UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
	*	
FATAL FIRE AND SINKING OF THE	*	
DREDGE *WAYMON L BOYD* IN CORPUS	*	Accident No.: DCA20FM026
CHRISTI, TEXAS, ON AUGUST 21, 2020	*	
	*	

Interview of: GEORGE FORD, Pipeline Tech
Enterprise Products

Via telephone

Tuesday,
October 20, 2020

APPEARANCES:

PAUL STANCIL, Rail and Pipeline Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

LUKE WISNIEWSKI, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

ROGER EVANS, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

LCDR [redacted], Senior Investigating Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

LT [redacted], Investigating Officer
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JEFF MORTON, Senior Director of Transportation Compliance
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NHAN TRUONG, Compliance Manager
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MATT PISERELLE
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Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

RON PEREZ, Inspector
Railroad Commission of Texas

MARK FARLEY, Farley and Partners
(On behalf of George Ford)

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

(1:25 p.m.)

MR. STANCIL: Okay. The recording has started. I'm going to go ahead and begin the interview. This is Paul Stancil. I'm an NTSB hazardous materials accident investigator, and I'm the pipeline group chairman for the investigation of the August 21st, 2020 fire and sinking of the dredge *Waymon L Boyd* in Corpus Christi, Texas.

This is an interview of Mr. George Ford who is employed by Enterprise Products. The NTSB accident reference number is DCA20FM026. Today is October 20th, 2020, and the time is 1:25 Central Time. Mr. Ford is located in a conference room at the Enterprise Products facilities in Corpus Christi, Texas. Many others, including the NTSB investigative team, are participating in this interview over a video conference.

Mr. Ford, would you please spell -- state and spell your full name, please?

MR. FORD: My name is George Ford. It's G-e-o-r-g-e, and my last name is Ford, F-o-r-d.

MR. STANCIL: Thank you very much. So this interview is being recorded. Mr. Ford, do we have your consent to record this conversation?

MR. FORD: Yes, you do, sir.

MR. STANCIL: Thank you. And I want to remind you and everyone else to speak loudly and clearly and slowly so that we

can get an accurate recording and transcript of this interview, and please let us know if there's any problems with poor audio quality. We've been having some technical issues here lately, so let us know. All right.

At this point, I'm going to ask everyone to introduce themselves. Please state your organization, title and spell your last name. Again, this is Paul Stancil. My last name is spelled S-t-a-n-c-i-l. I'm an accident investigator with the NTSB. And next I'll go to my colleague, the investigator in charge, Mr. Wisniewski.

MR. WISNIEWSKI: Good afternoon, Mr. Ford. My name is Luke Wisniewski, W-i-s-n-i-e-w-s-k-i. I'm the investigator in charge from the NTSB.

MR. STANCIL: Thank you.

Mr. Evans?

MR. EVANS: Yes. Good afternoon, Mr. Ford. I'm Roger Evans, E-v-a-n-s, with the NTSB, and I'm an accident investigator.

MR. STANCIL: Thank you.

Coast Guard?

LCDR [redacted]: Hi. This is Lieutenant Commander [redacted]. I'm the senior investigating officer. Last name [redacted].

LT [redacted]: This is [redacted], U.S. Coast Guard, and I'm an investigator. Last name is [redacted].

MR. STANCIL: Thank you.

Enterprise Products?

MR. MORTON: Good afternoon. This is Jeff Morton, Enterprise Products, senior director of transportation compliance. Last name is Morton, M-o-r-t-o-n.

MR. TRUONG: This is Nhan Truong, Enterprise Products. Last name is T-r-u-o-n-g. First name is N-h-a-n.

MR. KOHLER: Joel Kohler with contractor safety for Enterprise. Last name is K-o-h-l-e-r.

MR. STANCIL: Okay.

Orion Marine Group?

MR. KENYON: This is Graham Kenyon, last name K-e-n-y-o-n, and I'm the VP of risk management.

MR. STANCIL: Thank you.

MR. PISERELLE: This is Matt Piserelle, Orion Marine Group. Last name is P-i-s-e-r-e-l-l-e. I'm the marine maintenance manager.

MR. STANCIL: Thank you.

PHMSA?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon. I'm Alvaro Rodriguez, Alvaro, A-l-v-a-r-o, Rodriguez, R-o-d-r-i-g-u-e-z. I am a pipeline accident investigator with PHMSA.

MR. STANCIL: Okay.

Railroad Commission of Texas?

MR. PEREZ: Good afternoon. This is Inspector Ron Perez. My last name is spelled P-e-r-e-z. I'm an inspector out of Region 7.

MR. STANCIL: Thank you.

And representative for Mr. Ford?

MR. FARLEY: Yes, My name is Mark Farley, M-a-r-k, Farley, F-a-r-l-e-y with Farley and Partners on behalf of Mr. Ford.

MR. STANCIL: Thank you.

And, Mr. Ford, you're free to have a representative of your choosing there in the room with you or online and that person, although, is not able to speak for you or answer questions. Do you understand?

MR. FORD: Yes, I do.

MR. STANCIL: And do you understand that Mr. Farley, who represents Enterprise Products, is online -- is he the person who is representing you today?

MR. FORD: I believe so.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. Thank you.

All right. The purpose of this investigation is to improve safety. It is not to assign any fault, blame or liability. Our sole mission is to improve transportation safety and prevent accidents. The NTSB is not able to provide any guarantee of confidentiality or immunity from any legal proceeding by other agencies, whether local, state or federal.

