

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

SAN FRANCISCO GAS RELEASE AND FIRE * Accident No.: PLD19MR001
FEBRUARY 6, 2019 *

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Interview of: BILL RUSSO

San Francisco Police Department
San Francisco, California

Tuesday,
February 9, 2019

APPEARANCES:

ALEX COLLETTI, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

NATHAN SARINA, Utilities Engineer
California Public Utilities Commission

TERENCE ENG, Senior Utilities Engineer Supervisor
California Public Utilities Commission

KIM WEST, Senior Accident Investigator
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
(PHMSA)

MICHAEL COCHRANE, Assistant Deputy Chief
Homeland Security, San Francisco Fire Department

CHRISTINE COWSERT, PE
Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E)

KEVIN SOUZA, North Bay Gas Superintendent
PG&E

LISE JORDAN, Attorney
PG&E
(On behalf of Mr. Russo)

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:23 a.m.)

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2
3 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. We're on the record for the Bill Russo
4 interview. Good morning. Today is February 9, 2019. It is now
5 10:23 a.m. Pacific Time. My name is Alex Colletti, the
6 investigator in charge for this accident for the National
7 Transportation Safety Board in Washington, D.C. We are at the
8 Richmond Street -- Richmond Station Police Station in San
9 Francisco, California.

10 This interview is being conducted as part of the
11 investigation into the Pacific Gas and Electric gas -- natural gas
12 release and fire that occurred on February 6, 2019 in San
13 Francisco, California. The NTSB case number for this accident is
14 PLD19MR001.

15 This interview is being recorded and may be transcribed at a
16 later date. A copy of the transcript will be provided to the
17 interviewee for review prior to being entered into the public
18 docket. That's your opportunity to correct any mistakes in
19 transcription. It's not really an opportunity to add a whole
20 lot --

21 MR. RUSSO: Right.

22 MS. COLLETTI: -- a whole lot new more facts, so please tell
23 us now.

24 MR. RUSSO: Understood.

25 MS. COLLETTI: But if you said right and they recorded it as

1 left, that's the place to do it.

2 MR. RUSSO: Okay.

3 MS. COLLETTI: You are permitted to have one person present
4 during the interview. This person is of your choice, an attorney,
5 a supervisor, a friend, a family member, or nobody at all. Bill,
6 state for the record the spelling of your full name, your job
7 title, and who you have selected to be with you.

8 MR. RUSSO: Okay. My name is William Russo, that's W-I-L-L-
9 I-A-M, Russo is R-U-S-S-O. My job title is gas construction
10 supervisor at PG&E. And today I have Lise Jordin with me from
11 PG&E.

12 MS. COLLETTI: Excellent. Okay. We're going to go around
13 the room now and introduce ourselves. We'll start with you.

14 MR. SARINA: My name is Nathan Sarina, N-A-T-H-A-N, S-A-R-I-
15 N-A, and I'm with the California Public Utilities Commission.

16 MR. ENG: Terence Eng, T-E-R-E-N-C-E, E-N-G, also with the
17 California Public Utilities Commission.

18 MS. WEST: And I'm Kim West, K-I-M, W-E-S-T, with the U.S.
19 Department of Transportation Office of Pipeline Safety.

20 MR. COCHRANE: Michael Cochrane, M-I-C-H-A-E-L, C-O-C-H-R-A-
21 N-E, Assistant Deputy Chief, Homeland Security, San Francisco Fire
22 Department.

23 MS. COWSERT: Christine Cowsert, C-H-R-I-S-T-I-N-E, C-O-W-S-
24 E-R-T, Pacific Gas and Electric.

25 MR. SOUZA: Kevin Souza, K-E-V-I-N, S-O-U-Z-A, PG&E.

1 MS. JORDIN: Lise Jordin, L-I-S-E, J-O-R-D-I-N, PG&E.

2 MS. COLLETTI: Excellent.

3 INTERVIEW OF BILL RUSSO

4 BY MS. COLLETTI:

5 Q. So, Bill, if you could, just talk to us about your history
6 with gas distribution. If you worked for another operator before
7 you work for PG&E, please mention that, anything that made you
8 qualify for a gas construction supervisor.

9 A. Yeah. I've been at PG&E it'll be 17 years this coming
10 April 15th. The entire time I've been at PG&E I've been in gas
11 construction. I started off as a utility worker and worked my way
12 up through various positions in construction and became a
13 construction supervisor full-time in early 2011.

14 I've -- since taking the on call and temporary upgrades in
15 2010 as a supervisor, I've been on countless emergencies, and I
16 have been taking the on call as a supervisor for emergencies that
17 entire time. So going on about 9 years I've been taking the
18 duties as a frontline gas construction supervisor

19 As far as this response, other than my previous experience
20 with emergencies, I've been through countless emergency
21 preparation training for PG&E. That'll be our GERP training.
22 That's -- I've been doing that for probably the entire time I've
23 been a supervisor for about 8 years, as well as a number of
24 simulated trainings that we do every other year as part of the
25 emergency response team.

