UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
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PIPELINE RUPTURE NEAR	*	
HUNTINGTON BEACH, CALIFORNIA	*	Accident No.: DCA22FM001
ON OCTOBER 3, 2021	*	
	*	

Interview of: GENE PRITCHARD, Control Room Operator
Amplify Energy

Long Beach, California

Saturday,
October 9, 2021

APPEARANCES:

ANDREW EHLERS, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

KIM WEST, Pipeline Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BRIAN PIERZINA, Senior Investigator
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

MAUREEN WILLIAMS, General Engineer
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

ERIN HENDRIXSON, Attorney, Office of Chief Counsel
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

BRIAN PORTER
National Center of Expertise

LES LEDET, Investigator
U.S. Coast Guard

RICHARD SMILEY, Senior Vice President of Operations
Amplify Energy Corporation

CHRIS KEEGAN (on behalf of Amplify Energy Corporation)
Law Firm of Kirkland and Ellis

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

(9:21 a.m. PST)

MS. WEST: Good morning. Today is October 9th, 2021, it is now 9:21 a.m. Pacific Standard Time. My name is Kim West and I'm a pipeline investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board. We're in the office of the Amplify Energy at 111 West Ocean Boulevard, that's Long Beach, California.

This interview is being conducted as part of an investigation into the (indiscernible) and release, I believe was October 1st, 2021, in the (indiscernible) near Long Beach, California.

The NTSB Case Number for this accident is DCA22FM001 and Coast Guard Pipeline, if I have that correct, P00547.

So again, the purpose of this investigation is to increase safety, not to assign blame, or fault, or liability. We're about finding fact, so I know it doesn't feel like it but that's our intent.

So the interview is being recorded, it may be just transcribed at a later date. A copy of the transcription will be provided to you for your review prior to being entered into our public dock. So again, do you agree to have the interview recorded?

MR. PRITCHARD: Yes, ma'am.

MS. WEST: Okay. So Mr. Pritchard, please provide the spelling of your name, the company you work for, and your job title.

MR. PRITCHARD: Gene, G-E-N-E, Pritchard, P-R-I-T-C-H-A-R-D.

MS. WEST: Thank you.

MR. PRITCHARD: I work for Amplify Energy.

MS. WEST: Thank you. And your job title?

MR. PRITCHARD: I'm control room operator.

MS. WEST: Okay. So you are permitted to have one person -- one other person present for the interview. This is a person of your choice, a supervisor, a friend, a union representative, family member, or nobody at all. Please state for the record if you have selected someone.

MR. PRITCHARD: I have nobody, just myself. Thank you. And Counsel, Chris.

MS. WEST: And can you, as a designation, can you please state for the record your -- spelling of your name and your affiliation.

MR. KEEGAN: Chris Keegan, C-H-R-I-S, last name Keegan, K-E-E-G-A-N. I'm with the law firm of Kirkland and Ellis representing Amplify.

MS. WEST: Thank you.

MR. KEEGAN: Thank you.

MR. WEST: So now we'll go around the room and have each person introduce themselves. For the record, please state your name with spelling, job title and your employer's name, and I'll start first. My name is Kim West, K-I-M W-E-S-T, and I'm a pipeline investigator with the National Transportation Safety

Board.

MR. PORTER: I'm Lieutenant Commander Brian Porter, B-R-I-A-N P-O-R-T-E-R. I am an investigator with the National Center of Expertise with the Coast Guard.

MR. LEDET: Lance Ledet, L-E-D-E-T. I'm an investigator with U.S. Coast Guard Investigations Nation Center of Expertise.

MR. EHLERS: This is Andrew Ehlers. I am the investigator in charge of this investigation for the National Transportation Safety Board. My name is spelled A-N-D-R-E-W E-H-L-E-R-S.

MR. PIERZINA: Brian Pierzina, B-R-I-A-N P-I-E-R-Z-I-N-A. I'm a senior investigator with the Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration. What else? That's it.

MS. WEST: Yes. Thank you.

MR. SMILEY: Excuse me. My name is Richard Smiley, R-I-C-H-A-R-D and S-M-I-L-E-Y. I'm senior VP of operations for Amplify Energy.

MS. WEST: And online we have?

MS. WILLIAMS: Maureen Williams. I'll go. Maureen Williams, M-A-U-R-E-E-N Williams, W-I-L-L-I-A-M-S. I'm a general engineer with FIMSA.

MS. WEST: Thank you. Is there someone else online?

MS. HENDRIXSON: Yes. Erin Hendrixson, E-R-I-N H-E-N-D-R-I-X-S-O-N. I'm an attorney with FIMSA's Office of Chief Counsel.

MS. WEST: Thank you. Is there anyone else online? Hearing none. We can go and get started.

INTERVIEW OF GENE PRITCHARD

BY MS. WEST:

Q. Can you -- to get started, can you tell us just a little bit more information about your background, such as can you -- well, they heard your title. Education, department, how many -- what kind of reports do you do? What kind of work do you do?

A. Do you want to go back when I started my oil field career?

Q. You can go ahead and start back there.

A. I started at Shell Oil April 4th, 1978 (indiscernible) as a roustabout. First thing they do is they (indiscernible) you (indiscernible) to be a well (indiscernible) and then moved into the well pulling crew, did that for about six years and went back into the roustabout crew and became a lead (indiscernible), did that for about three years. They deleted that job, got rid of it and then I went back to being a pumper.

Then in 1996, I think it was, I answered a (indiscernible) to go offshore on Platform Edith (ph.), down here. There I started off as a facilities operator and (indiscernible) operator. I did that for approximately 10 years. My boss retired and I became the number one there.

And then in about 2006 I went to work for Pacific Energy then and was a facility operator and did that approximately three to four years, went to platform (indiscernible), became a (indiscernible) operator for about a year and a half. Then I was called back to the Platform Ellie (ph.), and from there I started

going in the control room and training in the control room.
Q. Thank you. And how --
A. And I've been in the control room full-time for appropriately eight years.
Q. That was my next question. Thank you.
A. I can't swear to that eight years, I'm just -- approximately that date.
Q. That's fine. So could you please describe your current job? Tell us what you do --
A. In the control room I'm an operator --
Q. What does a controller do?
A. You do reports at midnight. You start turbans, shut down turbans. (INAUDIBLE) the pipeline of course. When shipping comes, you monitor them. Assign permits. I work confined space. And I work with the mechanics and anything else that comes up about contractors, paperwork and so forth.
Q. Just so we have a little more background understanding, can you tell us about a typical work shift?
A. When everything is smooth, it's really easy, you know, there's always stuff to do. You always (indiscernible) computers, monitor stuff. And versus at daytime just a lot of questions, phone calls, sometimes they have us do the POB on board versus on board.
Q. Thank you.
A. And the (indiscernible) and so forth.

Q. Okay. So do you normally sit at a consult or is an --
A. Yes. Sit in front of a -- there's two computer screens and one more here and then just a general computer screen.
Q. Do you also make rounds or is --
A. No, not inside.
Q. You recently --
A. You do get up out of your chair. We have still the old fashion role charts.
Q. Oh, yeah.
A. We have them on the scanning board, we call it. And we monitor them too.
Q. So in terms of your job, what do you do at your station or at an operator station? You kind of touched on it earlier.
A. Mostly you monitor what's going on during the day. And people will come up with different questions.
Q. Okay.
A. You know, if I have something happen out in the plant, you get an alarm and an operator might come and say, you know, what do I do? You'll tell them what to do and give them guidance if they need it.
Q. So is your console or your station on a platform or is it on shore?
A. Yeah. It's on the platform. It's on Platform Ellie.
Q. On the Platform Ellie. Okay. Thank you. I was confused about that.