A transcript of this interview will be placed in the public docket for this investigation which, in the future, will be available through the NTSB's website. Do you understand, Mr. Ford?

MR. FORD: Yes, sir. I do.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. And I'll start off with a few questions, and then I will pass on to my colleagues and the other folks who are attending online. So we'll continue until everyone has had the opportunity to ask questions. Okay?

INTERVIEW OF GEORGE FORD

BY MR. STANCIL:

Q. So, Mr. Ford, would you tell us about your background? And begin with your education and continue with your employment history, please.

A. Well, I graduated from high school in '73. Volunteered for the U.S. Army in '75. Served in Europe for 2 years. Got hired at Corpus Estates Refinery as an operator, and in '77, got laid off. In '84, I went to (indiscernible) Shoup Plant as an operator in '84, July, and operated at Shoup Plant for 7, 8 years and went to the pipeline group in 1992, and I've been with the company 36 years.

Q. So, during that 36 years, has it been at the same facility?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Okay. Have you had different positions while you've been employed at this location?

A. Just operations and pipeline tech.

Q. During the entire 36 years?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Okay. Great. All right. So your current job title is?

A. Pipeline tech.

Q. Okay. And who do you report to?
A. I report to Wes Warden. He's my immediate boss.
Q. Okay. And where do you report to work? What -- where do you physically go to work?
A. I have a physical office at Origin Station in Corpus Christi, and from there, I go out and do my work at Shoup Plant and on pipelines.
Q. Okay. And tell us about your job duties and responsibilities.
A. My main duties is measurement on the pipeline and DOT inspection of valves and pipelines.
Q. Okay. And do you have any special training that you received through Enterprise?
A. No, sir. I do not.
Q. Do you have any internal training or certifications as a pipeline operator?
A. Yes, we have to do CBTs and operator qualifications online.
Q. And is that recurring training that you get? Is that every year or is it periodically? How does that work?
A. It's mainly every year, but every -- periodically.
Q. Okay. And do you hold any professional certifications?
A. No, sir.
Q. Okay. And what are your work hours?
A. Eight-hour day shift.
Q. Five days a week?

A. Five days a week, Monday through Friday.
Q. Okay. All right. So let's draw your attention to the day of the accident, which was August 21st. Can you tell us about that day, beginning with everything you did when you got to work and then everything with respect to your involvement in responding to this incident?
A. Yes. I got to work at Origin Station at 7:30 and got a call from OCC, our Operations Control Center, about the pressure on some pipeline, and drove from Origin Station to the actual pipeline (indiscernible) observation and investigated, noticed the pipeline was de-pressured and went ahead and spoke to the actual person at OCC, and we decided to take action.
Q. All right. So who at OCC were you communicating with?
A. The actual operator on the shift was Earl. I don't know his last name.
Q. And you said you responded to Origin Station?
A. I actually reported to Origin Station and from there got the phone call from Earl to go to investigate the pressure loss on the pipeline upstream of the leak.
Q. And what did you find?
A. I did find the pressure of the pipeline abnormal.
Q. And what do you mean by abnormal?
A. Not normal pressure on the actual pipeline.
Q. Okay. Tell us -- fill us in a little bit because we're not really experts on your pipeline system. Tell us how you

determined that the pressure was abnormal and where, exactly, you did that and what equipment you had to refer to.

A. Well, the normal operating pressure on that pipeline at that time was about 400, and I got the call from Earl to go investigate the -- because it had dropped substantially from 400. So I got to the actual site, which is located near the Flint Hills West Plant, and verified the pressure was abnormal and took action.

Q. And when you said the site, are you talking about the location where the fire occurred?

A. No, sir. It was the upstream block valve from the actual pipeline.

Q. Upstream block valve. Okay.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. All right. And how did you determine that the pressure was abnormal? Is there a gauge or a meter there that you can look at?

A. There was a pressure instrument, and I verified visually that the pressure was abnormal.

Q. And what was the pressure?

A. I believe -- if I recall, I believe it was 125 pounds PSIG.

Q. All right. And did you record any of these observations in some way?

A. I did write up an email on the actual incident.

Q. And who did you send that to?

A. I sent it to my immediate boss, my immediate supervisor.

Q. And again, who -- what was his name?

A. Wes Warden.
Q. Wes Warden. And what did you say in your email?
A. The action I took to isolate the actual pipeline.
Q. Okay. So what did you do to isolate the pipeline?
A. Actually manually blocked in a block valve.
Q. Okay. At this point what I'm going to do is attempt to share my screen with you so that you can point out the location. I'm going to show you an alignment sheet which is stamped document number ENT-NTSB-PR-001117. Let me get this up on the screen so that you can see, as well. And I'm not -- okay. Here it is. All right. Are you able to see this document, now? This is a sheet labeled PODS, p-o-d-s, Alignment Sheet Liquids and --
A. Yeah, I can see it.
Q. There's two pages to it.
A. Okay.
Q. This is the -- I guess this end is Viola where my cursor is.
A. Yes, sir. That's it.
Q. Is that correct? Okay. Can you point me to where this block valve was that you just described?
A. At the Viola block valve station.
Q. Is it where my cursor is moving now?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. So it's at the very end of the line.
A. That's actually the beginning of the line.
Q. Very beginning of the line. Okay. Tell us about what that

looked like. Describe what that valve and that station is all about, because none of us have any idea.