1 I've been through probably about, I would say, four or five
2 simulated large scale emergencies, including earthquakes and
3 fires. And that's probably, probably about it that I can think of
4 for now.

5 Q. I would say that's quite enough. Thank you for that, I
6 appreciate it.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. So now what I'd like is for you to walk through the event for
9 us starting when you first received notification, I think being
10 paged is what it's called.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. First when you received that establishment of the OAC and
13 continuing on through there what your roles were, what you did
14 when, as best as you can recollect --

15 A. Okay.

16 Q. -- until you were relieved. So it's going to be --

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Expect to talk for a while --

19 A. Okay.

20 Q. -- here, yeah.

21 A. Okay. I'll do my best to remember. I do recall receiving a
22 call from our gas dispatch at -- it would have been 1318. And the
23 dispatcher -- when I answered the phone the dispatcher informed me
24 that he felt we had a pretty serious event going on would be first
25 off. That was the first thing came out of the dispatcher's mouth

1 to let me know this was not a routine emergency.

2 He informed me that we had a gas release from a possible gas
3 dig-in with reports of an explosion and an active fire. At that
4 time I, you know, I informed him -- I didn't know who I was going
5 to assign as far as a crew lead at that time. At that time I
6 informed him we will be in contact; I need to get off the phone
7 immediately and start contacting our emergency response crews.

8 So I hung up with the dispatcher probably within the same
9 minute and immediately got on the phone to start calling our
10 foremen to get them to respond. The first foreman I called was
11 Andrew Thomas. Andrew was known -- the last time I communicated
12 with Andrew he was known to be on site at 1919 Funston, which I
13 felt at that time was relatively close to the emergency. He would
14 be there in under 15 minutes. So I felt it was best to call him
15 first, which I did. I dispatched him.

16 And then after Andrew subsequently I went down the list of
17 foremen in my head that we have that we had on that day that were
18 at work and I called each of them to respond to the emergency. At
19 that point I called Juan Perez to respond. Following that, I
20 called Jack McCully to respond. Immediately following that, I
21 called Alex Adomis (ph.) to respond. And after Alex, I called
22 John Presiotto (ph.) to respond. Now John was the furthest one
23 from the incident. He was on site at a location south of Market,
24 that I knew was going to take him the longest to respond that's
25 why I called him last.

1 At that time I also called Ben Williams, who is a gas
2 mechanic, because hearing the location before seeing a map, I was
3 under -- knowing the area, you know, through memory I knew that we
4 had steel facilities on the block. I didn't know what was
5 affected, but I knew that this could require some help with
6 isolating some steel.

7 This -- during this whole time I'm making these phone calls I
8 was across -- we have two buildings, one each across the street
9 from each other at our facility. I was at the Folsom Street
10 facility; my office is on the Harrison Street facility. So this
11 entire time I'm walking, making these phone calls walking back to
12 my office.

13 As I got back to my office, my goal -- my intention there --
14 I should say actually in between this actually I contacted Kevin.
15 He would have probably been after calling John Presiotto, the last
16 foreman, to get to respond. And I believe Kevin, when we spoke,
17 had already seen the incident come across, but he was en route --
18 he was driving at the time, so at that time he decided, and I
19 decided as well, that he'll respond on site to the incident since
20 he was mobile and I will remain at the office to pull maps and
21 pull as-builts and support in any way I could in the office.

22 After speaking with Kevin, I also -- at the time one of our
23 -- one of my fellow supervisors, my peers, Ricardo Cano, was not
24 with me, so I had -- I called him on the phone as well and said,
25 why don't you go out there on site and support Kevin? You know,

1 in this case with emergencies like this it's nice to have, you
2 know, a delegate or a deputy, and that was my thought at the time
3 to have Ricky -- Ricardo, we call him Ricky, to have him out on
4 site and I'll be in the office for support.

5 So at this time I get into my office, I'm pulling up maps to
6 see what we have. I also turned on the television, Channel 7 had
7 a live feed of -- and I don't know how they had it already. It
8 didn't seem like a helicopter but they had a live feed of the
9 fire, at which time I recognized it to be a gas, a natural gas
10 fire. It's pretty distinctive when -- you know, just by the way
11 it's fed, the height of the flames. So I knew at that time it was
12 confirmed before any of my guys were on site that it definitely
13 was a gas fire.

14 So at this moment one thing that we -- I can't -- and I can't
15 recall exactly who mentioned it to me, but somebody mentioned,
16 hey, we need to make sure power is cut to the area. So I ran down
17 the hall, across the hall to our electric side and spoke with a
18 supervisor over there named Dustin Deer (ph.). Dustin informed me
19 that they had shut-in power to the area, which was a positive
20 things. We were, we were pretty happy that they had already done
21 that. Was -- he informed me it was kind of a larger grid, like
22 pushing 3,000 customers.