A. It's on the plus 71 deck.
Q. Can you tell us a little about your training?
A. Training inside the control room was done by Billy Rollins (ph.), he since retired. You'd go in there and start training with him. I trained with a gentlemen named Howard Thompson (ph.) and Steve -- a gentlemen named Steve Owenton (ph.), I trained with him for a while, he's now passed on due to a lung disease. And a gentlemen named Kevin Bucanon (ph.), I trained with him for a while.
Q. So are there certain operator qualifications that you must have?
A. Yes.
Q. You told --
A. YYU wire training and when they think you're trained up, so to speak, they will give you an operator test in there; there's a verbal one and then there's also a written test.
Q. Do you know the time frames for those? Are you up to date on your training?
A. Yes. I'm currently up to date on everything.
Q. Okay. So is it a procedure for your training? And you may not know the exact numbers but.
A. Basically I -- I'm not sure.
Q. Okay. We wouldn't expect you to do verbatim but just a general understanding of the procedure.
A. They've -- when we train, there was no certain things and,

you know, this and this you will do. It's mostly like on-the-job training; situations come up, you're told how to handle them and then you learn how to handle them. Everybody has their own way of running a control room, you know, I might not do it the same was as somebody else would.

Q. Okay. Can -- you want to move slightly over and talk a little bit about the pipeline itself about -- so if you can tell us about how you do the emergency shut down for the pipeline.

A. The emergency shut down; I've never actually done an emergency shut down on the pipeline. Now you do shut off your shipping pumps and if something is really dire, you would shut in the ML3 valve, which is a -- it's basically a shut down valve but they don't consider it a shut down valve; it isolates the pipeline between Platform Ellie and Beta Pump Station.

Q. Uh-huh. And where is that located?

A. Beta Pump Station?

Q. No. The valve.

A. Oh. The valve is out on the plus 44 deck on Ellie, it's right by the fire pumps. And there's shipping pump C, B and A and it's right by C shipping pump; that's probably about eight feet up off the ground.

Q. Okay. Unfortunately you have -- well, not unfortunately. Fortunately, you haven't gone through the emergency shut down. But how would you -- could you please describe how you would go about an emergency shut down.

A. What I would do is --
Q. Or is indications and then what you would do.
A. I would contact my supervisor first and he would have to give the okay to do it and then I would shut off my shipping pumps. Let's go back. I would tell Beta Station, Beta Station is (indiscernible). I would inform them by phone and say we're going to shut in the pipeline. So it's shut down my shipping pumps, shut down the ML3 valve, if this is an emergency I would shut that in and then Beta Station would shut their shut down valve isolating the pipeline.
Q. Do you mind showing (indiscernible)?
A. Yes.
Q. So how long have you been operating at this station, (indiscernible) Ellie?
A. Oh, on Ellie?
Q. Yes.
A. Oh. Since I hired on.
Q. Oh, okay.
A. Or in the control room?
Q. In the control room.
A. I can't give you a definite eight years, but I think it's in that range.
Q. Okay. So has there been any big changes in the station's operations in the last six months say?
A. No.

Q. Or the last year?
A. No.
Q. Okay. I understand that this is a common carrier. So can you tell us a little bit about how you would operate the pipeline with different crude oils coming through. How does that work?
A. What do you mean different crude oils?
Q. My understanding it's a common carrier so you have not just your oils but it's another --
A. Yeah. We have Platform Edith --
Q. If you could explain that.
A. -- that pumps into our dry tank, approximately 410 (indiscernible) a day and that's -- basically I just see a level, a little difference in the level with them pumping because they go right into our open-ended tank. They don't go through our pumps or nothing, their line is isolated into our tank.
Q. Okay. And how do you control that?
A. Edith?
Q. Yes.
A. If there's a problem, I call their operator and they shut down their pipeline and then if it's something extreme, we have a shutdown valve coming up through the deck on Ellie, on the plus 45 level, we would shut that in and isolate Edith from Ellie totally that way.
Q. Thank you. I'm going to switch again. Can you tell us about the leak detection system?

A. Yes. It's an Atmos system; it's a good system. I don't know what else to say, I mean, it's --

Q. Okay. Can you walk through for us how the leak detection system works?

A. The leak detection managers through our PAM unit into the beach's meters. The meters read each other, so to speak, and if they see that the barrels are close, then the leak detection is okay. When you start seeing a swing in the barrel count, the leak detection will come on.

Q. Now were you on duty the day of the release?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. So can you, kind of, walk through the events that day?

A. Okay. I got to work (indiscernible) ready. I drive down the day before, I get on the platform first (indiscernible) in the morning, I go to sleep and then I usually get up about three. And when I'm on nights, I come to work, roughly 4:30, I do change out with Johnny.

So that day they woke me up about 2:00 in the afternoon and said they were having problems. So I come into the control room and the dry tank was really full and they were having a hard time getting -- shipping the oil out, but there was more coming in than flowing out and pumping out, so they had a problem, you know, that day.

Q. Can you clarify what you meant by coming in? What's coming in?

A. They called -- they woke me up and got me out of bed to come to work at about 2:00 in the afternoon.
Q. Well you said the oil was coming in. I'm sorry. That's what I meant.
A. Oh, okay. Well let's go back. During the day, they had a major upset and come to find out on the knockout, which is a vessel that comes in, and it separates the gas, oil and water. So out of the vessel there, the oil comes off about 12 to 14 percent cut, maybe 20 percent cut. And then from there that oil goes into a heater treater and then there the water is knocked out to like a half a percent and there -- that -- we call that dry oil that comes out of there and goes down to the dry tank (indiscernible).

And what happened was the knockout, the water-out valve was not working correctly. So you had a lot of water and oil coming out of the knockout over into the heater treater, and then from there (indiscernible) the dry tank but it was a lot more than normal.
Q. The water content.
A. Yes. The water content was probably 50 percent approximately instead of being a half of a percent. So shipping pump A was working as hard as it could basically, you know. I think it was putting out 315 barrels at 640 PSI, roughly, I can't -- I don't have everything in front of me. So that was the start of our problem.
Q. Okay. And when was this?

A. This was on Friday, and I think we found the valve not working right on the knockout at approximately 4 p.m. or a little bit before.

Q. And this is an ML3 valve?

A. No, not the ML3 valve, this is another vessel. The ML3 valve is on your (indiscernible) one, the oil line (indiscernible) the platform.

Q. So this is a valve off the ship you said?

A. No. This valve is a -- off a vessel that wasn't working correctly. It was sticking -- let's say the dump pressure, which controls a valve, was running at six pounds and it should have been running anywhere from 12 to six and it varies on your inflow. So it wasn't operating right, that's why everything flowed over down into our stock tank.

MS. WEST: I know there's some other people waiting for other questions, so I was just going to go ahead and pass it over to (indiscernible).

MR. PIERZINA: All right. Thanks, Kim. This is Brian Pierzina. And I'm going to have Maureen Williams asking most of the questions, but I'm interested in what you were just describing with the knockout and the flow because I don't understand completely what's going on.

BY MR. PIERZINA:

Q. So you said a valve was sticking on your knockout (indiscernible)?

A. Yes. On a knockout vessel.
Q. All right. And so --
A. Your gross production comes into that vessel, and it's not tied into your pipeline leaving (indiscernible).
Q. Right. So to simplify (indiscernible) of the process (indiscernible) of what's coming into the platform separates the oil and any gas that you get, that's what you call dry oil that goes to the tank, and that's what gets shipped down the pipeline?
A. Yes. From the knockout it goes into your heater treater, we call it, or treater, and that gets the oil up to like 210 degrees, so you have really good separation in there. You've got water valve off the bottom; your dry oil comes off the top and goes down to your tank.
Q. Great.
A. That gets shipped down the pipeline.
Q. That's helpful. I did notice that -- I saw a discharge temperature of like 184 degrees, so is that pretty typical?
A. Yes. The knockout -- or not the knockout, excuse me. The treater. The knockout runs about 145, 140.
Q. Okay. Is that (indiscernible) your valve sticking, is that a, kind of, a common operational issue with the treatment of the product coming in?
A. No. That's the first time I've seen this in quite some time to be honest, probably a couple years. It's not a common thing. No, sir.