A. Well, it's a 16-inch mainline block valve on the actual pipeline, and we actually have an MOV there, motorized operating valve, and we also have another remote access valve on the actual meter itself. So we closed the meter valve and the actual pipeline valve.

Q. So there would be two valves.

A. Yes, sir, one on the meter skid, one on the actual pipeline.

Q. Okay. Did you record what time you made the closure?

A. If I were to recall, it was I would say maybe 8:20 -- 0825, 0830, somewhere around that area. I'm not really sure what time it was.

Q. Okay. And what time were you -- when you got this call from Earl at OCC, what time was that?

A. It was a little bit after 8:00 a.m. I would have to say maybe 8:05, 8:06, somewhere around there. I'm not sure.

Q. And so how long did it take you to get to Viola Station?

A. About 15 to 20 minutes.

Q. Okay. And then once you got there, how long did it take you to isolate the line?

A. Less than 2 to 3 minutes.

Q. Okay. And did you record all of that in your email?

A. Yes, sir. That's more precise.

Q. Okay. And so your email has the times that you did each of

these actions?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. All right. Did you know anything about -- what was the sense of urgency when you spoke to Mr. Earl on the -- at the OCC? What did he tell you, specifically?
A. He told me to go check out the -- verify the actual pressure on the pipeline was low and just to get there as soon as I can, obeying the speed limit on the actual road that I took to get there.
Q. And were you aware at that time whether there was a fire or some other incident going on?
A. I could see the actual fire from my location, but I wasn't sure if it was our pipeline or not, at the moment.
Q. So you didn't know that it had anything to do with this issue that you were being sent to investigate?
A. Yeah. That's correct.
Q. Okay. So that -- you said that valve was an MOV. Is that an automatically operated valve or do you have to physically be there to shut it?
A. Actually, it can be shut from the OCC end. I just verified that it did go shut.
Q. So OCC can shut this valve. Did they shut this valve?
A. Yes, sir. They did.
Q. Okay. So all you did was verify that it was already shut.
A. Yes, sir, and also block in a no-block valve that was feeding

into the line, and that was a manual valve.
Q. Okay. And did -- was there any propane flowing in the line at the time or was that -- what can you tell us about that?
A. Not that I recall at this moment. I know they were flowing from Flint Hills Refinery, but other than the actual flow rate being registered, I have no idea because I did not go to the flow meter to verify there was flow.
Q. Okay. So after you verified that the valve was shut, what did you do next?
A. After I did that, I locked out/tagged out the actual valve to make sure that there wasn't any accidental opening of the valve, so I made sure that, that wouldn't happen.
Q. Okay. All right. So then what happened?
A. After I got the sites secured, (indiscernible) valve, go to the other end of the line and assisted Mr. Goldsmith in securing the other end of the line.
Q. All right. Your audio quality is really getting poor. Can you repeat what you just said?
MR. TRUONG: Let me check again. I don't know why it keeps defaulting to the other microphone. Is that any better?
MR. STANCIL: It is.
MR. TRUONG: Okay. Okay.
BY MR. STANCIL:
Q. Just make sure you speak loudly, Mr. Ford. I'm sorry about that.

A. Okay. Not a problem. What was your question again?
Q. So after you did the lockout/tagout, what happened next?
A. After I did lockout/tagout the valve to make sure the site was secured, all valves are blocked in, and then I drove to assist Mr. Mike Goldsmith on the end of the actual line that feeds and assisted him in closing the actual blocked valves there.
Q. Okay. And what sort of assistance did he need?
A. Just closing valves. Those were manually operated valves, and they're pretty labor intensive.
Q. So was it the two of you there together manipulating those valves closed?
A. That is correct.
Q. Okay. And which valves did you close?
A. A 16-inch and an 8-inch and a 6-inch. So in other words, that was the actual pipeline, three valves altogether to isolate the actual pipeline.
Q. And where were these three valves located on the line?
A. They were located at Cantwell Drive.
Q. Were they on the -- were they on the -- were they mainline valves or were they farther up the line?
A. They were mainline valves at the end of the line.
Q. So there were three of them altogether?
A. Well, the main valve was 16-inch, and the other two were feeding into the Origin Station. We just wanted to verify that all valves were sealed, and we checked that they were just a

triple assurance that the valve -- that the line was isolated.
Q. Okay. Were they already closed when you got there or were you actually helping him close the valves?
A. He was actually already closing the valve. I just helped him. I staked the other valves that were tied to that 16-inch.
Q. Okay. So he had how many closed before you got there?
A. He had one, and I helped him close the other 8-inch and 6-inch.
Q. Okay. And what time was that?
A. That I'm not sure. We -- 9:00 sometime.
Q. Okay. And is that in your email, as well?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. And you said it's a fairly detailed account of what you did?
A. As I recall, yes, sir.
Q. Okay. Great. All right. So on the upstream end where you first responded, is that something you were able to accomplish on your own?
A. Yes, sir. I did.
MR. STANCIL: Okay. All right. At this point I'm going to go ahead and pass it on to my colleagues and let them ask some of their questions. Let me unshare my screen first. Okay.
MR. WISNIEWSKI: Paul, if you could just leave that up. I just wanted to verify where the valves were, again, with Mr. Ford.
MR. STANCIL: Okay. All right. Mr. Wisniewski, you're up.
MR. WISNIEWSKI: All right. Great. Thank you. Luke

Wisniewski, NTSB.

BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

Q. Trying to just verify where these valves are that you helped close.

A. (Indiscernible) the line.

Q. And Mr. Stancil has up on there the second page of that drawing the ENT-NTSB-PR-00117. Is that correct where he has -- if I can take control. You see my cursor there on the screen, sir?

A. Yes, sir. That's it right there.

Q. And so you closed a 16-inch valve that was on the mainline.

A. Yes.

Q. And then there was a metered skid that dropped down to, you said, an eight and -- before the meter.

A. The actual meter is here. The skid is upstream, the other end of the line.

Q. Oh, it's upstream of it. Okay, so when you're closing the main -- okay, the meter's upstream of that.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. So then you said you triple blocked it, so you said there was one -- you have a 16-inch that would reduce down to, what, an 8-inch?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And then there was a 6-inch. Is that a bypass or is that a -- they're all just in series?

A. They're all in a series.

MR. WISNIEWSKI: Thank you. I'm going to stop control, and you can take that image down.

BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

Q. I just wanted to talk a little bit about these -- the valves themselves. You indicated pretty well the ones that were the motorized operated and you indicated that as a pipeline technician that you're responsible for the maintenance of the pipe in the pipeline and the valves.

A. Yes, sir. I make sure they work.

Q. How often are they exercised?

A. I check them every 6 months.

Q. Do you have records that we can access that can show the valves you closed at Cantwell as well as the ones at Origin?

A. Actually, you meant the (indiscernible), the ones at Viola Station upstream --

Q. Oh, correction. Viola. Yes.

A. Yes. Yes, that's the only ones I actually manipulate or make sure they're working remotely and manually. The other end on Cantwell is the operators at Origin Station that take care of that site.

Q. Who was the individual that takes care of the valves at the Origin Station?

A. The operators at Origin Station. Mike Goldsmith, that was here before, and three others whenever the time comes for inspection.

Q. And where is that recorded?
A. We get emails on work orders to do that.
Q. Is there a system that you input when you perform these maintenances, the 6-month check?
A. Yes, sir. There is.
Q. What's that -- what's the name of that system?
A. It's called V Works.
Q. V Works. Okay. So then that operator or the individual that performed that work would input it into V Works?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. And is that something that everyone has access to or is that a username/password?
A. It's a username/password.
Q. And it's just V Works, Victor --
A. Yeah.
Q. W-o-r-k-s.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. You indicated that you could see, I guess, the initial fire or incident from the *Waymon L Boyd*. Can you describe that a little bit more? Was it -- could you see the flames, the smoke?
A. Flames and smoke from Origin Station and at the Viola Station.
Q. And when you're at the Origin Station when you departed, how close were you to it? Could you make out the vessel? Could you see other people there or emergency responders?

A. No, sir. All I could see was the flame and smoke, that's all.
Q. Okay. Fair enough. And you indicated that the Flint Hills Refinery was moving product in this line that morning.
A. That I don't know.
Q. Oh, you're not sure. Okay.
A. They usually do, but at that particular time, I don't know if they were or not, in other words.
Q. And how could someone -- how could you view that? Is that something that the OCC, operator control center --
A. Yes, sir.
Q. -- has records of?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. What system -- do you know what system that's in?
A. It's called VNA System.
Q. And that could show you pressures and valve closures or positions of the --
A. Yes.
Q. -- system, how they're lined up.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. And I just want to go back to the meter skid that you saw with the motorized operated valve. That meter there, there's no local readout, right? Is there any way for you to verify that the flow rate has been cut off locally or is that all operated in --

A. I could locally look at it by going to the flow computer itself. It's within sight of the actual pipeline in another fenced area.
Q. And did you do that on that morning?
A. No sir, I did not.
Q. Okay. And I just had a couple more questions regarding, like, training for these type of incidents come up, whether it's hazard, HAZWOPER or tabletop exercise where you've had a pipeline breach or a type of failure. Can you recall the last time that you've gone through an exercise to isolate the system?
A. Yes. I believe it was -- we had a HAZWOPER class and we did have a incident exercise to do that. I think it was early in the year.
Q. About -- approximately what time?
A. I would have to say February, March. I'm just guessing. I can't recall actually what date it was or what month it was, but we do have annual training on that.
Q. Okay. So that was your HAZWOPER training for the year.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Is that an 8-hour or how long is your HAZWOPER training?
A. It's an 8-hour.
Q. And that's a 8-hour refresher.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. As a technician or --
A. Yes, sir.

Q. I'm sorry. Say that again.
A. Yes, as the pipeline tech.
Q. As a pipeline tech. All right. Did you take any type of line sheets or anything with you when you went out there to verify the valves?
A. No, I didn't.
Q. So you're pretty comfortable and just familiar with how the layout is and --
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Based on your 36 years of experience there --
A. Yes, sir.
Q. -- you just know where they are. And do you teach others where they are, other operators?
A. If they're around, yes, sir. I let them know what the line is and what the block valves are.
Q. Is there like a formalized process that you go through? Because I'm just trying to understand, you talked about a little bit of the training, but is it mostly OJT, on-the-job training, as far as these individuals know where they are, where there's an operator or technicians?
A. This is OJT, operator or the technicians.
Q. And do you train operators?
A. No, sir. I do not.
MR. WISNIEWSKI: That's all I have at this time. Thank you.
MR. STANCIL: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans?

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Hello, Mr. Ford. Just a few questions here. So did you actually hear the explosion on the morning of the accident?