23 At that time, when I met with Dustin he came back to my
24 office with me and I found one of our public relations supervisors
25 in the office, in my office and I decided at that time -- well, I

1 had called Kevin back and said -- we had the discussion, hey, we
2 need to open up the OEC, our emergency room.

3 So that -- at that point I -- the individuals that had
4 started to gather in my office I said, let's open up. We went up
5 to the second floor where our regional emergency center room is to
6 basically make this official an let's get the room opened up,
7 let's get the people we needed in our, in our incident command
8 team, let's get them up here so we can start to get this
9 situation, at least from the office, get it where we need it to
10 be.

11 So the order of phone calls at this point could get a little
12 tricky, but -- because there was a lot -- as you can imagine,
13 there's a lot of phone calls going on, a lot of communication.
14 One thing that Kevin and I -- again, we had multiple discussions.
15 Again, the order of how these calls took place is a little fuzzy
16 to me, but one of our next calls was to notify Gas Distribution
17 Control.

18 So after setting up the room and getting everything to where
19 I felt we can kind of initiate the emergency room, I called the
20 Gas Distribution Control Center. They had informed me that they
21 had already spoke with Kevin, that's what they said, and I offered
22 up -- because Kevin was on site at that moment it made more sense,
23 I think, for him to be in communication with them because they can
24 get real-time information. However, I did offer up that if Kevin
25 was busy, if they couldn't get him, if they needed any other

1 information I gave them my name and my contact number. And that
2 was that with gas control at the time.

3 And at this point, you know, folks started to trickle in for
4 our -- you know, as far as the incident command structure, the
5 team, they started to trickle in. one thing that I was working on
6 at the time was, you know, our gas control will work on shut-in
7 basically what they want to do to shut-in, working on their plans.
8 One thing that we do in the office as well is we see -- you know,
9 we use our knowledge of the system and our thoughts, as well as
10 talking to Kevin and talking to Ricky.

11 I tried to contain my conversations to Kevin or Ricky only.
12 I feel that sometimes it's best just to have one point of
13 communication and the guys in the field should be communicating up
14 through Ricky and Kevin as opposed to contacting me directly,
15 however I believe I spoke to Andrew Thomas a couple of times. But
16 initially -- I got to back up. I knew this was going to happen.
17 When I spoke to --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. I spoke to Andrew before we opened up when I, when I
20 mentioned I had got to my office to pull the maps as the as-
21 built, construction drawings if you will, of the main, I told --
22 I dispatched Andrew to a specific location of 176 Parker and
23 instructed him to start digging and expose the 4-inch plastic at
24 that location for a isolation point, for a squeeze point.

25 Just looking at the maps, I found that to be a no-brainer. I

1 understand that we do want gas control to come up with a plan, but
2 I felt that that was the quickest, safest way at the time to get
3 him started on a task that I felt was going to be part of the plan
4 and be productive. And so, I did, I did initiate that
5 construction activity prior to getting the plan from GDCC, Gas
6 Distribution Control Center, sorry.

7 Q. That's okay.

8 A. Sorry about the acronyms. We're famous for that at PG&E.

9 Q. Quite all right.

10 A. All right. And so, fast forward, back to the emergency room,
11 you know, I talked -- through talking to Kevin and Ricky, we knew
12 that the digging for the plastic squeeze point at 176 Parker was
13 going really well. Their response to -- Andrew's response time,
14 in my opinion, was incredible, on site in under 15 minutes from
15 getting the call -- from myself getting the call. They
16 immediately, again, started hand digging that and prepping it to
17 squeeze. I felt that that was going off without a hitch.

18 We, you know, at some point looking at the maps and the,
19 again, the construction drawings, we knew that valving was the
20 best -- would be the best plan. We needed to get a shut-in zone
21 utilizing our valves. So at some point, again not really sure
22 here what time, but I did contact Rusty Henderson and we
23 discussed, hey, I need some -- I need your guys out there. I need
24 some assistance.

25 We have this emergency going on. It is being fed by a 12-

1 inch steel line and, you know, we're going to need some valves
2 operated. And to me, that was, that was almost a certainty that
3 we needed valves operated, but, you know, of course, we have to,
4 we have to prepare for anything.

5 So Rusty was mobilizing his employees. He confirmed that he
6 would do so. He also informed me he would have to reach out for
7 resources depending -- because at that time we were uncertain of
8 the shut-in zone and how many valves we'd have to turn. So he
9 immediately, as far as he explained to me, was going to contact
10 San Carlos, our neighboring division to the south, to ask for
11 resources.

12 So that was all going on. And while that's going on, you
13 know, of course I have to look at other options that, you know, in
14 case -- because you can never be too sure. Valving of course,
15 like I said, was Plan A and squeezing the plastic, but in case one
16 of the valves is inoperable or inaccessible, I had to think of
17 other ways to control the flow of gas. And one of those ways we
18 considered was squeezing the 6-inch steel, which was feeding the
19 fire coming off of the 12-inch steel. It was a crosstie off of
20 the 12-inch.

