

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 *

* * * * *

Interview of: DAVID GUTERRES

San Francisco Police Department
San Francisco, California

Saturday,
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
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KIM WEST, Senior Accident Investigator
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
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MICHAEL COCHRANE, Assistant Deputy Chief
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Pacific Gas & Electric Company
(On behalf of Mr. Guterres)

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I N T E R V I E W

(8:49 a.m.)

1
2
3 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. We're on the record for the David
4 Guterres interview.

5 Good morning, today is February 9th, 2019. It is now 8:49
6 a.m. Pacific Time. My name is Alexandria Colletti, the
7 investigator-in-charge for this accident for the National
8 Transportation Safety Board in Washington, D.C.

9 We are at the Richmond Station Police Department Community
10 Room in San Francisco, California. This interview is being
11 conducted as part of the investigation into the Pacific Gas and
12 Electric gas release and fire that occurred on February 6th, 2019,
13 in San Francisco, California. The NTSB case number for this
14 accident is 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, which is yourself, for review prior to being entered
18 into the public docket.

19 You are permitted to have one person present during the
20 interview. This is a person of your choice, it can be an
21 attorney, it can be a supervisor, a friend, a family member or
22 nobody at all.

23 David, please state for the record the spelling of your name,
24 your job title and who you have selected to be present during this
25 interview.

1 MR. GUTERRES: David Guterres, D-A-V-I-D, G-U-T-E-R-R-E-S,
2 I'm a GSR, gas service rep, for PG&E and I have --

3 MS. JORDAN: Lise --

4 MR. GUTERRES: -- the company, Lise --

5 MS. JORDAN: -- Lise Jordan.

6 MR. GUTERRES: -- as representing me. Thank you.

7 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Excellent, great. Now we're going to
8 go around the room and we're going to introduce everyone in the
9 room. As a reminder, folks, we've got to spell out our names. So
10 let's start with Nathan.

11 MS. SARINA: Nathan Sarina, N-A-T-H-A-N, S-A-R-I-N-A, I'm
12 with the CPUC.

13 MR. ENG: Terence Eng, T-E-R-E-N-C-E, E-N-G, I am also with
14 the California Public Utilities Commission.

15 MS. WEST: I'm Kim West, that's K-I-M, W-E-S-T, I'm a senior
16 accident investigator with PHMSA, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials
17 Safety Administration.

18 MR. COCHRANE: Michael Cochrane, M-I-C-H-A-E-L, C-O-C-H-R-A-
19 N-E, assistant deputy chief, Homeland Security, San Francisco Fire
20 Department.

21 MS. COWSERT: Christine Cowsert, C-H-R-I-S-T-I-N-E, C-O-W-S-
22 E-R-T, and I'm with Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

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

24 MS. JORDAN: Lise Jordan, L-I-S-E, J-O-R-D-A-N, PG&E.

25 MS. COLLETTI: Fantastic. Thanks, everyone.

INTERVIEW OF DAVID GUTERRES

1
2 BY MS. COLLETTI:

3 Q. So, David, just to get started, I'd like for you to talk to
4 me about your work history, how long have you been with Pacific
5 Gas and Electric, had you worked for other gas operators in the
6 past, just a little history on your background so we know your
7 qualifications?

8 A. I've been with the company it will be 38 years this year.
9 I've been a GSR, gas service rep, for -- since 1990 and, yeah, gas
10 service, yeah.

11 Q. You know, so just a few years, right, you just started? To
12 say 38 years, that's an accomplishment.

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Congratulations.

15 A. Yeah, thank you.

16 Q. So what I'd like to happen next is in as much detail as
17 possible I'd like for you to tell me what happened on February 6th
18 from your -- from when you first received a call, being told to
19 arrive on the site, what you saw, what you heard, any kind of --
20 any observations that you can think of, there's no detail that's
21 too small.

22 A. Okay.

23 Q. And throughout the rest of the evening until you were
24 relieved so --

25 A. Well, I got the call around 1:00 something and it was an

1 explosion call so I responded and I think I got there within 15
2 minutes and I was on the west side of Geary, 3300 block. And I --
3 when I arrived I'm, okay, there's a big fire going on, a lot of
4 fire trucks.

5 First thing I did was call the dispatcher and told them we
6 need a crew and they said that they were already on their way.
7 And then I called my supervisor, who was filling in. It was a
8 fill in supervisor, Felix Gonzales, and told him what was going
9 on. And then my immediate supervisor called me too after that and
10 then I told him what was going on, and then a lot of other calls
11 came in.