A. Yes, sir. I did.

Q. And where were you at that time?

A. Origin Station.

Q. Okay. And all the movements that remained were post the time of the explosion. Is that correct?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. You weren't making any movements prior to the explosion; you weren't getting any calls or directions from OCC at that time?

A. No, sir.

Q. Okay. Do you typically speak with OCC or is it only on a -- I guess you call it control center, Operations Control Center, correct?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Okay.

A. Yes, sir. I talk to them when -- they call me if they need some action taken on the pipeline or whether closing or opening or making a switch on the pipeline.

Q. Okay. But your direct line supervisor, who was that again?

A. Wes Warden.

Q. Okay. Wes Warden. Okay. When those calls for movements are made, does Wes get included on those conversations or no?

A. No, sir. Just the OCC and myself.
Q. Okay. And the method that they use to get ahold of you, is it through cellphone or a landline or what?
A. Cellphone or sometimes landline where I'm able.
Q. Okay. For the communications on the morning of the accident, was it cellphone?
A. Yes, sir. It was.
Q. Now are these personal cellphones or your company cellphone?
A. Company-provided.
Q. Okay. Thank you. The annual training tabletop exercises you do, do you do a different type of a -- just a second; the printer's going off. Sorry. So the tabletop exercises, are they different every single year?
A. There is a different scenario, yes, sir.
Q. Okay. Did any of the scenarios that you have had in the past, has it covered anything like this?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Can you describe a scenario where it was close to what happened out there?
A. A pipeline leak of that nature and what to do and how to respond to it.
Q. Okay. When you said you did a lockout/tagout, did that include physically locking the valve and all that?
A. Yes, sir. Chain and lock and tag.
Q. Okay. And does that get logged into some sort of software?

A. No, sir. Not that I know of.
Q. Okay. Just curious. The 16-inch mainline valve with an MOV on it, you stated that, that was activated by a switch, and you said just a couple minutes to get that going, but how long does that valve take to close?
A. About 2 minutes. A minute or two.
Q. Okay. And then you talked about the closure of a 16-inch line valve, that was manual.
A. That's a little more labor intensive. Takes a little bit longer to close, maybe 3 to 5 minutes.
Q. Three to five minutes.
A. Yes, sir. Between two men.
Q. Okay. Does it have a 90-degree gear operator on it that has -- is the gear down or something or what?
A. I believe so. It's got a hand wheel on it, and we just (indiscernible) of closing the valve.
Q. Okay. Okay. The training you have for, you know, for your job, is there any ongoing training besides the tabletop type training for the different situations, you know, for where the valves are located to isolate and all that for conditions? Are they numbered and are they on lists and you can go to the list and say, I know what this valve's purpose is; I know what I have to -- what it's used for? Do you get schooled on that, like, every year?
A. Yes, sir.

Q. Can you describe that for us?
A. It's a scenario. They put it on paper, and we look at it and respond to our actions, what needs to be done to actually take care of this (indiscernible).
Q. Are these ever videoed? Do you ever take videos of this?
A. No.
Q. Okay. Are all the valves -- you said they were in Works. Are they described within Works what that valve tag number is and what the valve's use is? Is that in the Works system?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. And given your experience -- I know you have 3½ decades of experience there; that's a long time. When you got the call from the OCC, I mean, is it like instinct, I know exactly where I need to go to get this going, and you didn't --
A. Yes.
Q. -- have to think about it? You didn't have to go look at a piece of paper, anything like that?
A. Didn't have to look at a piece of paper, just went out there, and I knew exactly where to go and what to do and how to do it.
Q. Okay. Just a second here. And are there any alarms at all in your area with regard to pressures, you know, like pressure excursions or something like that? Are there alarms for that on your system from where you are?
A. Not on my end. No, sir.
MR. EVANS: Okay. That's all I have right now. Thank you.

Appreciate it.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. Thank you, Roger.

Next, let's go to PHMSA, Mr. Rodriguez.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Paul.

BY MR. RODRIGUEZ:

Q. Mr. Ford, could you please describe which abnormal conditions you can potentially find in the system?

A. Pressure difference.

Q. Is anything else that can be abnormal in the system?

A. You can have a leak in a pipeline.

Q. Would you proceed differently one versus the other?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Can you briefly describe the procedure?

A. Well, the procedure is to actually get to the actual leak site and verify that the pressure is good, or if there's a visual leak, you'd be more cautious and work from there.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. I don't think I have any other questions for now.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Rodriguez.

Texas Railroad Commission, Mr. Perez.

BY MR. PEREZ:

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. Ford. Just following up with PHMSA's last question, you mentioned the procedures specifically. Did you use a specific procedure when you were responding to this abnormal event, you called it?

A. Yes, sir.
Q. Do you -- and I know you probably don't have it memorized, but you did have a physical procedure in your hand?
A. No, sir. I did not.
Q. Did you use a procedure after you realized you had a pressure difference?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. Do you remember what procedure that was?
A. Well, I responded to the actual pipeline reduction in pressure and blocking the pipeline there.
Q. Is that tribal knowledge or did you have something that told you what exactly to do in step one, two, three, four, et cetera?
A. Tribal knowledge.
Q. Okay. Thank you. When you responded and you realized it was an event, you closed the 16-inch MOV; is that correct?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. And then what made you decide to go to the other end of the pipe to help your partner?
A. Make sure that site was secured, locked out/tagged out, make sure nobody else would manipulate the valves, and decided to go to the other end to help Mr. Goldsmith isolate the other end of the pipeline.
Q. And on arrival, Mr. Goldsmith, to your words, only had one valve he was working on at the time, and you assisted on the other two. Is that correct?