Q. And just so that I'm clear, is the operation of that part of your responsibility as a control room operator?
A. Yes. That's part of the whole system, yes.
Q. Okay. And I'd like to get back to one of the questions that Kim asked about changes to your system. So the current screens and stuff that you have have -- how long have those been in place for you?
A. Quantum (ph.) installed them maybe six years ago.
Q. Oh, okay.
A. I can't swear on that.
Q. All right. So most of your time controlling, you've been using (indiscernible) screen.
A. Yes, sir.
MR. PIERZINA: Okay. All right. Thanks. Gene, I'm going to turn it over to Maureen Williams, she's our control room expert.
MS. WILLIAMS: Hi, Gene. How are you today?
MR. PRITCHARD: I'm good. How are you?
MS. WILLIAMS: I'm good. First I just want to say that I do appreciate the role the controller plays in managing the flow of hydrocarbons and natural gas through our system so thanks for that. I have some quick logistic questions just to give me a lay of the land and I don't think they'll take real long.
BY MS. WILLIAMS:
Q. So can you just verify for me what your shift change times normally are?

A. We're supposed to be in the control room at 4:45 p.m., on nights, to 5 a.m. in the morning, that's our shift.
Q. So you get 15 minutes for shift change. Is that the idea?
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Okay. And then would that be for the days for 4:45 a.m. in the morning to --
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. -- 5 p.m. at night. Okay. Great. And on this day you said that you got the call -- you came in at 2:00, so you came in about three hours earlier than you normally would for shift?
A. Yes.
Q. Oh, okay. And then the other thing you said -- I just was curious, you said that you were on the mainland, and you got word to come. Was there a reason -- did you -- were you not scheduled to work or was this filling in for someone? Can you tell me a little bit more about that?
A. I was already on the platform in my room asleep and the cook came and woke me up.
Q. Okay. But before that, were you normally scheduled to start your shift or were you filling in?
A. No, it's my normal shift.
Q. Okay. Okay. I just wanted to make sure I understood that. And so on this you were working nights then? You were working nights?
A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. Oh, okay. And so it was your first day in rotation?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. And can you tell me a little bit about your shift change. What do you cover during your shift changes?
A. We go over the events of the day, any problems we might have, contractors, what they're up to and doing, and anything else -- any issues that are out in the facilities, we discuss.
Q. Okay. So when you came in in your capacity, you are not the primary controller, you were --
A. No, ma'am.
Q. -- supporting controller?
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. So who was that controller then?
A. Johnny Sanchez.
Q. Okay. Okay. So do you document -- how do you document your shift change, what you discussed and covered? Do you have a form or a formal process for that?
A. It's just verbal.
Q. Just verbal. Okay.
A. We do have a book that things are written in during the day or night that are of importance that are happening. Shift change does sometimes last a half hour or 45 minutes too.
Q. Okay. Can I ask -- when does -- so when you do a shift change, you've got the outgoing controller and the in-coming controller, and so when do you decide when the actual exchange

occurs so that who is in control. When do you decide who takes over and assumes control?

A. We usually discuss what's happened and then I might say, okay, Johnny, it's yours and he might say the same thing to me, maybe something different, and then we usually get up and talk a little more and then I'll go to my room, or he'll go to the room.

Q. Okay. So you don't sign anything then or you don't sign out and sign in? Tell me a little bit about signing out and signing in.

A. We don't do that whatsoever.

Q. So -- okay. So you don't have a log -- a specific log in to this (indiscernible)?

A. We do on the computers. Sometimes we log in, sometimes somebody's already logged in and you just use their log in. The company always knows who's behind the chair.

Q. And how do they know -- that they know that by?

A. By your shift and your schedule.

Q. Okay. Okay. Okay. Can you tell me -- I'm a real visual person so I'll probably be drawing a picture while you talk. Can -- as you're sitting and looking at your screen, can you, kind of, describe your console layout for me?

A. It's a desk, probably three feet wide, like maybe seven feet long. You have two computer screens. Right off to your -- if you're looking towards the wall, it'd be off to your left and then you have a general, like, a company computer screen and then you

have one more --
Q. Are the two computer screens --
A. -- screen off to your right.
Q. Are the two computer screens on top of each other, you know, like stacked or are they side by side?
A. Side by side.
Q. Side by side. So you've got -- and those are your (indiscernible), right?
A. (indiscernible) usually -- generally we put that on the right computer. If you're looking towards the wall, it'd be on your right-hand side.
Q. Okay. So (indiscernible) and there's two of those?
A. No, just one computer. We have several screens we can bring up on any computer but the --
Q. Okay. Sure. And so the --
A. -- pipeline we like to dedicate to one spot so we can always see it.
Q. So to the one to the left is the IT computer then?
A. The one in the middle would be the IT computer.
Q. The one in the middle. And what is the one on the far left?
A. The far left we usually put on there the flow coming into the vessels, it'd be into B train.
Q. Okay. Okay. So that's, kind of, your (indiscernible) screen too?
A. No.

Q. No.
A. No, that's a process screen.
Q. Oh. That's a process screen. Does that come from your (indiscernible) system?
A. No.
Q. No. It comes from another system?
A. (indiscernible) -- you can bring up (indiscernible) -- you can bring up (indiscernible) in the pipeline on any one of them screens in there except for the IT screen.
Q. Right. Okay. Okay. So I'm just trying to -- I'm just trying to get the lay of the land here. So then there's -- so what kind of a (indiscernible) system do you use?
A. It's an Atmos system, that's basically what I know.
Q. So you haven't -- so you haven't Atmos leak detec system?
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. And do you -- and so do you have another -- you don't have another (indiscernible) system? There's so many brands out there, clear (indiscernible), Viba (ph.), those types of things.
A. We have one coming from Urica to Ellie on monitoring that gross (indiscernible) line, and that is hooked up to the HMI and that is a micromotion system.
Q. Micromotion. Okay. Okay. So when you get an alarm, that is all coming from Atmos, you say? All the alarms like a pressure alarm or a flow alarm or --
A. No.

Q. No. Where is that coming --
A. If (indiscernible) pertains to the pipeline?
Q. Yeah.
A. Yes, that's where that would come up at. But the other process computers will log, let's say if you had a high pressure on the pipeline, we'll use this for an example only, it will come up on another screen, but it won't change the screen to the pipeline, but it will come up on the other two screens.
Q. Okay. So all -- the leak alarms that came in, came in on the Atmos system?
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Okay. Okay. So and we -- you said you were a qualified controller. Okay. So I -- we talked a little bit about the -- there was a pig launched, right?
A. Yes.
Q. That morning.
A. Sometime in the morning, early, there is a pig in the line.
Q. And as far as you know there was no problems with the pig run?
A. No, ma'am. Not to my knowledge.
Q. Okay. And then you had this disruption of some sort that you talked about, getting rid of the wet oil and I -- and that seemed to clear itself out somehow, right? They fixed the -- was it like a dump valve or something that wasn't --
A. Yes. Once they -- ACR went and looked at the situation going

on with the controller and exercised it a few times, and did some cleaning on it and got it working correctly.

Q. Okay. So if everything now is working and then you get the first leak alarm. Were you in the control room when the first leak alarm came?

A. I honestly can't answer that. I'm not sure.

Q. Okay. But you were not the controller in charge of the first leak alarm? You were not in charge of the system?

A. Johnny was still in control. I don't have the timeline in front of my face.

Q. Okay. It came -- the first leak alarm came in at 16:10 and so I was just trying to figure this out. I'm thinking that it was the other controller who was responsible for the pipeline.

A. Yes. Johnny was in control of the control room at that time. I was in and out looking at the knockout vessel.

Q. You were kind of -- okay. You were supporting the issue. Okay. Okay. So then at some point you came on shift. At your regular shift you would have come on about 5 p.m., is that fair?