12 The digging specialist called me, the gas control called me
13 getting -- trying to get information. And basically I said, right
14 now I've got to gather stuff and figure out what's going on at
15 that point. There was just too much going on to try to get the
16 information right away so I waited, you know, to see what was
17 going on before I -- I couldn't do anything, I was just watching
18 at that point.

19 And, at that point, I was getting the calls, giving
20 information to -- they usually want to know who's -- if there was
21 any injuries so -- but, at that -- it wasn't there, I mean, I
22 couldn't figure that out yet until I got out of the truck. And I
23 saw somebody walking by who was a lieutenant, a fire chief or
24 something, and he said he wasn't sure. I asked.

25 At that point I just was standing by waiting for -- and

1 shortly later I saw crews coming on my side. I didn't -- I
2 couldn't see on the -- there's four, what, four sides. I was on
3 one side of the block, you know, I couldn't see if there was other
4 people on the other side so I just stood by at that point.

5 Q. And what happened after that once --

6 A. Oh.

7 Q. -- once you had supervisors on scene, what were you directed
8 to do from there?

9 A. I was just -- standby because there's nothing you can do if
10 it's -- you know, I mean, until that thing is -- the fire was out,
11 you know, you only can standby at that point, you know. And, I
12 mean, shortly later I was -- as we were standing by as they were,
13 you know, putting the water on that, I took several pictures and
14 sent it to the bosses and just stood by waiting.

15 And I noticed that -- I was looking for the crew that was
16 involved. I could not see from the other side what the name of
17 the crew was and then I -- for some reason I saw them at Mel's
18 Diner sitting -- standing by there, so I -- we have to fill out a
19 gas station first responder form.

20 So I proceeded to go over there and ask them questions on
21 their USAA ticket and contractor's license I.D. and, you know,
22 we're supposed to fill it out and basically I couldn't fill it out
23 completely until the gas station specialist Esther came and she
24 gave -- filled it out, gave me the USAA numbers because the
25 contractor did not have it or his license at that point, and I got

1 all that information from the fill in part with Esther, the
2 digging specialist. And basically I asked him what happened and
3 he filled out the form, what he was doing.

4 And then after, when all said and done, I handed it over to
5 the foreman that was first onsite. That's what we're supposed to
6 do and they fill out the rest.

7 Q. And what did you do after that, were you relieved from the
8 scene to go back to regular duties or --

9 A. No, no, no, we're just -- I mean, it was a couple of hours, I
10 believe, you know, and we just stood by. The supervisors were all
11 there already so we wait and see what's going on. Actually I
12 stayed until -- when the fire was out we were told to start
13 shutting down services that were affected that's why I stood by.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Okay. So essentially in the beginning you're waiting for
17 instruction?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Your role is not part of the excavation teams --

20 A. No.

21 Q. -- or any of that? So you assisted with gaining initial
22 information by speaking to the excavation crew?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. And then you passed off that information --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- once that was done, and then you essentially were waiting
2 for instruction until you could shut down services?

3 A. Well, whatever services were affected we were instructed to
4 shut down the services at the meter locations.

5 Q. Okay. How did you receive the information on which services
6 were to be shut down?

7 A. From out supervisors, they had a list that were the area that
8 were affected.

9 Q. About when did you receive that information to start doing
10 that?

11 A. Well, probably maybe 5:00, 4:00; I can't really say. But I
12 was about -- I was actually headed there. I was the first one to
13 start doing it and then they told me I had to go to another --
14 somebody 2 blocks down was smelling gas so I stopped and went back
15 into my truck to get my tools to respond to somebody calling in a
16 gas leak down on 65 Parker, which is 2 blocks down, there was a
17 passerby that said that he smelled gas.

18 So the customer at the residence did not -- they said they
19 didn't call it in. So I called the number that called it in and
20 he said, oh, I was just a little concerned, so I did what I would
21 normally do, just kind of sweep the area.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Yeah. And then I went back to whatever I had to do.

24 Q. And you didn't detect any gas at that location?

25 A. No, no, no, no. There was a lot of smoke. You could smell a

1 lot of smoke in that -- just that area, yeah.