21 And that's when I called Ben Williams back, the gas mechanic,
22 and I said, I need you to load up your 6-inch hydraulic squeezer,
23 which is kind of a monumental task on its own. It's very large
24 and it weighs a lot. So I sent -- at this time, I should say, we
25 had dispatched the initial dispatch to the, to the scene. I had

1 dispatched probably around 20 employees, including heavy
2 equipment.

3 But I did keep about four guys back in the ER just in case we
4 needed anything. I'm glad we did that because they helped Ben
5 load up the squeezers. They also helped load up some shoring. So
6 is this too detailed?

7 Q. No, this is perfect.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. I've seen those squeezers.

10 A. Oh okay.

11 Q. I'm laughing --

12 A. Okay.

13 Q. So I apologize to interrupt. I'm laughing because it is a
14 monumental task.

15 A. It is.

16 Q. (Indiscernible).

17 A. Okay. Sorry, I know I was -- I'm just -- as I'm getting --

18 Q. This is --

19 A. Okay.

20 Q. You are doing wonderful.

21 A. Okay, all right.

22 Q. This is perfect --

23 A. Thank you, sorry.

24 Q. -- level of detail.

25 A. I got worried I was getting too detailed.

1 Q. No.

2 A. Okay.

3 Q. Not at all. Please continue, my apologies.

4 A. No, no, it's okay. And so, I'm glad I kept four guys back,
5 they helped Ben load the squeezers. At that point I had called
6 Ricky and said, I'm having Ben load the squeezers, let's start
7 digging. In the event that the valving operations are not
8 successful, we need to be prepared to do what we have to do.

9 Now, I should say at this time squeezing a 6-inch steel pipe
10 is not something we want to do. It's -- not only is it a lot of
11 work on the backend for us, but it could be somewhat dangerous to
12 our employees if a seam splits on the 6-inch steel while you're
13 squeezing it, you've now put your employees in a little bit of a
14 dangerous situation.

15 And so, I would like to note that although we considered it
16 as a backup plan, we really didn't want to have to employ that
17 plan. We would have if we had to, but we did not want to. So
18 when I spoke to Ricky I said, hey, I'm having Ben load up the 6-
19 inch squeezers, let's start to dig over the 6-inch to find a point
20 where we can squeeze if necessary.

21 And I felt that that was a smart move considering we did have
22 so many employees we rolled to the scene that we dispatched out
23 there that we had the bodies to start working on that and it was,
24 I felt, time well spent on their part in case we had to employ
25 that squeezing operation, the isolation operation, and they were

1 working to do that.

2 You know, I had to mobilize some guys with some shoring
3 because, you know, the construction drawings indicated it was
4 deep, deep enough to need shoring, which again would, obviously,
5 put it on our, on our -- the end of our list of isolation plans
6 because it would have taken a little bit longer.

7 And all that was going on and after reviewing -- and this,
8 again, this is -- time is ticking as this is happening and, again,
9 I needed to reach out to Rusty to see his -- where he was at with
10 his isolation procedures with the turning of the valves. And I
11 wanted to double check with him because we had, we had two plans
12 for valve -- for turning the valves.

13 We had one that I believe was 12 valves and the other was 7.
14 And the plan with 7 was included there because when we squeeze the
15 4-inch plastic, you know, that would -- that took of five of the
16 valves that he would have had to turn. So I wanted to make sure
17 that he was aware that we were moving forward with squeezing the
18 plastic because I didn't want him turning valves unnecessarily.

19 And since he had to wait back at his office, normally I would
20 like him to be in the OEC with me, but he did have -- because we
21 had to reach out to San Carlos he needed to download those guys on
22 what was going on and dispatch them out and make sure they had
23 everything that they needed to go out there. So I understood that
24 completely.

25 So that's why I wanted to stay in communication with him to

1 let him know what we -- what our plans were, what we were doing in
2 the field so that he was utilizing the correct isolation plan.
3 And as we were discussing, we had I would say maybe two or three
4 operations briefings call.

5 Backing up, the company decided to open up the REC, and doing
6 so, you know, they were -- they wanted to make sure that we had,
7 you know, all the resources that we needed and all the support
8 that we needed. And during I believe the second ops briefing call
9 Rusty was on the line and we heard him talking with Gas Control
10 and getting the final valve turned.

11 So we kind of heard it real-time, which was good because we
12 were able to relay that to Kevin and the guys in the field
13 because, you know, as the, as the gas stopped I think it was a
14 little -- the fire stopped immediately, which is a little
15 startling because if -- you don't want the fire to go out, you
16 know?

17 Q. Absolutely, yeah.

18 A. So it was good that that happened real-time and I think that,
19 you know, helped with some concerns out there that would have come
20 up if, you know, if the, if the fire had suddenly gone out and
21 nobody knew why. I'm sure I'm missing something, but that's kind
22 of the way that I remember it all going down. I'm sure there were
23 a few phone calls that I'm forgetting in the, you know, the
24 timeline of things, but it's kind of what I remember.