A. That's fair.

Q. Okay. And so at that time then there were these leaks going on?

A. Yes.

Q. Leak indications from the Atmos system?

A. Yes.

Q. And so let's talk about when you came on. Help -- talk me

through what you were seeing and how you were thinking about it. Did you --

A. Go ahead.

Q. No. So just, you know, you were getting leak alarms, right, and you were shutting down the system. Tell me a little bit about that. What were you doing?

A. What we've been taught is you would get a leak alarm, you shut down shipping and let it sit and settle out, I try to let it go a half hour, it depends where my levels at and my dry tank, I can let it go for an hour, and generally that cures the problem, that fixes the problem, the leak alarms clear.

Q. Okay. So this wasn't your first leak alarm that you've experienced in your approximately eight years?

A. No, ma'am.

Q. And you just shut the shipping pumps down?

A. Yes.

Q. You don't close any valves?

A. No, that's not standard procedure.

Q. Okay. So then -- okay. So then you're getting several leak alarms through the night, and do you have -- so you have the authority to shut down the pipeline?

A. No. I do not have that authority; I can recommend.

Q. Okay. So then shut -- help me understand what shutting off shipping pumps means versus shutting down the pipeline.

A. When you shut off the shipping pumps, that's all your doing,

the pipeline is still open. You have not isolated the pipeline by shutting off a shipping pump.

Q. Okay. So you don't have the authority to isolate the pipeline, that's what -- that's the difference?

A. I could probably do that, but I would always check with my PIC.

Q. And what is a PIC?

A. Person in charge.

Q. Okay. And -- okay. And who typically is -- is that the same person?

A. It rotates every other -- the PIC is on two weeks.

Q. Okay. So they do it --

A. And we have one PIC one week and one PIC the next week.

Q. Okay. So who did -- so you talk about -- okay. You would report it to your PIC and then they would give you the authority to isolate?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And then so do you have the authority to restart a pipeline after it's been isolated?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. So tell me a little bit about these starts and stops. What were you thinking, were -- you know, and how were -- are you troubleshooting, I guess, or how were you thinking about what you were seeing?

A. Well I encountered something different this time; usually you

get -- a leak alarm would come in and there's a little block on the screen that tells you approximately miles and feet where the leak would be.

Q. Okay. So my --

A. During this episode, that little block never came -- the block was there but it came up as zeros.

Q. Okay. So it does estimate -- yeah. I mean it could have come up as eight, right, or it could have come up as 14, something like that?

A. You mean in miles?

Q. Yes.

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And you have seen that in the past?

A. Yes ma'am.

Q. Okay. But this time was different?

A. Yes.

Q. Which led you to think what?

A. Something didn't seem right because it would show that the leak would be on the platform. The leak would actually be on flatform Ellie if it's reading zero zero.

Q. Okay. So do you have a support team that is monitoring the Atmos system outside of the controller performance of the Atmos system, that you could call a technical expert of Atmos?

A. You mean call Atmos itself?

Q. Well that would be -- I don't know how you -- I don't know if

you have a support team. Some operators have like a third-party vendor that can quickly jump on and monitor, you know, their system; some have it in-house where they have people that can jump on and monitor and act as a support, you know, when things are a little -- might seem a little wonky to the controllers, they can say hey, this is looking weird. Do you have anything like that?

A. If it seems like it might be an HMI issue, we can call Quantum.

Q. And who is Quantum?

A. They help set up the system, the Wonderware (ph.) system and everything on the three computers.

Q. And they are familiar with the Atmos algorithms, etcetra?

A. I can't answer that honestly.

Q. Okay. Okay. So over the course of -- how long were you fighting this, these leaks through your shift?

A. It's (INDISCERINBLE) until like 7:15, the line was down; I called the PIC, Alex Vasquez (ph.), and told him that we keep getting leak detection and I asked him if I can call out Mike Smith to Beta Pump Station to reboot his computer on his end, and to see if this would fix the problem.

Q. So there's an Atmos system on the mainland?

A. Yes.

Q. At Beta?

A. At Beta station. They have the same screen that I have.

Q. And did that fix the problem?

A. No. We restarted it, maybe, approximately 12, 15 minutes it went back into leak detection alarm. We shut down the line again and I think at that point Mike Smith called Rick Armstrong.
Q. And then what?
A. Rick Armstrong called the platform and said let's clear it and try it again and see what it does, so he did that, it went back to leak detection, we shut down the shipping pumps again.
Q. So do you clear the -- you cleared the Atmos system on Ellie?
A. Yes.
Q. So you did like a restart or reset?
A. Yeah. You just let the pipeline sit and rest again, and everything clears out again.
Q. Oh. So you didn't do anything within the Atmos system like set the -- reset the parameters or anything like that?
A. Oh. No, ma'am. No.
Q. Okay.
A. Absolutely not.
Q. Okay. And so it's, you know, dark, right, zero dark 30 on the platform?
A. We have good -- very good lighting at night and it's dark outside, yes.
Q. Okay. But it's dark outside, right, for the most part on the ocean?
A. Yes.
Q. So at any point did you consider manually looking at what was

going on?
A. Yes. I don't know the time, but I had my outside operator, Chapper Richmond (ph.), go down and look at the PAM unit, the shipping pumps around the tank, the pipeline itself. He put on a flotation device, went downstairs on a 12-foot level and looked at the pipeline all the way to where it goes into the water and did a visual.
Q. Okay. But I mean did you compare -- did you do the manual comparison of the meters for manual operation of the pipeline, how you would manually operate the pipeline and if you're looking for leaks.
A. We didn't start that until 12:20, I think.
Q. 12:20 a.m.?
A. Yes, ma'am. Rick informed us that we need to start doing manually leak detection.
Q. On the -- so that would have been the second you started that --
A. October 2nd.
Q. 12:20 a.m. of the 2nd?
A. Yes. Yes.
Q. Okay. And that is because Rick informed you that you needed to do that?
A. Yep.
Q. Okay. And what did you find when that -- when you did that manual leak? So you did that how -- for how long? How long did

you run that manual leak operation?
A. We did that up until 2:20.
Q. So for a couple hours?
A. Yes ma'am.
Q. And what did you find?
A. He was comparing the numbers off the Omni (ph.). Omni is a counter we use that comes through the PAM unit, and I think, if I remember correctly, it was eight-to-10-barrel difference; normally it runs two to three, somewhere in there.
Q. Okay. And so then what?
A. So we monitored that, and it came up almost identical for the two hours, every half hour reading. And after that Rick called out and says, shut down shipping immediately and that's exactly what I did.
Q. Okay. Then did you restart again at some point?
A. No. We -- I got up to PIC, I got Alex Vasquez, he came over, we told him the whole situation, we had a little meeting, and we called out our boat to make a pipeline run, that was approximately 3:35 a.m. They made the pipeline run, I can't tell you when it ended, I don't have the correct times with me, I don't want to guess, and they gave the all okay, said they see no oil, no nothing, all was okay.
Q. And when you say pipeline run, just that means like they run the boat over the line --
A. Yes.

Q. -- relatively. Okay. Okay. And then you went off shift?
A. No. I stayed on a little extra because the gentleman, Johnny, that relieves me, he worked a little extra because I called in sick on Thursday, so he worked a little longer shift. So I stayed on until approximately 5:50 a.m.
Q. Okay. And then did you -- and do you know when the -- and you did a shift change with him?
A. Yes.
Q. And -- okay. And what did you talk about?
A. I think, about 5:00 Rick wanted to restart the shipping pumps to do a meter check, and I think that ran for approximately 1 hour, and then I left the control room once Johnny was in charge and briefed; I left 5:56, somewhere in that time frame.
Q. Uh-huh. Okay. Okay. So you turned it over to Johnny. Okay.
A. Yes.
Q. I just want to ask quickly because I don't want to -- I know that we have other people to talk to. So the Atmos screen, it will report, I'm assuming, if there's volumes of product being lost? Do you --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- look at that screen for that purpose? How do you use that screen, the trending capabilities that may have or the reporting capabilities, and the lambdas and the -- how do you use that screen and did you use that -- those -- the information there for

--

A. I did not use that information that night, no. I went off the pressure on the pipeline and the barrels going to the meter.