2 Q. I'm sure you could smell it in the air.

3 A. Yeah, was, yeah.

4 Q. I imagine everyone smelled like gas --

5 A. Yeah, yeah.

6 Q. -- at the end of the evening.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Okay. At the beginning you mentioned that you got a lot of
9 different calls from a lot of different folks?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. How did you coordinate that effort? Did you refer them back
12 to gas control or did you refer them to supervisors? Did you
13 provide them direct information?

14 A. At that point, I said I didn't get enough; I don't have
15 enough going on.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. When they first -- everybody calls at one time just pretty
18 much they want to know what's going on. I say, it's just still
19 blowing. I just kept relaying what was happening, you know.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And I couldn't get enough information. I mean, there's
22 nothing much more I could do other than the crews being there
23 trying to figure out what was going on, I mean.

24 Q. Okay. Once incident command had been fully setup, did you
25 have any kind of check-in or anything like that?

1 A. Yeah, yeah, that's when they got the list and, you know, for
2 us to do what we needed to do to shut down what was affected, the
3 area that I was -- I got a list --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- to go out and shut off all the services that were
6 affected.

7 Q. Okay, okay. As far as training for this kind of incident for
8 being the first person on scene, how did you know, for example,
9 that you needed to fill out the first responder form on scene, et
10 cetera?

11 A. That's what --

12 Q. What other training have you been given for incidents like
13 this?

14 A. Well, that's -- I mean, if I can control I can, right. It's
15 blowing and we try to -- that's the first thing we were told is to
16 call our dispatcher and get somebody out here as soon as possible,
17 try to make the area safe. But that was too big so -- like all
18 the emergency personnel, police, were already there when I got
19 there, so they had pretty much, you know, kept it -- everybody
20 away from -- I actually went through the tape to -- closer to the
21 scene.

22 What we were trained to do, the first thing is to make sure
23 everything is safe and then fill out the forms and get information
24 as soon as I could but, you know, it was chaotic at that time so I
25 did it as accordingly to when things were a little bit not so

1 chaotic.

2 Q. Can you talk me through the conversation you had with the
3 excavator while you were filling out that form, what specific
4 details did they give you, any impressions, as much detail as you
5 can provide, please?

6 A. I just told them I have to -- I have this form I have to fill
7 out, I'm the first responder and I just needed some information,
8 dates, that I put the dates, time. I asked them for the numbers,
9 their normal -- the company name, their numbers, license, USAA
10 numbers. He didn't have it. He only gave me the number and his
11 company and what he was doing pretty much so at the time, yeah.

12 Q. And what exactly was he doing at the time, can you --

13 A. He said -- well, he wrote it down, so he was saying he was
14 shoveling and he was -- yeah, he was shoveling and it exploded.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. That's what he said.

17 Q. Interesting.

18 A. I mean, that's what he wrote, I'm sorry.

19 Q. That's what he wrote?

20 A. Yes.

21 MS. COLLETTI: I don't have any more at this time. Nathan,
22 do you have anything?

23 MR. SARINA: I guess in --

24 MS. COLLETTI: Introduce yourself, yeah.

25 MR. SARINA: Sorry.

1 BY MR. SARINA:

2 Q. Nathan Sarina, CPUC. Just so -- so he gave you the phone
3 number and his company name?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. What number did he give you?

6 A. Just whatever the -- I mean, whatever. He wrote it down so
7 but pretty much. I don't recall it because I handed it off. If I
8 would have made a copy. I should have took a picture maybe but we
9 were just told just to hand it off to the foreman that was first
10 at the scene so one of the foremen had it so they fill out the
11 rest.

12 Q. Okay. During, and you mentioned the emergency -- your
13 emergency training --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- for the making the area safe. Are you guys -- can you
16 recall if there's anything where you assist the fire department in
17 evacuation or anything else along that -- or along those lines or
18 aid the fire department?

19 A. If they weren't there or if they --

20 Q. If they are there --

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. -- are you trained to assist them in helping clear any of the
23 nearby buildings?

24 A. Yeah. We were told if the fire department, if it's blowing
25 and stuff, they already secured the area but we're the first

1 responders so we would ask for assistance from the fire department
2 if we need to go back further or we would be considered incident
3 command at that point for our company and we would ask assistance
4 from the police and fire if we needed to have more space and make
5 it safe, that's what we were trained to do to let them know to
6 help us out.