25 Q. First off, that was excellent.

1 A. Okay.

2 Q. That was exactly the level of detail I was looking for.

3 A. Okay.

4 Q. So thank you very much. I apologize again for interrupting
5 you.

6 A. No, it's good.

7 Q. I just -- Kim and I are over here laughing because we know
8 how much work goes into that and it is not a fun --

9 A. It was -- I think when I, you know, when I did tell Ben he's
10 like, okay. And I was like -- he's like, you know, of course
11 knowing the seriousness of it, you know, these guys they really
12 rose to the occasion, but I know asking that was probably -- there
13 were some sighs, you know.

14 Q. Oh for certain.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. For certain. Well, I want to, I want to back up on a couple
17 of things --

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. -- to revisit them for you, but first I want to talk about a
20 couple acronyms, OEC, REC, I've heard GEC maybe at some point. I
21 might have been making up the last one.

22 A. Okay.

23 Q. Can you explain what those mean?

24 A. So yeah. It's just our -- as far as our different command
25 structure. You know, so when we -- as our levels of emergency

1 rise, you know, it's the involvement of, you know, different
2 groups and different command structures. So our local emergency
3 we open up our operational emergency. So the OEC is our level 1
4 basic -- it's not a basic, basic emergency.

5 Normally we wouldn't open for a regular gas dig-in, but if
6 we're opening up the emergency room, you know, we have some kind
7 of a significant event where we, you know, we need some support
8 and we'll need to get different groups involved.

9 We'll need our public relations folks, our media folks. We
10 need to -- we're going to need to go ahead and get people to send
11 out updates for us to let the company know what's going on with
12 these emergency. So it's just -- it's basically the different
13 levels of involvement from our, from our different entities. And
14 it all depends on the levels of -- you know, a level of emergency.

15 So once we had significant media coverage on this event, you
16 know, plus with the amount of damage being done and, you know,
17 having 330 customers out, you know, we elevated the emergency, you
18 know, the level of emergency, which now included the REC so --
19 which is Regional Emergency Center.

20 And that -- you know, and they're there, again, to support us
21 but knowing that we need to really be focused on this emergency.
22 They can be on the backend getting us, you know, logistic like,
23 you know, do you need CNG? They're going to take care of all the
24 stuff so we can focus on the task at hand, the emergency at hand
25 and isolating and restoring.

1 So, you know, getting us crew support from other areas, you
2 know, that's another thing that will elevate the level of
3 emergency. So we did get our general construction folks in to
4 help us out and relieve our guys who had been out there for 24, 30
5 hours. So those are just -- that's what, that's what that is all
6 about.

7 Q. Okay. So when we're talking about your role in the OAC
8 versus Kevin's role as the IC --

9 A. Mm-hmm.

10 Q. -- from my understanding of this you are supporting Kevin on
11 the ground by providing him the resources that he needs.

12 A. Mm-hmm.

13 Q. Is that correct?

14 A. Yes. Correct, yes. I'm there as --

15 Q. Okay. Is there an elaboration to that? I'm feeling more to
16 it, please --

17 A. No. And that's correct. So Kevin in the field, he is, he
18 is commanding the crews in the field and what is happening out
19 there as far as, you know, the actions that are taking place in
20 the field. I am there to support him with, again, any
21 documentation needs, any needs to revise -- we have -- one of the
22 groups we have in there are planning -- are engineers.

23 You know, they're working to come up with, you know, or
24 mitigate any issues that they might have. They're the eyes in the
25 field, so if they see -- on paper it all looks nice, you know, but

1 if they see something that's like, well we can't get to that
2 valve, there's a, there's a bus parked up top of it and the guy's
3 gone, you know, those are things that, you know, we don't -- we
4 need to know from the field so that we can help him, you know,
5 maybe even restructure a plan or what have you.

6 So, yes, we're definitely there to support if he needs --
7 hey, I need, I need two more crews out here, they're on their way,
8 and I'll let him know who they are. So, yes, definitely our role
9 is a support role to make sure that they have what they need in
10 the field.

11 Q. Excellent. That's a very good answer, thank you. Going back
12 to something you mentioned about the planning engineers are part
13 of your OEC group.

14 A. Mm-hmm.

15 Q. How is the, for lack of a better work, command given to them
16 to start developing a valve isolation plan and when was that done?

17 A. Okay. So our planning engineers in the OEC are local
18 engineers and headquartered with us at Harrison Street. The Gas
19 Distribution Control, that's the GDCC, they are actually tasked
20 with, you know, coming up with the shut-in plan.

21 They work hand-in-hand with -- the GDCC, our Gas Distribution
22 Control Center, works hand-in-hand with our local planning
23 engineers. Because, again, we have -- sometimes, you know, we
24 have local knowledge that is very useful to them when they are
25 creating these plans, so that's why they want to stay in constant

1 communication. But I would say from the moment that Gas
2 Distribution Control was notified of the event, they start working
3 on a plan immediately.