Q. And I guess what I'm drawing from that is you concluded it was reasonable or did you have concerns?

A. Of the situation or?

Q. Well you said that you used the pressure on the pipeline and the barrels, and so, you know, I know controllers do hours and hours and hours studying what normal is, right --

A. Right.

Q. -- so that they know when things go off normal, become abnormal, or emergencies. So when you were looking at the pressures and the barrels, did you have -- tell me how you thought about what you were seeing?

A. That all looked normal to me because the shipping tank had come down and it was approximately shipping then maybe 110, 120 barrels an hour, and the pressure on the pipeline was down to 290, 295, somewhere in there.

Q. Was it reasonable on both ends?

A. Yes. It looked reasonable on my end. Mike's end looked reasonable and, you know, anywhere from 10 to 12 pounds it's going into an open tank.

Q. Tell me more about -- I don't understand what you just said by Mike's end. Is there somebody else monitoring on the other end or do you do both?

A. That's Beta Pump Station. Mike was there because we called him out at 8:00 p.m. for the pipeline leak detection issues.
Q. Okay. But when you're controlling, you're watching both the, I'll say the inlet pressure and the outlet pressure at the end of the pipeline?
A. Yes. I always look at that.
Q. Okay. And so when you looked at the Beta Station pressure compared to the Ellie Station pressure, it seemed to be a reasonable pressure differential?
A. Yes, it seemed normal to me.
Q. What's normal when you're flowing? What's a normal pressure loss across that line when it's burning?
A. Right now we have a pig in the line --
Q. Yes. Without the pig in the line.
A. -- so we're going to be pushing harder on our end, of course. Normally the line ships 300 pounds and on his end, it's still about the same, 10 to 12 pounds.
Q. So there's a 10-to-12-pound loss?
A. No, that's his pressure on Beta pipeline. Going into the stock tank, that is the pressure going through their pig receiver.
Q. So there's no differential across the pipeline? Just trying to understand.
A. You're going from roughly 300 pounds and time it gets on the other end, it drops off fast because you're going into an open-ended tank inside, there's no backpressure there.

MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. Okay. Okay. I don't think I have any other questions unless somebody else does.

MS. WEST: Yes. Thank you.

MR. EHLERS: This is Drew Ehlers from the NTSB; I have a couple of questions based on what we've heard so far. And as I mentioned to you, I'm not a pipeline expert so you're going to have to bear with some of these dumb questions, all right.

BY MR. EHLERS:

Q. First of all, some acronym questions. PAM unit, PAM stands for?

A. I can't recollect that right now.

Q. All right. It's okay. I heard you say ACR.

A. ACR is automatic control technician -- no. A automatic control repairment, ACR.

Q. Okay. And you said an HMI issue.

A. HMI is your computer, the HMI screen.

Q. Okay. All right. Normally -- normal operation, is this a continuous transfer pipeline of that (indiscernible)? Do you know what I mean by that? Or is there always product flowing through that pipeline or is it done in (indiscernible)?

A. No, it's usually continuous.

Q. Okay. All right. Where is Beta Station physically located, right over here?

A. Pico and something. I've only been there one time; it's been a long time ago.

Q. Here in Long Beach?
A. Yes, it's in Long Beach.
Q. Okay. All right. So you mentioned the issue with dry tank filling up because of the valve, I think you said it was a valve problem in the afternoon on the 1st. Is the level in the dry tank, does that become a concern? Like can it overflow, or I mean do you have to --
A. Yes. It gets you concerned, you get a level alarm high, I think it's 80, maybe 80.1 percent and then if it goes too far, you'll get a level safety high and that will shut in the pipeline, that shuts in everything; shuts down all the incoming oil, shuts down all the wells, everything.
Q. Okay. And you mentioned that because of that issue, you said the shipping pump was working as hard as possible.
A. Oh, no. It wasn't working as hard as possible. We have a recycle valve that goes off the shipping line back into our dry tank, so that was, I think, at the time was 10 percent -- 10 percent bypassing back.
Q. Okay. All right. So as far as -- at the time of the issue with the valve and the -- was the product shipping a lot of water? In other words it wasn't as --
A. Yes. I can't give you the percentage but there was quite a bit of (indiscernible).
Q. Okay. So essentially compared to normal, it was a different consistency of product rolling -- going through the pipeline --

A. Yes.
Q. -- during that time.
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. And you said that -- I think you said that the problem cleared -- I think you said you cycled the valve a couple times. Do you remember when that problem cleared?
A. We had to bring down the vessel slowly because you don't want to flood out yourself. We get -- that water goes into another tank off the bottom of that vessel, so you have to bring it down slowly, so I'm going to say maybe an hour.
Q. An hour after it -- the problem?
A. After we found the problem, maybe an hour and a half.
Q. Okay. That is after you've been woken up and --
A. Yes, sir.
Q. -- you were helping out with the problem. Okay. While that issue was manifesting itself, while it was happening, was there more pressure in the pipeline because of that dry tank from overflowing, from getting hot?
A. The valve was set at 10 percent, so you're shipping a little harder, I think it was 315 barrels an hour in the pipeline; I'd say it was 640. I don't have the pressures with me, somebody else has them; they can tell you exactly what it was.
Q. Okay. You don't remember it being significantly higher?
A. No. Now what we did do, we were running shipping pump A, and it was putting out pretty well, when I came on, the level was

still high. So I asked Seanie (ph.), what do you think if we put on shipping pump B and see what it does, if it will bring down the level a little better.

We started shipping pump B, that raised the pipeline pressure a little bit and it really didn't seem to do much. So I said why don't we try one more pump and just see what it does, so we put that on approximately 10 minutes, the mechanic calls the control room, says hey, I need somebody down here. So I went down personally and them two pumps were cavitating because they weren't getting enough flow, they're used to getting good clean oil and now you're maybe getting 50 percent water and 50 percent oil. So the discharge gauges on them two pumps are zero, so I told Johnny shut them off, they're not doing anything, we don't need to run these.

Q. Okay. These are the extra --

A. Shipping pumps. They're spares, yes.

Q. How many do you have total on the platform?

A. Three.

Q. Three. Okay. So normally you would run one and you had brought in on, on one point, three --

A. Yes.

Q. (indiscernible) those extra two were kept (indiscernible).

A. Yes. They were kept (indiscernible).

Q. Okay. All right. So you mentioned the leak and that in the past we had problems you'd shut down the shipping pump and

(indiscernible) if I understand that correctly?
A. That's correct.
Q. How often do you get those leak alarms?
A. Lately we haven't really been getting too many leak alarms. We've been losing communication with Beta Pump Station.
Q. Okay. Let me try and quantify (indiscernible). Do you get a leak alarm every shift or once every couple of days, couple weeks? How often does that happen?
A. Once every two weeks. You'd have to go back in on the -- look on the HMI on the alarms and that will tell you better than I can sit here and tell you, but I'd say one.
Q. Once a --
A. Once every couple of weeks.
Q. Once a rotation? Yeah. Okay. All right. Where is the PIC located? Where is he? Is he off the platform?
A. Yes, he's on platform Ellen, two platforms connected by a bridge.
Q. Oh, okay.
A. He's on Ellen, the one with the --
Q. Okay. We're looking --
A. On the left.
Q. -- at a picture. For the recording, we're looking at the picture in the -- hanging in the room of the platform, so thanks. I appreciate that. Okay. So he's out there physically, he's on the other platform (indiscernible) physically able to be at the

