stick them in the first row, because the masters don't like it
12 because they're too close to the break water. However, they can
13 go in the first row. There's a lot of extra just between
14 experience and following the -- what we have in the standards of
15 care in the vessel traffics operation like internal operating
16 procedures. If you apply all that together, you're going to come
17 up with what anchorage, you assign the anchorage, make sure that
18 he's comfortable going to that anchorage. If he's not, then we
19 try to accommodate with a different anchorage.

20 Q. I got you. I'm going to ask you to reflect back to January
21 25th, 2021, on that particular night, do you recall any of the
22 specific vessels that were in anchorage by name?

23 A. Not really by name, sir. I had numerous vessels that night.
24 Overall, it was a very hectic night between with the weather and
25 the (indiscernible), the alarms that were going off, the vessels

1 that I was mitigating with. I do know the vessel center had
2 questioned and I reviewed the tapes prior to -- several weeks ago
3 I reviewed the tapes prior to this interview just to refresh my
4 memory on the -- what vessels were out there with the -- as far as
5 *The Beijing*, *The MSC Danit*, and the locations of where the vessels
6 were that were dragging anchor.

7 Q. Okay. So, that night on watch, there was nothing that stood
8 out or put you in any mode of alertness regarding *The Danit* or *The*
9 *Beijing* or any other vessel?

10 A. No, sir, it started out as a normal night. As the wind came
11 up, about 3:30 in the morning, the other alarm started going off
12 on the ships. Then at 4:00 or 4:15-ish, we had a -- the winds and
13 the swells came up, we had several ships dragging anchor
14 throughout the night where I kept contacting them to let them know
15 and ask them if they were dragging anchor, make sure the anchor
16 was secure based off of our C-Scope systems where the alarms were
17 going off for the vessels. I -- we had another problem going on -
18 - a major incident that was going on at the time.

19 So, everything -- but everything had started off for the
20 night fine and then the winds came up so suddenly and so extreme,
21 and the swell came up so extreme that it was just one of those
22 perfect storms I guess you want to call it. I mean, it was pretty
23 incredible. I had never seen it like that since I've been here.
24 I've seen it -- when I was in the Coast Guard, I saw it out here
25 like that, but I've never had to deal with it as a watch stander.

1 We've never had these conditions and then in that speed -- to come
2 in that speed in that timeframe.

3 Q. Got you.

4 A. We've had wet weather before, but nothing to that extreme
5 and we've never had the amount of vessels that are out there to
6 deal with. We may have had, you know, one -- like, half the
7 amount of the ship or a quarter of the amount of the ships, but
8 we've never had that many ships out there. So, it was a very -- I
9 don't want to say chaotic, but it was a lot of extra paying
10 attention. I mean, normally, you're paying attention, but there
11 was just so much going on that you had to be -- I mean, you
12 couldn't get tunnel vision. You'd have to be on the spot for
13 everything. While I was dealing with one thing, I was having to
14 deal with all of the other ships that were still -- alarms going
15 off.

16 Q. Okay. In regard to a situation like that, do you feel like
17 you had enough hands on -- enough personnel to deal with
18 everything that has happened? It seems like a few different
19 things taking place at once.

20 A. Yes, sir, I felt that just in my experience of
21 being -- having been here for 20-something years, my experience
22 was fine. When we had our other incident going on at the time, I
23 felt that I needed to make my notifications based on that and I
24 asked Mr. Katz -- Dave Katz to relieve me on the radar, I brought
25 the Coast Guard member up to take over the phones, which allowed

1 me to make notifications, phone calls, monitor everything that was
2 going on in the -- on the watch floor.

3 Q. Got you. Okay, what type of equipment is used to perform the
4 duties of the VTS watch in your setup?

5 A. We have radar, we have visual equipment, as far as eyes, we
6 have windows, so we have visual detection and observation. We
7 have electronics between my radios, we have the C-Scope system,
8 which is our main radar system that converts the radar to digital.
9 We have the port system that allows me to monitor the swells
10 offshore, I have internet access to monitor conditions, I have
11 backup systems as far as -- we have our pilot made system that we
12 have that also is tracking all the ships. We have access to
13 different internet sources as far as tracking vessels if there was
14 a redundancy.