4 Now, it's -- they do need some information from us in order
5 for that to be successful. In this case, maybe not so much
6 because when you're doing a valving operation the shut-in zone,
7 you know, it's going to be a large zone. So as long as you know
8 that you're removing gas from the entire area by shutting the
9 valves, you know, you can move forward with the plan without
10 knowing exactly which facility was damaged in some cases.

11 In this case, because we did, we did have low pressure and
12 high pressure in the area, it was important for them to know what
13 facility exactly was hit as best as we can give to them for them
14 to give us the most accurate, the best plan, the quickest plan,
15 and the most efficient plan, which we were able to provide just
16 given the location of the dig-in. We knew that -- we didn't know
17 if it was the steel pipe or the plastic pipe, but we knew it was
18 the high pressure pipe that was coming off, you know, feed down
19 Parker and fed from the 6 off the 12 on Geary, we knew that.

20 So GDCC was able to then -- having that -- being armed with
21 that information they were able to start formulating their plan
22 almost immediately. And then, again, they work with the local
23 planners if they have any questions.

24 Q. Okay. Did you feel that you guys had to wait on them to get
25 that final isolation plan? I know you had started taking some

1 actions ahead of time in advanced of receiving that, right?

2 A. Mm-hmm.

3 Q. That 4-inch dig and then later the 6-inch dig?

4 A. Right.

5 Q. And the 4-inch was definitely prior to receiving the valve
6 isolation plan. Was the 6-inch before or after? Do you remember?

7 A. I don't remember.

8 Q. Okay. That's okay.

9 A. Okay.

10 Q. Did you feel that there was a period of time where you were
11 -- you guys were just waiting, where you had to wait or --

12 A. I wouldn't say that. I would say we understand that there's
13 a couple of things that kind of -- that go into this as far as
14 like the waiting. I know what we do is, you know, we understand
15 it's going to take time. I believe that the valving plans were
16 out -- I believe the valving plans were out in a reasonable amount
17 of time.

18 They did give the two plans, again, the first being the 12, I
19 believe, valves and the second being the 7 with the squeeze, but,
20 you know understanding that it was going to take time for Rusty --
21 Rusty's two employees, looking at the big picture, you know, now
22 we have a significant amount of Geary shut off.

23 So Geary is a main thoroughfare in San Francisco, three lanes
24 on each side, right? So this is a pretty -- it's a main artery.
25 Shutting that down creates gridlock. So we understand that these

1 two individuals who are doing valving operations are going to be
2 dealing with quite a bit of traffic and -- you know, so they -- it
3 takes time for them to get to one valve, turn the valve,
4 lockout/tagout to the next valve.

5 Even though it doesn't seem like a great distance, we
6 understood logistically it was going to be hard -- it was going to
7 take time for them to get to each location and then make sure it
8 was safe to do so or they had access and then turn. So we --
9 understanding that on our end, instead of kind of, you know,
10 waiting around to see if it happened, that's why we decided, hey,
11 we have all these employees, you never know.

12 I've seen valves break while we're trying to operate them,
13 which if that is the case it might expand the shut-in zone which
14 would take more time. And so it was had -- hey, we have these
15 resources, let's go to town and let's be sure that we're ready to
16 do whatever we have to do in case it doesn't work out.

17 So it's a perceived waiting period, but we understand that
18 they're doing a job and it's going to take a little time,
19 especially given the circumstances and how hard it was for them to
20 move around.

21 Q. It's a waiting period with activity.

22 A. Yes. Yes.

23 Q. Okay. And you mentioned that you felt like that was a
24 reasonable amount of time and you have done other emergencies in
25 the past.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Is that -- was that a standard response time for receiving
3 that?

4 A. I believe it was. They -- that group, I should say, our I&R
5 group, Rusty's group, they were -- I can't speak to what time they
6 were mobilized, but I can say it was, it was after construction.
7 So I'd have to -- I don't know the timeline of it all, I'd have to
8 probably go back into a call log somewhere and see, but I do know
9 that, you know, they didn't get the jump on it that we had, of
10 course. I was immediately sending everybody and whoever they
11 could find to go to respond.

12 So there is a little bit of, you know, a time difference with
13 the response. But I would say overall just considering with the
14 two individuals that they had, that that would be a pretty normal
15 response time for them, again, given the logistics of everything
16 and all -- most of the valves, if not all of them, being on Geary,
17 you know, was kind -- was going to be tough for them to accomplish
18 in a really, really quick time, in my opinion. So I think it was
19 pretty reasonable.

20 MS. COLLETTI: That's all I've got for my first round, so --

21 MR. RUSSO: All right.

22 MS. COLLETTI: -- I'm going to pass it along.

23 MR. RUSSO: Okay.

24 MS. COLLETTI: Are you doing all right?

25 MR. RUSSO: Yeah, doing good.

1 MS. COLLETTI: Okay, good.

2 MR. SARINA: I'm trying to think to some of the -- oh sorry,
3 Nathan Sarina, CPUC.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can we pause?

5 MS. COLLETTI: Yeah. Let's take a break. We'll go off the
6 record real quick, yeah.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

8 (Off the record.)