same location as you essentially.
A. Yes. When you walk across that bridge, it would be right there.
Q. Okay. You mentioned the 8-to-10-barrel difference when you were trying to troubleshoot (indiscernible) would troubleshoot the leak alarm. Is that barrels per hour?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. That's the rate difference. Okay.
A. Excuse me. And that was per half hour.
Q. Per half hour?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. My apologies for bouncing around here. Back to the leak alarm. When that leak alarm goes off, is it a continuous audio -- audible alarm, is it a -- does it go on and off, is it a flash on your screen? How does that work?
A. It comes up on a pangram, it comes up as leak detection, you can see it -- a white light comes on and it's marked and you can clear it by pushing a button, but if it stays on, which it does, and anytime that light comes up, you immediately go to your shipping page, it's on, and click on your Atmos button and see what's going on.
Q. Okay. When that light initially comes on, is there an audible alarm as well?
A. Yes. There's an audible alarm in the control room.
Q. And does it continue to arm the alarm or once you acknowledge

it, it --
A. You're going to acknowledge it.
Q. Okay. And then if there is still an alarm condition, the visual indication will stay but the audio alarm would clear. Is that correct?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. Some more basic questions here. What's your rotations as far as time on and time off. You mentioned two weeks, I think, on and --
A. And two weeks off.
Q. Two weeks on, two weeks off. And then last question I have for the moment, do you run leak drills? In other words (indiscernible) going, kind of, to training. Do you ever do a drill where you have a simulated leak, and you take action?
A. No.
Q. Okay. And I lied, I do have one (indiscernible). This always happens. You mentioned the valve that can isolate the pipeline if necessary, is that a motor operated valve?
A. Yes.
Q. Is it operated remotely if it was from the control --
A. It's -- yes. I can turn a key inside the platform in the control room and shut it or else an operator can go down and hit a palm pilot valve, it's called, he can hit that, it bleeds the air off fast; it's an air actuated valve and shut it's (indiscernible).

Q. Okay. Are there any -- is that valve or any other valve automated for a low pressure or any kind of -- for a leak type parameter? Do you understand what I'm asking?
A. Yes. I think if you get a pressure safety high, that valve shuts in.
Q. Okay. So that's a high pressure?
A. And probably it does on the low too, I'd have to look at the schematics.
MR. EHLERS: All right. That was my last question, sir. Thank you.
MS. WEST: All right. I'll shift over (indiscernible). Do you have any questions, sir?
MR. PORTER: Yeah. I had a couple. Hey, Gene. Lieutenant Commander Brian Porter. I'm from the National Center of Expertise for Marine Casualty Investigations. So my look at this is a little bit different than, I guess, the entire scope of the pollution incident and all that stuff. Okay. So what I want to get at is -- I've got a couple questions.
BY MR. PORTER:
Q. The first one, we've -- you've got a lot of great details with what were, you know, times and how were -- how you proceeded with, you know, discovery and all that business. But can you just walk me through a real rudimentary by the time that you discovered it or were involved in it of, hey, we've got a leak to, you know, call so and so, help so and so, looked at the pipe and just really

glossary. Just give me like the date, approximate time and just a real snapshot because we've got a lot of information, but I just need to put it into something easy to handle.

A. Are you talking about the first pipeline run?

Q. No. Probably --

A. Or an actual leak in the water?

Q. Like they get you out of the bed, right, and they say --

A. Right.

Q. -- hey, we've got a problem, Gene. Take me from that to, like, you know, we know we have an issue but just real (indiscernible), approximate times and dates. I know it's hard, but you don't give me a ton.

A. Times are hard, I mean --

Q. Yeah.

A. We have the problem at the knockout.

Q. What date was that?

A. That was Friday. Then we started with the shipping issue.

Q. Do you know what time the knockout had the issue initially?

A. I can't -- I wasn't on. I can't answer that. I know approximately what time we found out and then from there we had the leak detection start going off, once we started shipping again, that was at 4:00 or whatever time that was.

Q. Still on the 30th?

A. Yes, first.

Q. You said the first, 4:00, first leak? First leak detection?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: October 1st, not the 30th. I'm sorry.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 1600. Okay.

BY MR. PORTER:

A. And then the shipping pump issue -- we're running the three shipping pumps. How fast do you want me to go over this? To go over the whole thing again?

Q. No. You're doing fine. I just wanted to fill in these big spots, you know, these big chunks and you're doing well, so thank you.

A. All right. We had the shipping issues, leak detection goes off, I reset the pipeline, (indiscernible) off again, I reset it again, this time I called the PIC and let him know the situation and if I call the pipeline tech, Mike Smith. I called him at approximately -- I think that call was made at 7:30. He got to Beta Pump Station I think roughly 8:00.

Q. So that was 7:30 on the 1st?

A. Yes. He reboots his end of the computer, we start shipping again, leak detection goes off again, we shut down, we call Rick Armstrong.

Q. Do you know -- maybe -- how long do you think that was between- before Rick was called?

A. I think he called him right after we shut down, and that was 8:00 -- I mean I don't have the times in front of me.

Q. No. Just approximate is --

A. So we call Rick, Rick informs us of what to do, restart the

shipping, and see if we can let this thing balance out. Also, I forgot to say this, we had put the pipeline asleep on the Atmos, I was informed of Rick to do this. And what we were hoping to do -- this was about 9:10 or 9:15, I didn't even know where the box was to put it to sleep, he had to tell me where the box is; I don't ever want to touch that unless I'm informed to do that by a superior. So we put the pipeline to sleep and the idea was -- being is, we had three pumps -- shipping pumps running at one time for a little bit, that didn't help out the matters. We had the pig in the line, he figured maybe we whipped up a bunch of gas and crap in the line, and maybe this is what's causing the leak detection to go off. So we put it asleep, we start it back up, we approximately ran it 25 minutes asleep and then the leak detections on --

Q. This is about -- this is about -- and I don't want to stop you, but this is about 9:00 or so on October 1st, right?

A. Yeah, about 9 -- we put it asleep (indiscernible) like 9:15 until about 9:45, I got -- excuse me, not paranoid but I've never done that before, but I'm going (indiscernible) what my superior tells me to do.

So we take it back out of sleep, and we were hoping that that would do with Beta Pump Station, their meter would catch up with our PAM meter, but it never never did because all the activities during the day, all the water that can be here in front of this pig and over here. In front of the pig in nice dry oil. So we

did that and then after that, it didn't help, we shut down shipping again, we waited awhile, and we kept thinking still that we had a leak on Ellie because that meter on Atmos still would not read; it would not read in miles where the leak can be. It came up saying you have a leak but if there's --

Q. (indiscernible) zero?

A. No, zeros -- it tells you it's got to be an Ellie, you know, that's when I sent the operator out to go look, you know, go look for a leak.

Q. What time did that guy actually do the visual look?

A. Probably about 9:30 sometime in there. Now he does make rounds earlier, which I never did go tell him hey, go tear up the pipeline, but he's out looking and if he's seen a leak, he's going to tell me and he's out making rounds.

Q. That was (indiscernible) right? He didn't have (indiscernible).

A. No. There was no leak, nothing we could find. So then we start a manual leak detection. Roughly 12:20 we let the lines sit out, we tried to (indiscernible) a time or two more. We all three talked together to see if we could figure out this problem which was going on, you know, what is happening here because we've had false leak detection before.

Q. The manual leak detection, is that -- besides just visually looking, taking a boat back and forth, is it like just certain monitors or is it they send the pig down and run the line or?

A. No. What it is is when you do manual leak detection, you have an Omni counter on the wall and I'll have PAM A and B, and we were in PAM A at the time. So what you do is every half hour, this is like standard to do, I get a reading off their -- I get the pipeline pressure and I get the temperature of the oil, all that comes up. And so they do the same at Beta Pump Station, they call me with their number, and we compare the numbers, that's manual leak detection. They have the temperature of the line coming in there and also their pressure, and I have that also on my screen; that's manual leak detection.