15 There's -- I have the weather station on our wall, I have the
16 weather station on the computer, I have the weather station on the
17 radars. So, I have visual and electronic -- plenty of visual and
18 electronic means for detection and tracking vessels and doing my
19 job. I also have the ability to call in somebody from management
20 who has more expertise. We run everything as a team up here and
21 if I have a question or if I'm not sure or if I feel that I'm
22 missing something, I ask one of my watch mates on the port just to
23 verify to make sure I'm correctly viewing this situation.

24 Q. Okay. And the equipment that you had available to you that
25 evening, that watch, was everything operating normal --

1 A. I don't remember there being any deficiencies at the time.

2 Q. Okay. Let's see -- if the vessel drags anchor and comes out
3 of their anchorage, and you mentioned there were several that
4 night, have you experienced that in the past, in the years that
5 you've been there, before?

6 A. I have had the anchor alarm go off on numerous vessels
7 throughout my time at vessel traffic center and during that time,
8 if an alarm goes off, I ask the vessel if he's dragging anchor.
9 Depending on the weather conditions and what is happening, I may
10 have -- if in proximity to other vessels, I may reset the alarm
11 and wait for it to go off again and then verify with the master
12 again that he's not dragging anchor or he is dragging anchor. A
13 lot of times, the captains of the vessels will want to put out
14 chain to get their anchorage instead of actually getting underway
15 and repositioning and we go back to monitoring. I, personally,
16 like to use the radar in a set position and get the
17 (indiscernible) and set an actual mark on the radar. Having been
18 a quarter master in the Coast Guard, I like to use radars. So, I
19 use the radar to verify as another form that the vessel is
20 dragging anchor along with our vessel traffic electronic system
21 that monitors it automatically once we apply the anchor alarm to
22 it.

23 Q. Got you. And when a vessel would drag anchor, would you
24 expect for them to contact VTS about not only of the dragging
25 anchor incident but if they were going to relocate or re-anchor?

1 A. Yes, sir, that would be the normal procedure. However, a lot
2 of times we're the first line of defense and our system picks it
3 up before they do and the alarm goes off and we'll go out and we
4 ask them to verify whether or not they are or are not dragging
5 anchor. Most of the time they say they're not and it requires a
6 second call if they are, if they're not, then they're not and we
7 go back to monitoring. We follow our monitory, inform, recommend,
8 and direct model. So, I monitor, I inform them, I go back to
9 monitoring, I go back to informing, and then if I have to
10 recommend they do something or if I have to use the captain of the
11 port direction, which we've never had to do as far as -- since
12 I've been here. That would apply.

13 Q. Got you. Do you recall that evening -- the vessel, *Danit*, do
14 you recall if he got underway after the wind event took place?

15 A. Sort of. The wind event was going on when I left watch in
16 the morning. Before I left watch from approximately 5:25 or 5:20
17 is when I got relieved -- or 5:30 when I got relieved -- somewhere
18 in between 5:20 and 5:30, I was relieved, Bio Watch had made its
19 initial contact. His alarm went off and notified the vessel that
20 we were receiving an anchor alarm for his vessel, ensured that his
21 engine was indeed in standby. I don't remember if he stated that
22 he was dragging anchor or if he was actually dragging anchor. I
23 was relieved and the next watch took over.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. I had so many boats that I was going out to that night and

1 telling, like, you know, your anchor alarm's going off, sir, and
2 giving the spiel to him as far as, you know, are you dragging
3 anchor, is the engine indeed in standby? So, I cannot tell you if
4 the thing was actually moving when I left or not.

5 MR. [REDACTED]: Okay. All right, that's all I have right now.
6 Drew?

7 BY MR. EHLERS:

8 Q. Yeah, just a couple of questions here. You did touch on
9 captain of the port authority, what specifically requires captain
10 of the port authority?

11 A. There's four reasons to -- three reasons to issue captain of
12 the port authority, one of them is dragging anchor, one of them is
13 serious machinery, steering propulsion issues, and another one
14 would be is if by the inaction or action of the vessels, would the
15 cause be an environmental damage or a danger to itself or any
16 other vessel.