7 Q. And then how far or how far had the fire department already
8 pushed back people?

9 A. It was over -- I was a block away and it was probably 2
10 blocks from my side.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. It was almost 2 blocks. I was in the first block and then
13 there was another barricade even further so --

14 Q. And then I think you said -- so you approached from the west
15 side of Parker or --

16 A. Yeah, yeah, there's four sides, there's Parker, east, south
17 and north and west and east of Geary. It was right in the middle
18 of the intersection so --

19 Q. Okay. So, I guess, how did you -- or from what direction did
20 you approach?

21 A. I came from the west side standing and came up towards the --
22 I was right across from Mel's Diner, 3300 block, in the middle of
23 that block, yeah.

24 MR. SARINA: No more questions right now.

25 BY MS. WEST:

1 Q. Okay. Kim West, I just have a quick question. Kind of
2 following up on the training idea, do you have formalized training
3 that you go through beyond what you're (inaudible)?

4 A. The, I mean, protocol was standard, what we need to get
5 assistance from the fire department and the police.

6 Q. I see.

7 A. You know, I mean, that's what we were told to do to try to
8 get -- work with the fire department and police department.

9 Q. I'll maybe put it a different way --

10 A. All right.

11 Q. -- your background in terms of training for emergency
12 response.

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. So what type of training do you get and how often?

15 A. Yeah. Yeah, we do it yearly, yes.

16 Q. Do it yearly?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Okay. And does that involve interfacing with the fire
19 department or --

20 A. Yes, yes.

21 Q. -- other emergency services?

22 A. Yeah, yes.

23 Q. Okay. Just a clarification, you mentioned that you met with
24 your foreman onsite.

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Who was that?

2 A. That was -- everybody was out there, I mean, you know. The
3 first person I saw was -- the supervisor was -- there were several
4 supervisors. Our superintendent, which was Matt Ramirez, Wyman
5 Cole, Joel Hart was just my immediate supervisor, yes.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And I was just going to go back a little bit talking about
9 you had received a gas odor call a little further up away from the
10 site.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And you called it in. Did you call it into their gas
13 dispatcher or --

14 A. Not a dispatcher. Somebody, somebody called --

15 Q. Called it into you?

16 A. Yeah, my boss told me to go up before I was doing the other
17 part so I responded to that one too.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Yeah. It was 2 blocks down but it -- there was nothing. He
20 was just walking by, he was concerned so --

21 MS. WEST: Thank you. That's all I have.

22 MR. GUTERRES: Okay.

23 BY MR. COCHRANE:

24 Q. Mike Cochrane, San Francisco Fire. Good morning, sir.

25 A. Sir.

1 Q. I guess my only question is if you're there that quickly, is
2 there a protocol for you to go to the command post and say I'm
3 from PG&E and I've notified until you're relieved or did you feel
4 it was unsafe to go up and tell the fire department I'm from PG&E,
5 I'm here, everybody's coming?

6 A. I would, I --

7 Q. I'm just wondering if that's in place or if it's unsafe? I'm
8 not sure that's right.

9 A. I didn't even know which part because there was four sites to
10 it. So, I mean, I saw the guy with the white hat which is -- it
11 wasn't the chief but I asked him. And he said -- first thing I
12 asked him was there injuries and he said that he wasn't sure.

13 So I -- with all the phone calls coming in, I didn't even
14 know where the command post was for --

15 Q. That's good. The person in the white hat is good. That's
16 the chief. I just wondered if you -- if there's a first step for
17 you? Okay.

18 A. Yeah, I mean, normally in a case like that I would look.
19 This incident was all sides so I didn't really -- at that point, I
20 did not go directly to where the incident command was at that
21 point. No, no, I didn't.

22 MR. COCHRANE: Okay.

23 BY MR. SOUZA:

24 Q. Kevin Souza, PG&E. Good morning.

25 A. Good morning.

1 Q. Just to follow up, I have a question from the last -- for
2 clarification. Was it unclear to you where Fire IC was set up due
3 to the amount of fire personnel --

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. -- spread out around the fire?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. A lot of fire fighters?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. A lot of different color helmets?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Right, so --

12 A. Shortly after the crews were coming in from all sides, it was
13 four sides. I didn't even realize it was all four sides, you
14 know.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. I was only on one side, so until I actually, you know,
17 started to go, I said, oh, shoot, over there, over there, what,
18 all four sides.