A. That is correct.
Q. And were there any other valves in between after you guys closed the initial three?
A. No, sir.
Q. No other laterals or connections or anything in between?
A. No, sir.
MR. PEREZ: All right. I think that's all I have for you, sir. Thank you very much.
MR. STANCIL: Thank you, Mr. Perez.
Lieutenant [redacted], U.S. Coast Guard.
LT [redacted]: Thanks, Paul.
BY LT [redacted]:
Q. Good afternoon, George.
A. Good afternoon.
Q. Just a few questions. So the training, the tabletop trainings, do you sign some sort of an attendance sheet that says that you've attended the training that day?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. And Enterprise would have those documents?
A. I believe so.
Q. Okay. And you said, specifically, the training that you received there was a scenario where -- I don't know if there was a pressure differential or there was a leak, but it was something where you had to go close valves. Is that correct?
A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember, in that tabletop, was it a leak or was it pressure diffs?
A. It was a leak.
Q. Okay. And we were talking about a leak in the pipeline; is it at the facility or could it be down range?
A. It can be down range.
Q. Okay. And do you know, approximately, when that training was?
A. Earlier in the year.
Q. Okay. So that happened -- that was earlier in the year where you had the leak in the pipeline. Got it.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. And other drills that you conducted, was there anything about a pressure differential in the pipeline where you had to go close the valves, something similar that you did that day?
A. Just the abnormal conditions.
Q. Okay. So in each of these, did you actually -- was it just a tabletop or was there other trainings where you actually went out and physically -- the OCC would call you and it was a total exercise where you would check the valve and report back?
A. It was actually just a tabletop, not the actual going to the actual site to do that.
Q. Okay. And so throughout your 36 years, have you done any exercises, kind of real-life exercises where you'd actually go and pretend like you were, you know, checking the valves or manually,

you know, closing the valves?
A. No, sir.
Q. Okay. And did you feel the training that you received, was it adequate for how you responded on August 21st?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. So going, you know, looking at the pipeline itself, were you aware of any preexisting conditions on that 219 pipeline?
A. No, sir.
Q. Would you have been made aware of any preexisting conditions or abnormal conditions in that pipeline? If there were any?
A. No, sir.
Q. Who monitors the alarms and the --
A. Not at the moment.
Q. Okay. Who monitors the alarms and the pressure of that pipeline?
A. Our Operations Control Center in Houston.
Q. Is there anyone looking at it on site at Viola?
A. No. There's just a valve station and a measurement station. The only other station that I can think of that has access to that is Origin Station, end of the line.
Q. Okay. And about how fast from the -- on August 21st from that, if you know, that pressure drop did the OCC call you?
A. Repeat the question.
Q. Do you know about how long -- if you don't know, you can say you don't know, but how long from the initial pressure drop in the

line, the abnormal condition, to when the OCC called you and said, hey, you need to manually block these valves?

A. That I don't know.

Q. Okay. And who would know that?

A. Well, the actual OCC people.

Q. Okay. Great. Thanks. So when you went to go help Mike Goldsmith, did he call you and ask for help?

A. No, I just took it upon myself to go help him.

Q. So the OCC didn't tell you, hey, after you get done with that, you need to go help Mike down at the other station?

A. No, sir.

LT [redacted]: Okay. I think that's all the questions I had right now. Thanks, George. Appreciate it.

MR. FORD: You're welcome.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. Thank you.

Next, let's go to the Orion Group, Mr. Kenyon.

MR. KENYON: Good afternoon.

BY MR. KENYON:

Q. Just a couple of questions. [redacted] has actually stolen most of my questions, so I'm going to be fairly brief. With regards to the propane that's flowing through the line, can you tell me whether that propane actually has an odor or smell added before or after --

A. That I --

Q. Go ahead. Sorry.

A. That I don't know.
Q. Okay. On the morning of the incident, we heard that the OCC closed in the line, correct?
A. That is correct.
Q. And they did that automatically.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. And then they obviously sent you over to check that that line had actually been -- to verify, number one, that there was a loss in pressure and, number two, that the valve had actually been closed in, correct?
A. That is correct.
Q. Okay. Is it common for them to do that and do you do that on a fairly regular basis?
A. They call us.
Q. Is it like a weekly occurrence, monthly, couple of times a year kind of thing?
A. That I'm not sure. I mean, they just call us when needed, whether it be a week or two weeks or a month.
Q. Fair enough. So obviously you were at Viola, and then obviously Mr. Goldsmith was over at, initially, Origin and that area at Cantwell was closed, closing the valves there.
A. That is correct.
Q. In a situation like this, can you just run me through -- I know very little about pipelines -- what would be the priority of closing those valves in and why you would do them in a certain

order?
A. Well, we usually start at the beginning of the pipeline to make sure the actual source of the product is isolated and then move to the end of the pipeline to make sure the product from that doesn't go back into the pipeline.
Q. Okay. So you started at Viola, which is where you were, and then sort of work your way down towards Origin and then Cantwell.
A. That is correct.
MR. KENYON: All righty. I appreciate your time. Thank you.
MR. FORD: You're welcome.
MR. STANCIL: Thank you, Mr. Kenyon.
Enterprise Products, Mr. Morton.
BY MR. MORTON:
Q. Good afternoon, George. This is Jeff with Enterprise. Thanks for your time. I don't have a lot, just a couple follow up questions. We talked about the valves that you isolated at Viola Station, and there was some question about drawings to know which valve needed to be closed. Is Viola Station a very complex station, or is this just where the refinery connects to our pipeline?
A. It's where the refinery connects to the pipeline.
Q. So you would not consider that a complex facility --
A. (Indiscernible) --
Q. -- as far as on options of operation -- okay. You also clarified that, in your role, you actually perform the inspection