17 Q. What specifically is the authority that you have? You
18 mentioned -- and I'll get a question in on this, you mentioned you
19 have to have an agreement with the Coast Guard member, but what
20 specifically is that authority?

21 A. The authority is the Coast Guard member issues the order, so
22 we have to be in agreement. So, he represents -- the Coast Guard
23 member represents the captain of the port, we have to be in
24 agreement if we're not -- the Coast Guard member and myself have
25 to be -- a watch supervisor has to be in agreement to issue the

1 captain of port direction. If it is -- if we are not in
2 agreeance, we notify the vessel that we are seeking a captain of
3 the port intervention on it, we contact the Coast Guard OOD at the
4 time and let them know what is happening. But we let the vessel
5 know that we are seeking this and traffic would recommend doing
6 this and in the meantime, we are seeking captain of the port
7 direction.

8 Q. Okay. So, this is specifically related to if you have to
9 issue direction to a vessel?

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And that we follow the monitor, inform, recommend,
13 model -- direct model.

14 Q. Okay. So --

15 A. So, if it gets to that stage.

16 Q. Yeah, in any of the stages before that monitor, inform,
17 recommend, you don't have to -- it doesn't require captain of the
18 port authority, is that correct?

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. Okay. All right, let's see, the -- I think it might be
21 on -- never mind, I think -- so, you said you listen to the audio
22 from the 25th recently?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. In that audio at one point, I think I heard that *Beijing* was
25 one mile outside of her anchorage. Would that be unusual?

1 A. It would depend on how much chain the vessel had. But yes,
2 it would -- no, it would be -- for it to be that far out, it would
3 obviously be dragging anchor at that time.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. I mean, it would not be -- based upon where the vessel
6 anchored in the circle at the time, I believe that the master did
7 tell me that he was letting out chain to help secure himself. So,
8 depending on how much chain he let out, the scope of the chain and
9 the severity of the weather conditions, and whether or not the
10 chain went taut, and the -- and so, nothing as -- when I was in
11 the Coast Guard, we used five to seven times the depth of the
12 water as far as stormy conditions and three to five times in light
13 conditions. So, if you think about five times the depth of water
14 and then you stretch that out, and if the vessel was not vessel
15 was not anchored directly in the center of the anchorage, it could
16 be outside of the circle to start out with. When it stretched out
17 the chain, it would've moved out the extra chain.

18 Q. Yeah, okay. So, you're aware of the location of the pipeline
19 that was struck?

20 A. Yes, sir, I'm more than aware of it. I've been -- I make
21 sure when I train people, I'm very conscious about notifying
22 everybody that there is a pipeline that runs along this -- that
23 area, along the side of the anchorages, and very close to --

24 Q. Yeah. And you're getting at my next question, which is that
25 pipeline is very close to the anchorage, has that ever been

1 brought up previous to the current issue as a safety concern or a
2 safety hazard?

3 A. I don't know as far as management. I know that I do train
4 when I train people and do break-in qualifications that I do let
5 the vessels know that it is imperative to get people into the
6 anchorages and centered in the anchorage due to the fact that
7 there are -- the pipeline runs in a lot of the aside of the
8 anchorage and how over on the eastern side of the anchorage,
9 there's a half mile, roughly, where it goes down to whatever it is
10 at the southern edge.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. So, I try to make sure that I emphasize that when I do train
13 people. As far as what management does discuss with the Coast
14 Guard and warnings, that's -- we know it's there, yes.

15 Q. Okay. Are there any other pipelines that border the
16 anchorage areas?

17 A. There's just the one right there that borders the F
18 anchorages. There's one that goes over towards Seal Beach if I
19 remember correctly that goes from the platforms to Seal Beach area
20 or Huntington Harbor area. There's pipelines that are up off of
21 Point Fermin at the sewage outfalls. There's Shables (ph.),
22 there's -- the ocean's littered with pipelines and cables.