9 (On the record.)

10 MS. COLLETTI: All right, we're back on the record, Bill
11 Russo.

12 MR. RUSSO: Okay.

13 MR. SARINA: You know, this is Nathan Sarina, CPUC.

14 BY MR. SARINA:

15 Q. So you mentioned the GERP training. If you could run through
16 that acronym real quick briefly for the other people who aren't --

17 A. Yeah, I'm sorry. Again, the acronyms, Gas Emergency Response
18 Preparedness.

19 Q. Okay. And then, could you describe how that training
20 prepared you for this (indiscernible)?

21 A. Yeah. That training, it helps -- you know, nothing like, you
22 know, real events actually -- real-time events are -- is where the
23 real training is at, but GERP it gives you a foundation. And
24 basically it just describes different levels of emergencies and
25 the different entities that will be responding and, you know,

1 basic requirements for, you know, different levels of emergencies.
2 You know, level 1 through level 5, 5 being a catastrophic, you
3 know, event such as a very large earthquake.

4 And it goes through, you know our -- how we need to respond
5 and, again, most importantly our structure of command and how that
6 all works and who we, who we roll up to and who makes the
7 decisions and how we will get our support in these emergencies.
8 So that's kind of a high level, you know, response to that or
9 description of that I should say.

10 Q. Okay. This is going to go a little bit more into
11 distinguishing -- I think we briefly touched on it, but the
12 difference between the gas construction group and then the more
13 local division I&R guys.

14 A. Okay.

15 Q. At least from the GC side, if you could expand on that.

16 A. Okay. So for gas construction, you know, those are the
17 individual -- that's my group on a daily basis. So gas
18 construction, we are -- we respond to gas leaks. We maintain --
19 let's put it this way, we maintain the gas distribution system in
20 San Francisco. That's our jurisdiction. That includes, you know,
21 just preventative maintenance on pipe and up to including gas
22 leaks and dig-in and emergency response.

23 The construction group will be the ones working to, in many
24 cases, isolate the flow of gas not with, not with turning mainline
25 valves, though. That's where I&R comes in. We'll get to that in

1 a second, but so my construction group will -- they can, you know,
2 isolate through squeezing pipes and controlling with different
3 fittings to control the flow of gas. Construction obviously is
4 what it sounds like, so digging and working on the pipes.

5 Now, I&R, which that name is -- it used to be T&R and I&R,
6 GPOM, we call it all kinds of different names, but basically --
7 and that was Rusty's group. And what they do in the event of this
8 emergency -- I should back up. They're -- on a daily basis, you
9 know, they are -- they work on, you know, mainline valves,
10 instrumentation and regulation. They're all about -- they're
11 about regulation and they'll be in reg pits working on those.

12 In the event of an emergency, they will be the ones to
13 operate mainline valves. My construction crews are not qualified
14 to do so. You know, there's probably a few good reasons for that.
15 With operating mainline valves, you know, there are some
16 requirements and qualification requirements to do that. You know,
17 we need to -- there's many, many different styles of valves and
18 the last thing -- something as important as a mainline valve we
19 want to make sure that, you know, we're not -- we're treating them
20 right, we're maintaining them correctly, be it turning them or
21 greasing them.

22 So it's -- they, they being I&R, you know, control that side
23 of what we do. And there is also a lot of compliance with the
24 mainline valves is, you know, as far as maintaining them and
25 operating them yearly and just because in an event like we saw

1 here you want to make sure that your mainline valves are operable.
2 It's of the utmost importance. So that's kind of the difference
3 between what we do and what Rusty's group and I&R does.

4 MR. SARINA: I have no further questions.

5 MR. RUSSO: Okay.

6 MS. WEST: This is Kim West.

7 MR. RUSSO: Hi, Kim.

8 BY MS. WEST:

9 Q. I know you said this before, OEC, the acronym is -- means?

10 A. That will be our Operational Emergency Center.

11 Q. Okay. I just have one other question. You talked about
12 squeezing of the plastic.

13 A. Mm-hmm.

14 Q. Do you guys normally like mark the line? Do you -- so that
15 when you look at your map of you system or as-builts --

16 A. Mm-hmm.

17 Q. Do you see points where it's already been pre-squeezed in the
18 past?

19 A. So now -- I should say nowadays we actually -- they will have
20 that on our maps as basically, you know, you can, you can filter
21 that. There's an attribute now, but these -- that's very, very
22 recent within probably the last year or two, if I -- I could be,
23 you know, I could be wrong on the timeline there.

24 But as far as -- no, what we do when we're going to find a
25 location to squeeze, we want to do it right near a service T

1 because sometimes it's difficult to know, especially when it's we
2 don't have a lot of time it's difficult to know the installation
3 process of that particular main. So if it were -- for instance,
4 if it were a main that we use directional boring, it could be
5 deep.