and maintenance of these pipelines every 6 months.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. And how many years have you done that?
A. Quite a few.
Q. So the need for drawings to know which valve to close, in your opinion, that is not necessary.
A. With my knowledge, I didn't need it at the time.
Q. Okay. If you have not been in this situation, just tell us: if pipeline control or OCC, as you referred to it, would dispatch you to a facility where you did not have knowledge, would you need drawings or would they direct you which valve to close?
A. I probably would need drawings and direction.
Q. Okay. So is it safe to say, if you're unfamiliar with a facility, you either use drawings or you are provided specific direction from the control center?
A. That is correct.
Q. And are the valve sites typically numbered?
A. Yes, sir. They are.
Q. So if pipeline control said, George, you need to close valve number 40, you could physically identify that on the valve and close the valve?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. And as far as isolating the pipeline, following up with Graham's question, and I don't want to answer for you, but as far as isolating a pipeline to stop the flow, you can stop

pipeline flow by closing either the upstream or downstream valve. Is that correct?

A. That is correct.

Q. Okay. And once you close the first valve, then it's normal procedure to continue to close additional valves on that pipeline to ensure that you have the segment isolated with multiple valve closures.

A. That is correct.

MR. MORTON: Okay. Thank you. I think that's all I have.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Morton.

So at this point, I'm going to run us through a second round of questions just to clean up any clarifications that are needed. Okay? You doing okay, Mr. Ford?

MR. FORD: Can I take a restroom break?

MR. STANCIL: You want to take a 5-minute break, that will be great. Let's resume at 2:25.

MR. FORD: Very good.

MR. STANCIL: So we'll put this on pause for a moment. Thank you.

MR. MORTON: Hey, Paul?

MR. STANCIL: Yes.

MR. MORTON: This is Jeff Morton. I've got to leave at 2:30, so I'm going to delegate my -- any follow up questions to Nhan.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. That's fine.

MR. MORTON: Thank you.

(Off the record at 2:19 p.m.)

(On the record at 2:25 p.m.)

MR. STANCIL: Okay. The recording is back on. This is a continuation of our interview with George Ford. It's 3:25 p.m. -- I'm sorry, 2:25 p.m. Central Time. And so we're going to go through a second round of questions to clean up any lingering issues that require clarification.

BY MR. STANCIL:

Q. So, Mr. Ford, we talked about drills and tabletop exercises a bit, and I was just wondering and realized, have you ever had to do anything like this before?

A. No, sir.

Q. Okay. There's never been an incident on line 219 or any other line there at the Corpus Christi's facilities?

A. No, sir.

Q. Okay. All right. Is there any Enterprise procedure or protocol that states how quickly valves must be shut in response to an incident like this?

A. We do have a procedure, yes, sir, but the time, I'm not sure about that.

Q. Okay. All right. After you were finished assisting Mr. Goldsmith, did you do anything else? Did you go to the accident scene itself or did you help out with any other aspect to deal with this incident?

A. No, sir. I just stood by and waited for more instructions on

what I need to do.

Q. What else happened after this? Did you do anything else with respect to this incident?

A. No, sir. Just standby and wait orders.

Q. And did you ever get any?

A. No, sir.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. Great. All right. That's all I have. I do have one last question, but I'll save it to the end. I'm going to pass on next to my colleague, Luke Wisniewski.

BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

Q. Mr. Ford, just have a couple here. I'm going to show you a drawing real quick that we received and the drawing is -- Enterprise-NTSB-PR-11 is the number. I'm on page one, and it's called the Epic Encroachment Request Attachment to Bulkhead Site. And my question is, looking at this drawing, and I'm trying to zoom in as best I can so you can view it here, but on this one-page drawing here just lays out -- can you tell me which of the lines that are located here are the pipe for the Texas 219?

A. No, sir. I cannot.

Q. When you go through -- you indicated that you walk these pipes or take measurements and look at the valves. Do you walk the pipes too, as well?

A. No, sir. I do not.

Q. You don't -- you don't walk to see the condition of the integrity of the pipe?

A. No, sir. I'm not qualified to do that.
Q. Okay. In your 36 years there, was there any discussion at this terminal -- interstate terminal about one of your pipes being available to be seen by the water or not (indiscernible) to it (indiscernible) steps, in particular Texas -- the TX 219 line?
A. No, sir. I've never been to that site.
Q. Okay. So you have no involvement, and that wouldn't cross your desk?
A. No, sir.
Q. As far as any complaints that came in from the company there, and you've never walked the line to know exactly where that is, right, because there's no valves in that area?
A. That is correct.
MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Thank you. That's all my questions.
MR. STANCIL: All right. Thank you, sir.
Next, Roger Evans. You're muted, Roger.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. Thank you, Mr. Ford. Sorry. In your training that you have, do you get trained on the hazards of propane?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. And can you describe some of the hazards?
A. Oh, the hazards. It's a very flammable liquid, LPG, so you have to respect it.
Q. As far as the -- what it can do to a human, can you recall any of those items?