23 Q. Sure, yeah. But as far as I guess ones that are that close
24 to the anchorage, is that the closest one to the anchorage or are
25 there others that also pass in close --

1 A. That one spot between F16 and SF3, it's probably the closest
2 that it perceives that there is in our area that I know of other
3 than maybe (indiscernible). I don't know.

4 Q. Yeah. Do you remember on the morning of the 25th, any
5 discussion about the danger of that pipeline with the dragging
6 anchors?

7 A. No, sir, it's always incorporated into my worries when I am.
8 The head dragging -- ship dragging anchor is always aware of the
9 hazards around you and what's going on, so it would -- and with
10 all of the traffic and all the radio coms that was doing that
11 night, there was nothing extra taken into account with that. It
12 was -- the vessel was dragging anchor, I'd call up the
13 vessel -- or notify the vessels that they were dragging anchor or
14 to please check, and they stated they weren't, and we went from
15 there.

16 Q. Okay. Do you think the unusual nature of the events of the
17 25th -- I mean, was that a direct consequence of the number of
18 ships that are waiting to enter the port?

19 A. No.

20 Q. No?

21 A. No, I feel that it was because of the -- we always have
22 vessels that have proceeded us. For the 20 years that I've been
23 here, those anchorages have been in the vicinity of the pipeline.
24 So, it was not --

25 Q. So, it's really --

1 A. And number of ships out there would not make a difference as
2 far as a vessel being anchored in those anchorages.

3 Q. Okay. So, it was really about the weather that night -- or
4 that morning?

5 A. Still, it made no difference. I was notifying the ships as
6 the alarms came up.

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. I mean, if those vessels had anchor, the vessels had anchor.
9 It doesn't matter how many vessels were out there, I mean, it's
10 just more accurate as far as making calls. But I was able to do
11 all of it as you can hear on the tape. It was a constant --

12 Q. Okay. All right, a couple of sort of standard NTSB
13 questions. We are always interested in the effect of fatigue or
14 lack -- or not. What's your normal sleep schedule?

15 A. I get off watch, leave around 5:00 in the morning, I live
16 about 20 minutes away, usually in bed by 7:00. I get up around
17 2:00 -- 3:00 -- almost -- closer to 3:00. I get up for the watch
18 and I'm good to go for the next day. So, I try to sleep all day
19 long, I have a wife that's very considerate as far as noise. The
20 apartment complex is not, but we're typically -- I try to sleep
21 all day long, because I stay awake -- I, personally, just from
22 being on nights for so long, I stay up all night. I don't like to
23 personally sleep on watch because I like to be aware of what's
24 going on and I'm -- typically I'm a little bit more paranoid as
25 far as watching what's going to happen and covering my butt.

1 Q. Sure, yeah, absolutely.

2 A. It's not going to happen on my watch.

3 Q. Sure. It was months ago now, but do you remember, you know,
4 how you felt that day? Did you feel alert and awake, any fatigue,
5 do you remember at all?

6 A. I couldn't tell you to be honest. It was ten months ago and
7 then like I said, I pretty much keep my schedule throughout my
8 days off and my days on. So, I get my second wind at four in the
9 afternoon and I'm awake until 4:00 in the morning -- and 5:30 in
10 the morning and when I go home and then I unwind usually with
11 reading my book and go to sleep.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So, I'm typically very awake all night long.

14 Q. Okay. Do you typically -- or usually drink coffee, sodas,
15 caffeinated beverages either before or during your watch?

16 A. I have a little diet coke addiction unfortunately -- or I
17 did, I've tapered off. But yes, I drink a lot of diet cokes.

18 Q. Okay. Then through your day --

19 A. Throughout my night.

20 Q. Your night?

21 A. That's my coffee. I don't drink office, so that's my coffee.
22 I drink -- people ask me how I went through the 20 years in the
23 military without drinking coffee and I drink diet coke instead.

24 MR. EHLERS: Okay All right, I think that's all I have.

25 Thank you very much, sir.

1 MR. [REDACTED]: Thank you, Drew.

2 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

3 Q. Mr. Conner, do you -- after reviewing -- you mentioned that
4 you had reviewed that -- of the watch from January 25th of 2021
5 and do you recall that the vessel, *The Danit*, was in an anchorage
6 identified as SF12?