19 Q. Just because of the size of the incident?

20 A. Yeah, yes.

21 Q. Okay. Thank you. And just last question, do you feel that
22 you were supported from PG&E from your supervisors, from
23 management, from --

24 A. Yes, with the calls, yeah, they were calling in and that was
25 kind of hectic because I had no answers at that point. I say,

1 it's burning. I mean, the fire department was doing what they do,
2 police was doing what they were doing, you know, and it seemed
3 like as long as it's, you know, not contained but, you know,
4 they're doing to try to keep it from going further so, you know.

5 MR. SOUZA: Yeah. I have no other questions.

6 BY MS. COLLETTI:

7 Q. This is Alex Colletti again, just a couple of follow-up
8 questions. Do you know the name of the foreman that you passed
9 along that first responder form to?

10 A. No, they have so many new faces there but I can -- he's a
11 husky guy. I know -- I asked -- I went to one of the other -- it
12 was different foremen so I handed it to him and he said, no, no,
13 no. He was the first one here so I went to two different foremen.

14 And I don't even -- the foreman I know but he's not worked.
15 I think he was injured or something but is José but he wasn't even
16 there. But I handed it to the other guy, which is a huskier guy.
17 I wish I knew his name but I don't.

18 Q. That's okay. That's all right, that's all right. I'd rather
19 you not guess.

20 A. Yeah, yeah.

21 Q. Thank you. Going back to when you were at the scene, did you
22 feel like you had clear instruction on what you were supposed to
23 be doing at that time, that you were supposed to be on standby
24 or --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- did you feel that you were not sure what to do?

2 A. At that point, it was -- I mean, everybody had kind of came
3 right after me so, I mean, I was on standby, yes, because there's
4 nothing you can do, you know, when something -- I mean, I got the
5 calls, I made the calls.

6 And as far as trying to -- everybody's doing their thing, you
7 know, if I start trying to get information and I'd just be in the
8 way. But at that point I was just on standby, yes.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. And getting calls, you know, and trying to -- there wasn't
11 much I could do but other than try to do what I was told --
12 trained to do as far as getting information and let them do their
13 thing, the fire department and stuff like that.

14 Q. Okay. So essentially your qualifications didn't allow you to
15 provide more support, is that --

16 A. Yeah, yeah.

17 Q. Okay, okay, great. Going back to training a little bit, we
18 talked about annual training that you had mentioned yearly.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. What does that look like, who runs that, who all's involved?

21 A. It's pretty much a web-based training --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. -- that you have to go through and answer questions to the,
24 to the training, yes.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Yes.

2 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. That's all I have.

3 BY MR. SARINA:

4 Q. Nathan Sarina with the CPUC. Going back to a little bit
5 before the emergency or -- and the events leading up to the
6 emergency, so what did your day originally look like prior to the
7 emergency?

8 A. Maintenance, a lot of maintenance work. Oh, you mean, what I
9 was doing before the emergency call?

10 Q. Correct. What were you doing before the emergency call, yes?

11 A. Yeah, I was doing maintenance work, what they call AC
12 inspections, meter maintenance, corrosion inspections and between
13 that and service calls and response calls we have a full day of
14 work.

15 Q. Okay. Then, I guess, just as a point of clarification, when
16 you arrived at the scene were you -- and you were -- you know that
17 you're supposed to fill out the forms and try to get the
18 contractor's information or anything else?

19 A. Uh-huh.

20 Q. Did any of the dispatchers or supervisors you contacted
21 instruct you to do anything outside of that besides that form?

22 A. No.

23 Q. And then --

24 A. Not until later.

25 Q. Not until -- for the --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. So, I guess, the only instruction then was the odor call that
3 you later -- or, I mean, how much or what were you instructed to
4 do later or what was it?

5 A. The gas leak odor call, yes.

6 Q. Okay. Yes, the odor. And then during the emergency response
7 at what point were you released?

8 A. Until we started -- after -- we were told to shut down the
9 affected areas, the meters up to the valves and whoever was home,
10 you know, just to get into all the units and shut them down, the
11 ones that were affected. And then I -- at that -- it was probably
12 about 9-something when I was relieved, yeah.

13 MR. SARINA: 9-something, okay. No further questions.

14 MS. WEST: Kim West, no further questions.

15 MR. COCHRANE: Mike Cochrane, no further questions.

16 MR. SOUZA: Kevin Souza, no further questions.

17 MS. COLLETTI: In that case, this concludes our interview and
18 we're off the record.

19 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)
20
21
22

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 David Guterres

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.

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the transcriber.

Transcriber