A. It will hurt you, that's for sure.
Q. Okay. Do you know if it expands quite a bit once it comes into the atmosphere?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. Just to kind of get that out of the way as far as the training that you had. And is there, like, a set procedure for what constitutes a turnover from one shift to the other? Do you go through a turnover and does the shift after you make notes and share notes with what's going on? Is that something that you do every day?
A. No, sir.
Q. So you'll leave and the next guy comes on. Are the shifts overlapped?
A. Not our shifts. So for (indiscernible) 7:30 to 4:30, 5 days a week.
Q. Okay. Okay. Okay. Thank you.
A. I'm not an operator.
Q. Pardon me?
A. I'm not an operator. I'm a pipeline tech.
Q. Okay. Okay.
A. (Indiscernible) different.
Q. Okay. I have a question that's been kind of moving in my head for a long time, and I'm not sure I understand this. I want to make sure that I do understand it after today. You know we talk about storage tanks and, obviously, the fill has to come into

the storage tanks from some source. What is the source to feed the storage tanks that the product that you actually deliver to whomever the -- your delivery applied to, where does that come from?

A. Actual pumps.

Q. No, but I mean, is it a -- is it one of your Enterprise propane plants that feeds your pipeline?

A. I'm not sure what you're asking.

Q. No, I'm just trying to figure out -- I know the storage tanks, you know, get fed product and then you pump out of the storage tanks to a customer, I would imagine. Is that correct?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Okay. The propane that makes its way to the storage tank, where does that originate?

A. This actual propane originates from Flint Hills Refinery.

Q. Okay. Flint Hills Refinery. Okay. Thank you.

A. You're welcome.

Q. And then, once you are in the inactive mode and you're not in the delivery mode, what is the pressure of the line that you maintain on it for -- just for the line being raised to deliver?

A. It all depends on what the pump capacity is at the actual source.

Q. Well, what are the ranges of what you would store in the pipeline before delivery? I know when you deliver you're going to hit a certain PSI on the pipeline for the delivery, but is there

an interim pressure that you keep on the lines while you're waiting to deliver?

A. That's actually the OCC personnel that take care of that.

MR. EVANS: Okay. That's all I have. Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Evans.

Okay. We'll go to PHMSA next. Alvaro?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Paul.

BY MR. RODRIGUEZ:

Q. One more question, Mr. Ford. Is there any other pipeline sharing the right-of-way of the propane pipeline?

A. That I do not know.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. That's everything I have. Thank you.

MR. STANCIL: All right. Thank you. Texas Railroad Commission, Mr. Perez?

BY MR. PEREZ:

Q. Good afternoon again, Mr. Ford. Just one question following up on the three valves that you guys isolated together. You mentioned that they were in a series; is that correct?

A. That is correct.

Q. You closed three. Was there a concern for the mainline valve not holding pressure so you double blocked and bleed it with two more valves?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Did you know for sure if the mainline valve wasn't holding

and you closed the other two, or how did you guys decide to close all three?

A. Well, there's a block and bleed on the actual block valves.

MR. PEREZ: Okay. All righty, that's all I have for you. Thank you, sir.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Perez.

Coast Guard, Lieutenant [redacted].

LT [redacted]: Thanks, Paul.

BY LT [redacted]:

Q. Hi, George. I have one follow-up question. Knowing, you know, that there was a -- somehow a breech in the line at 219, would that have changed anything that you did on August 21st?

A. No, sir.

LT [redacted]: All right. That's all I have. Thank you.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. Thank you.

Orion Group. Mr. Kenyon?

BY MR. KENYON:

Q. Thank you. I've just got one last question, as well. You mentioned earlier on that you do inspections of the lines. What inspections do you do or have you done on that particular line on a regular basis?

A. Regular every 6-month intervals, all the block valve inspections, not a pipeline inspection.

Q. Okay. So you do the block valve inspection, and that's pretty -- is that the extent of the inspections you do?

A. Yes, sir.

MR. KENYON: Okay. Appreciate it. Thank you.

MR. STANCIL: Thank you.

Enterprise Products, Mr. Truong.

MR. TRUONG: I don't have any other questions, Paul.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. Does anyone else have any final questions before we close the interview?

(No response.)

MR. STANCIL: Okay. I just have one last thing for you, Mr. Ford, and basically, is there anything else about this accident that you think would be important for us to know?

MR. FORD: No, sir. I do not.

MR. STANCIL: Anything that we didn't ask you that comes to your mind?

MR. FORD: Not at the moment.

MR. STANCIL: Okay. Well, we all appreciate your help and patience, and you gave us some great information today, and we appreciate your time.

So right now it is 2:37 p.m. Central Time, and we will terminate this interview. Thank you.

(Whereupon, at 2:37 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	FATAL FIRE AND SINKING OF THE DREDGE *WAYMON L BOYD* IN CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS, ON AUGUST 21, 2020 Interview of George Ford
ACCIDENT NO.:	DCA20FM026
PLACE:	Via telephone
DATE:	October 20, 2020

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.

[redacted]
Beverly A. Lano
Transcriber

National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Transcript Errata

TABLE OF CORRECTIONS FOR TRANSCRIPT INTERVIEW WITH: GEORGE FORD
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PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
21	15	VNA System	DNA System

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 NEED. _____
Initials

George Ford
Printed Name of Person providing the above information

[redacted]
Signature of Person providing the above information

12/22/2020
Date