7 A. I believe *The Danit* was in SF3 and I believe that *The Beijing*
8 was in SF12.

9 Q. I stand corrected. You're right. Thank you. Hear that?
10 Can you tell me, are those anchorages -- have any restrictions
11 been put on those anchorages, are they still being used today?

12 A. No, sir, they are not being used at this time. We've secured
13 from using those anchorages.

14 Q. And when did that (indiscernible) go into effect?

15 A. I'm not sure, it was a couple of weeks ago. I don't believe
16 I -- I don't know the (indiscernible). I've been on -- I was on
17 vacation for part of October and I don't remember the exact time
18 that we secured those anchorages.

19 Q. Do you know why they would put --

20 A. I believe they were again for the -- both for the vicinity of
21 the pipeline and the repair of the pipeline. I did not know if
22 there were weather reasons.

23 Q. Okay. Are there any other designated anchorages that are not
24 being used as well?

25 A. We've secured using some of the Huntington Beach anchorages,

1 the two south anchorages, the sewage outfall, it's not very close
2 to the pipeline, but I think it made people feel a lot more
3 comfortable by securing those two anchorages. I know the city if
4 Huntington Beach is concerned about if we were to anchor anybody
5 further south, so we secured those two anchorages. We
6 secured -- oh, what is it SF2, 3, SF12, I think there's another
7 one that was in Huntington Beach, C10 -- 9 and 10. So, we've
8 secured those from using those anchorages from now on.

9 Q. And who makes that -- who made that determination?

10 A. You would have to take to management about that. I just come
11 into watch at night and the stuff magically appears.

12 Q. And one other thing I'd like to ask you, are you aware that
13 with the pipeline being where it's located in an anchorage, any
14 time where there are instruments get done on that pipeline or work
15 done on that pipeline, are you guys notified of those events?

16 A. I would have to say that not typically. I mean, if they do
17 it in inspection, they do not -- the vessels just run the -- they
18 use their local rig boats -- their out-crew boats and they use it.
19 I don't know if they -- even if they run a mouse inside the pip to
20 inspect, I don't know how they do their inspections.

21 Q. Right, okay. Is there anything that you would like to add
22 that we haven't asked you or would like to make a comment of
23 regarding that evening, January 25th of 2021?

24 A. No, I was -- nope. No, in all reality, it was a thousand
25 ships ago and 10,000 radio calls ago. So, other than what I

1 reviewed on my tape of that night, -- I mean, I -- (indiscernible)
2 vessel was another vessel at that time dealing with a major
3 incident and the other vessels. So, it's a -- I know the vessel
4 was there and I know what happened, but I don't remember actual,
5 individual vessels typically as far as all that. There's just too
6 many radio calls throughout the last ten months to remember.

7 MR. [REDACTED]: Okay, very good.

8 Drew, if you don't have anything further, the time is 9:55
9 p.m., Central Standard Time and we can end our recording.

10 (Whereupon, at 9:55 p.m. CST, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: PIPELINE RUPTURE NEAR
HUNTINGTON BEACH, CALIFORNIA
ON OCTOBER 3, 2021
Interview of Michael Conner

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA22FM001

PLACE: Via telephone

DATE: October 27, 2021

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Carolyn Hanna
Transcriber



National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C. 20594

Transcript Errata

**TABLE OF CORRECTIONS FOR TRANSCRIPT INTERVIEW WITH: MICHAEL CONNER
RECORDED ON OCTOBER 27, 2021**

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
8	15	BELL	BILL
8	18	ARMS	ALARMS
9	9	BELL	BILL
10	18	SENDING	SETTING
10	18	SENDING	SETTING
11	7	MANNERS	MANNERS
15	11	MADE	MADE
17	7	MONITOR	MONITOR
17	13	BY	BY THE

If, to the best of your knowledge, no corrections are needed kindly circle the statement "no corrections needed" and initial in the space provided.

NO CORRECTIONS NEEDED. _____
Initials

MICHAEL CONNER
Printed Name of Person providing the above information

[Redacted Signature]
Signature of Person providing the above information

11/20/21
Date