Q. So from there after you guys have compared and you said it was a little off, a little high, right?

A. Yes. It was off, yeah.

Q. (indiscernible) high.

A. And Rick was -- we were all concerned about this, you know, but it still shows my leak is on Ellie, it does not show a pipeline leak, it shows it's on Ellie. And (indiscernible) approximately 3:20 we get up to PIC, he comes over, him and Rick decide to get the boat and make a pipeline run.

Q. Okay. That's the manual run was done at 3:20. Okay.

A. Yes, approximately. And I think they got done at like 4:30 or something like that, it's longer -- they go slow and they're looking and smelling for oil, you know, and it makes it rough out there with them damn ships in the water.

Q. Yeah. So they do that okay. So they run the pipe and they

come back with nothing.
A. All is okay.
Q. All is okay and that's at 3:20 on the 2nd?
A. Yes.
Q. Yeah. Okay. And then a little bit more, I guess. What happened after that?
A. About 5:00 Rick decides he wants to do a meter check. So I started the shipping pumps back up, A shipping pumps are restarted and he's monitoring the meters.
Q. Rick is?
A. Yes. And then I go to bed.
Q. And then you were up.
A. Yeah at 5:50, somewhere in there I bailed.
Q. Oh. That's right, 5:50. So you're done at 5:50 and at that point nothing was secured secure, right?
A. No.
Q. Shipping pumps had been turned off inadvertently or -- I'm sorry, (indiscernible) really bad term, periodically throughout the process, right?
A. Yes.
Q. But the production had never been stopped.
A. No. Production was still -- I mean (indiscernible) --
Q. And by the time you went to bed it was still producing --
A. Yes. Can I say something? I mean I went to bed, and I didn't even know there was leak. I got up at 4:00 and Bobby

Bouche (ph.) of Bessy says, hey Gene and I go what are you doing here, it's 4:00? He says you have a pipeline leak; I go what; I don't even know what you're talking about, pipeline leak, no way. So I didn't even know we had a leak until I got up.

A. Right. No, that's good. That's good. No, that's great. And that was a good -- that's a good timeline for me, it shows me what was going on at that time. That's wonderful. Thank you. And that's all I -- you did great. That's what I wanted. That was awesome. And I'm also -- I know there's other people who want to talk. Let me get to a couple little other things. Is -- so I'm looking at it also in respects to not just the day of the event, but I'm looking at other events and how they tie into this whole process. So I, kind of, want to talk about -- you've been out there for a number of years, eight years or so, on actually Ellie in that pipeline?

A. Possibly 12, 13.

Q. Okay. In the last, I don't know, couple years, a year, in that time frame, has there been any like major modifications or repairs done --

A. To the --

Q. -- to the pipeline?

A. Not to my knowledge, no repairs have been done to that pipeline to my knowledge anywhere. Now we did, a couple of years ago, replaced the recycle valve; they get eaten up with time and we did replace it, that's the only thing I've known that -- that

wasn't even on the pipeline, that comes off our shipping pumps.
Q. And that's like a general maintenance thing?
A. Yeah, that's generally maintenance.
Q. And then we talked about -- you talk a little bit about the pig, right, running a line. How often is that pig ran through?
A. We run one pretty much religiously every Friday.
Q. So the -- okay. So every Friday --
A. First thing in the morning, generally.
Q. You run the pig the entire length?
A. Yes, sir. It ends up at Beta Pump Station in their pig receiver; approximately four days later it takes for that pig to get to shore, maybe four and a half days.
Q. And then it gets reran the next Friday, so it starts the (indiscernible) all over again.
A. Yeah. We have several different types of pigs we run, yes.
Q. Sure. Okay. has there any -- been any issues with -- of your knowledge, right, because you're there when the pigs were being run. Is there a way that you monitor the speed of the pig, the slowdowns, the stops?
A. We try not to stop the pipeline with a pig in there just in case, we always want to keep shipping. We have a screen -- on the pipeline screen there's a box in the corner that says the time the pig goes by a pig signal, when it ships it gives the time. And then as the pig moves down through the platform, out in the flats, it gives the distance in barrels that pigs traveled. So right now

it might be 3,700 barrels on the -- this red strip and it keeps track of the barrels right there.

Q. Okay. And then in the last, you know, year or two years, has there been any, like, unusual, to your knowledge, of hey, the pigs not pushing past as many barrels that it used, you know, as it was or hey it's slowing down in certain areas and that's kind of weird but --

A. You don't notice that. There's so much cushion in the line, you don't notice nothing like that.

Q. You don't notice any unusual pig movement throughout the --

A. No.

Q. Nothing that's been alarming to you about that?

A. No.

Q. And then and I was going to talk about high pressure alarms and things like that. So we talked a lot about, like, leak detection but has there been -- maybe from, right -- we talked about Friday, we'll talk about that little section first; Friday to the second, right. Was there any high-pressure alarms that were unusual?

A. No. The pipeline at one point got up to, I think, 830 pounds.

Q. Is that unusual?

A. That's a little high.

Q. And when was that?

A. I can't -- I don't have the screen in front of me. I can't

tell you an exact time or -- I think that was -- well Friday.
Q. Yeah. So that high pressure alarm, you discovered one maybe Friday.
A. No. There was no high-pressure alarm, no.
Q. Oh, okay. Not an alarm but a higher pressure.
A. Yeah. The alarm I think, goes off at 1,048 pounds.
Q. Oh, wow. Okay.
A. So we're not even near pushing that.
Q. But you did notice it was -- had some high-pressure.
A. The pressure went up a little bit, yes.
Q. Had you noticed some high-pressure events like that in the last year or so?
A. No. Not -- no.
Q. Nothing unusual like hey, this is getting a little high.
A. Yeah. This -- normally we have zero trouble with that pipeline.
Q. And no high-pressure alarms within the -- more alarms, more high-pressure occurrences (indiscernible) in the last year?
A. Not to my knowledge, not when I've been on. No, sir.
Q. Okay. And I think I'll follow Drew's (indiscernible) and say this is my last question; maybe not. I was curious about the water in the line, right. And so you guys obviously have an operation manual that everybody familiar with at the station, right?
A. There's several type of procedures if you're going that

route.
Q. Yeah. Yeah. Right. So in your procedures of loading, unloading, and all that stuff, is -- or emergency shutdowns or whatever this would -- this campus would fall under, when there's high water or a higher water content, is there a process that you say, you know, the waters at 30 percent, just shut it down?
A. No, no.
Q. No. There's not a threshold of there's a lot of water?
A. No. Now there is a cut monitor on the pipeline to the PAM unit that we're allowed to ship three percent BS&W, that's pipeline regulations. I'm sure this gentlemen can vouch for that.
Q. Three percent water --
A. Yeah. Three percent BS&W.
Q. What was coming through that?
A. At the time when the upset, I can't tell you.
Q. An estimate or a guess or --
A. I'm guessing 40, 50 percent during the upset.
Q. Have you ever seen anything like that in the 12 to 13 years you've been on that platform but any other platforms?
A. We've shipped (indiscernible) before maybe 20 percent, if you've had an upset. That day was a little higher because of everything flowing out of your treater down into the dry tank; that was an exceptional day, that's not normal whatsoever.
Q. Is there an alarm sounded when it -- when the high water is like that? Is there any alarms that go off?

A. There's -- on the pipeline page, you do get a -- if I remember right, you get an alarm and I think it's set for like 9.99 percent. So when you hit (indiscernible) call it 10 percent, it starts flashing in a box saying yeah, you know, you have a problem.

Q. With high water?

A. Yeah. This is not right, yeah. It's called a cut monitor.

Q. And have you ever seen that in maybe the past year (indiscernible)?

A. Oh, sure. Sure.

Q. So you've had high water content alarms --

A. Not to the extent that we had to --

Q. -- that day? But you had had some?

A. Yeah see it does happen once in a while. You will have a little upset, sometimes the treater will upset. You know, sometimes they float off the treater to get garbage out of it and I'm just talking about asphaltenes and stuff that build up in the alarm.