6 And also, if you don't go -- the service Ts we know that they
7 were worked on when it was installed, so it would be backfilled in
8 sand. So you know you're going to have easy digging. If you, if
9 you utilize the directional bore, you may be digging in native
10 soil which could be rocky and difficult to get to the pipe. So in
11 that case we weren't aware if it had been squeezed before at the
12 location.

13 That's when we assumed not because there wouldn't be any
14 reason to squeeze there in the past unless there was a leak that
15 we didn't know about, but the one thing you do want to do is dig
16 over a service T. And at that location that they picked in front
17 of 176, there were actually two service Ts, so we knew we were
18 going to get a nice big bell hole full of sand.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And that's much easier digging, you'll get to it a lot
21 quicker, and you know you're going to find the pipe there. So
22 that's why we chose that particular spot.

23 Q. Makes perfect sense.

24 A. Yeah.

25 MS. WEST: Thank you. That's all I had.

1 MR. RUSSO: Okay.

2 MR. COCHRANE: Hi, Mike Cochrane, San Francisco Fire. Yeah,
3 I want to commend you for taking action on Parker Street, number
4 one. Taking no action in an emergency is not a plan.

5 MR. RUSSO: Right.

6 MR. COCHRANE: And I can tell you have institutional
7 knowledge on that.

8 BY MR. COCHRANE:

9 Q. My only question would be, so you stated you're having -- you
10 had somebody at the command post. Just your construction crews,
11 just if they were out and about would they go to the fire
12 department and say, hey, this is what's going on, this -- and just
13 -- would they know to report to us and, hi, Chief, I'm from PG&E,
14 we got the ball moving?

15 A. So, yeah, that's a good question. What we'd like is our
16 first responder, the first person on scene -- as you know, what
17 they're going to do first is just assess the scene for -- you
18 know, to get an idea of what the heck is actually going on. And
19 for their immediate safety, as well as is there anything we do
20 need to relay that we might know that some other people don't
21 know. Also, to relay to the crews that are still responding, hey,
22 don't, you know, don't come up this way, come up that way or, you
23 know, you need to stay back, or what have you.

24 But after that, yeah, it is an expectation that the first
25 respondent -- so, the first person on site will be the IC at the

1 moment until they're relieved or somebody else, you know, of a
2 higher authority comes and says, hey, you know, I'm now the IC and
3 this is what's going to happen. So it would be my hope that after
4 everything -- you know, the first responder was feeling that
5 they're -- you know, they were safe and they've done their full
6 assessment that they would check in.

7 Q. Sure.

8 A. Yeah.

9 MR. COCHRANE: Thank you.

10 MR. RUSSO: Mm-hmm.

11 MS. COWSERT: Christine Cowsert, PG&E, no questions.

12 MS. COLLETTI: This is Alex Colletti, NTSB again. I don't
13 have any questions this round.

14 MR. RUSSO: Okay.

15 MR. SARINA: No questions this round.

16 MS. WEST: This is Kim West.

17 BY MS. WEST:

18 Q. I'm not sure if this is appropriate to ask you and we may
19 have already addressed it, but when the pipe is removed does that
20 fall under you?

21 A. So when the pipe was removed we, of course, in this case want
22 to make sure that we did a chain of custody on that. So the
23 foreman that removed it was in sole possession. It was under lock
24 and key in his truck. And then I did take the pipe from him and
25 we did a chain of custody.

1 And then it went from me, brought it back to the yard and
2 then gave -- then did another chain of custody and gave it to a
3 representative of our claims department, Mr. Thomas Gumer (ph.),
4 and he was going to -- he tagged it, evidence tag, and, as far as
5 I know, it's in an evidence locker at our (indiscernible)
6 facility.

7 Q. How much -- I actually didn't hear or see.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. How much of the pipe was removed and --

10 A. It was approximately 4 feet of 4-inch plastic main with two
11 Ts on top of it, one being a large high volume 2-inch tapping T
12 and the other being a half-inch plastic T, with each of it had --
13 each of those Ts had about a foot and a half to a 2-foot stub on
14 the end of them.

15 Q. And what kind of pipe?

16 A. It was, it was polyurethane pipe, plastic --

17 Q. Okay, polyurethane.

18 A. -- plastic gas main.

19 Q. And was it all consistent throughout? Was it consistent
20 material?

21 A. Yes, yes. What was left of it.

22 Q. (Indiscernible) leaking all over the place.

23 A. Yeah.

24 MS. WEST: Okay. Thank you.

25 MR. RUSSO: All right.

1 MR. COCHRANE: Mike Cochrane, no questions.

2 MS. COWSERT: Christine Cowsert, no questions.

3 MS. COLLETTI: In that case, we'll conclude our interview.

4 MR. RUSSO: Okay.

5 MS. COLLETTI: Thank you very much.

6 MR. RUSSO: Thank you.

7 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: SAN FRANCISCO GAS RELEASE AND FIRE
 FEBRUARY 6, 2019
 Interview of Bill Russo

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA19MR001

PLACE: San Francisco, California

DATE: February 9, 2019

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.



Charlene Brown
Transcriber