Q. Is that more frequent maybe in the last year, the buildup of water running through that pipe in the last year or so?

A. I honestly can't answer that.

MR. PORTER: Okay. No, that's fine. Okay. (indiscernible) get the rest of my stuff, you know, from the company (indiscernible). Lance, do you have anything to add?

MR. LEDET: Yeah. Yes, I do. Gene, I'm Lance Ledet, I'm

with the U.S. Coast Guard Investigations Center of Expertise.

BY MR. LEDET:

Q. Question for you, do you know what the age of that pipe that runs on the floor. Do you know what --

A. To the beach?

Q. Yeah.

A. (indiscernible) installed in 1980, I think, roughly, they built it before. All that's documented, I mean it's documented.

Q. Sure. Okay. And the pipe itself, because I'm certainly no expert in pipes but can you describe what a pipe -- what that pipe might look like in its condition, in its good condition state?

A. In a good condition state all of the concrete is on the line, and they have (indiscernible) in the joints, and all that's intact and obviously now it's not intact.

Q. Got you. Okay. So it's a steel pipe and it's encased in concrete. Does it have any other type of encasement or protecting or anything?

A. No, sir. Not to my knowledge, no.

Q. Okay. And that pipe, is it anchored in any kind of way to the sea floor?

A. I can't answer that to be honest.

Q. That's fine. Sure. No problem. Are you aware -- do you know of surveys or inspections that take place of the exterior portion of that pipe?

A. Yes. They do an ROV (ph.) run from the platform all the way

to -- I think it goes underground here somewhere, and they do that ROV every -- I'm pretty sure every three years.

Q. Every three years?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Has there ever been a time that you know of that there has been an issue with the pipe noted from an exterior ROV inspection?

A. No. I --

Q. Okay. So as a -- Lance Ledet again, U.S. Coast Guard. As an operator in a control room, you have different alarms for different situations that maybe take place. Is there any alarm that you know of of a pipeline being moved off station?

A. None. No, sir. None to my knowledge.

MR. LEDET: Okay. Thank you.

MS. WEST: Does anybody -- do you have any questions?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have any questions.

MS. WEST: No questions. Does anybody else have any new questions? I just have a few clarifying.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. Go ahead. We'll do a quick --

BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

Q. One acronym question. BS&W, is that (indiscernible) Settlement and Water? If you don't know, it's all right.

A. We used to call it bullshit and water.

Q. All right. That is what it is.

A. Settlement, yeah. We've always called BS&W.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Sorry. (indiscernible) my question.

MS. WEST: About acronyms.

BY MS. WEST:

Q. The other thing you mentioned was resting the pipe. What does that mean?

A. You mean putting it to sleep?

Q. Putting -- I'm sorry. Putting it to sleep, yes.

A. That is where --

Q. Just in your own words.

A. That's where the leak detection is bypassed putting the line asleep to see if the meters can catch up with each other.

Q. So does that mean it's shut in?

A. No. No, the pipeline is still moving. The Atmos has just been put to sleep, it's not reading right now.

Q. But it's still flowing?

A. Yes, it's still flowing.

Q. But it's not capturing (indiscernible)?

A. Yes. There's a box that you click on it --

Q. Okay. So it's still reading it?

A. -- and that will put it to sleep. It still reads to a certain extent (indiscernible) -- I can't. You need to talk with Armstrong, he's the professional.

MS. WEST: Okay. I think that was my -- the end of my questions.

MR. PIERZINA: Okay. And this is Brian Pierzina again. A couple questions.

BY MR. PIERZINA:

Q. You had mentioned that you discussed the issue and I think you said (indiscernible) discussing whether or not you might have a leak; I think there was three of you involved in that discussion; I think you, Rick Armstrong and --

A. Mike Smith.

Q. -- and Mike Smith. Okay.

A. He's the Beta Station pipeline operator.

Q. Okay. Would -- typically would you involve the PIC in those discussions?

A. Being this is the time morning it was he was not awoken.

Q. Got you. All right. And then the communication alarms, I think, about the same time there were some communication alarms coming in from Beta to Ellie, and just wondering if that's -- I think you had mentioned it, but is that something that's common, or new, or does it long last -- last long, does it affect, you know, what you're doing, operating?

A. Are you talking about communications?

Q. Yeah. Like and I saw an alarm log that there's an alarm for communications from Beta to Ellie or something.

A. Yes. How do I -- what it is, it seems like when it gets foggy or sometimes real calm water, we do occur communication problems, it comes up on our HMI and, like, Beta Station might be

red and then Ellie can be red, and it goes in and out and it comes back, but it's only certain times of the weather, certain types of weather it happens.

Q. Okay. And does it have any effect on how you do your job or decisions that you make or anything else?

A. If it were just a stay on period you would shut down -- you'd shut down shipping for the communication troubles, yes.

Q. Okay. And then just -- do alarms that are received, are there various severities of those alarms and if there is can you describe what they are and what the severity might mean for your decisions?

A. The severity would be to me a piece of equipment going down, turban failure, low tank, when we have low water in a tank, you'll get an alarm.

Q. Okay. So and I don't know what your systems like. I've seen systems where a low severity alarm might be a one, a more severe alarm might be a two and, you know, some -- the real severe alarms might be, you know, 3, 4. Do you have anything like that?

A. No, sir.

Q. So they're all standalone, see it, decide what to do?

A. Yes, sir.

MR. PIERZINA: Okay. All right. That's it for me.

MS. WEST: Maureen or anyone online? Erin?

MS. HENDRIXSON: I'm here. I'm here.

MS. WEST: Oh. Do you have questions?

MS. HENDRIXSON: No, I'm good. I'm good.

MS. WEST: Just for the record, I don't know if we asked about HMI as an acronym.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, we got it. Yeah.

MS. WILLIAMS: It's -- yeah. That's human machine interface.

MS. WEST: Just for the record. All right. Well if there's no more questions, I want to thank you very much for taking the time and coming all the way on shore for us. Appreciate the answers and I know it was very difficult, so it's much appreciated.

MR. PRITCHARD: Thank you, everybody.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you. Yep. Thank you very much.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm going to stop the recording.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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 John Smith
ACCIDENT NO.:	DCA22FM001
PLACE:	Long Beach, California
DATE:	October 9, 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.

Ashley Daumit
Transcriber

National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Transcript Errata

Subj: Transcript Review Request for the pipeline rupture near Huntington Beach, California, at 2:30 AM on October 3, 2021

Accident No.: DCA22FM001

To: Mr. Gene Pritchard

Dear Mr. Pritchard,

The enclosed transcript of your interview on October 9, 2021, is provided for your review and comment to ensure its accuracy. It is not for public release.

The transcript is investigative information of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) created as part of the NTSB's investigation into the pipeline rupture on October 3, 2021, at approximately 2:30 AM local time NTSB Accident No. DCA22FM001.

NTSB regulations prohibit the public release of investigative information prior to release by the NTSB without the permission of the NTSB Investigator in Charge (IIC). See 49 C.F.R. § 831.13(b). The IIC has not approved public release of this information at this time. Therefore, we request that you refrain from any further dissemination of this transcript.

Kindly review this transcript for accuracy and provide corrections, if any, in the attached table. Please print, sign, and return it to me via email by November 12, 2021. Please return or destroy the transcript after providing your comments.

Comments must be returned no later than November 12, 2021. Requests for an extension of this deadline must be in writing and received prior to the due date. If comments are not received by the due date, we will consider the transcript to be final without comment.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. If you have any question regarding the process, please feel free to contact me.

Best Regards,

Sr. Marine Investigator
Office of Marine Safety
National Transportation Safety Board

National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Transcript Errata

TABLE OF CORRECTIONS FOR TRANSCRIPT INTERVIEW WITH: [NAME]
RECORDED ON [DATE]

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING

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. */s/ GP*
Initials

Gene Pritchard
Printed Name of Person providing the above information

/s/ Gene Pritchard
Signature of Person providing the above information

November 30, 2021
Date