

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: REX HALE

San Francisco Police Department
San Francisco, California

Tuesday,
February 10, 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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CHRISTINE COWSERT, PE
Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E)

KEVIN SOUZA, North Bay Gas Superintendent
Pacific Gas & Electric Company

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Homeland Security, San Francisco Fire Department
(On behalf of Mr. Hale)

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Rex Hale:		
By Ms. Colletti		6
By Mr. Cochrane		23
By Mr. Sarina		24
By Mr. Souza		26
By Ms. Colletti		29
By Mr. Sarina		30

I N T E R V I E W

(9:33 a.m.)

1
2
3 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. We're on the record for the interview
4 of Assistant Chief Rex Hale.

5 Good morning. Today is February 10, 2019. It is now 9:33
6 a.m. Pacific Time. My name is Alex Colletti. I'm 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 Station in San
10 Francisco, California. This interview is being conducted as part
11 of the investigation into the Pacific Gas and Electric 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 you for
17 review prior to being entered into the public docket. That's your
18 opportunity to correct things that the transcriber may have gotten
19 wrong.

20 For example, if you said you turned left and the transcriber
21 wrote right, that would be something that you'd correct. It
22 wouldn't be, I turned left and then I walked and did this next.
23 It's not an opportunity to add additional factual, it's just to
24 make corrections. So, please, if you have information give it to
25 us now.

1 You're permitted to have one person present during the
2 interview. This person is of your choice. It could be an
3 attorney, supervisor, friend, family member, or nobody at all.

4 Assistant Chief Rex, please state for the record the spelling
5 of your full name, your job title, and who you've selected to be
6 present during the interview.

7 MR. HALE: Good morning, my name is Rex Hale, R-E-X, H-A-L-E.
8 I'm an assistant chief for the San Francisco Fire Department. I
9 have Chief Cochrane here as -- if that's okay. If not, I'll be
10 solo.

11 MS. COLLETTI: Okay, great. Now, we're going to go around
12 the room and introduce ourselves.

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

16 MS. WEST: I'm Kim West, the senior -- Kim West, K-I-M, W-E-
17 S-T. I'm a senior accident investigator for PHMSA, Office of
18 Pipeline Safety.

19 MR. ENG: Terence Eng, T-E-R-E-N-C-E, E-N-G, California
20 Public Utilities Commission.

21 MR. SARINA: Nathan Sarina, N-A-T-H-A-N, S-A-R-I-N-A. I'm
22 with the California Public Utilities Commission.

23 MR. SOUZA: Kevin Souza, K-E-V-I-N, S-O-U-Z-A, with Pacific
24 Gas and Electric.

25 MS. COWSERT: Christine Cowsert, C-H-R-I-S-T-I-N-E, C-O-W-S-

1 E-R-T, PG&E.

2 MS. COLLETTI: Excellent, thank you. I'm going to start this
3 by saying thank you. From all that I've heard so far, you guys
4 did an excellent job and really kept, really kept damage to a
5 minimum.

6 MR. HALE: Thank you.

7 MS. COLLETTI: Especially for the extent for that period of
8 time and for as large of a fire as it was. It is very remarkable
9 to not have had any injuries or fatalities, so thank you very much
10 for your work.

11 MR. HALE: Thank you.

12 INTERVIEW OF REX HALE

13 BY MS. COLLETTI:

14 Q. I'm going to start off by talking about your history with the
15 Fire Department. My guess is you've been there a little while.

16 A. Yes. It'll be 29 years in April 2nd.

17 Q. Fantastic, great. How long have you been an assistant chief?

18 A. I got appointed in July 2nd, 2018.

19 Q. Okay. Okay. Now, here's the part where you're going to have
20 to talk a lot.

21 A. Sure.

22 Q. If you could walk me through from when you received
23 notification via dispatch or any other means --

24 A. Okay.

25 Q. -- to head to the incident site, what you saw, what you

1 heard, what you smelled even when you were there, what you
2 instructed your crews to do, how incident command was set up,
3 every detail you can think of during that event that you can
4 remember. If you have to go back and forth in time, that's fine,
5 that's very normal.

6 A. Okay.

7 Q. So, the more detail you can provide us, the better.

8 A. Okay. The exact time I was notified, I'm not sure, but I was
9 at the firehouse and my operator made an announcement that he
10 heard something going on on Geary Street and he thinks I might --
11 we might have to go.

12 So, we started to proceed to go to Geary Street where I heard
13 Battalion 7 call for first alarm, we have a working fire at Parker
14 and Geary with gas explosion. We were in route and as -- I could
15 see some smoke from a distance and as we got on to Geary Street,
16 which I believe was probably Geary and Masonic, I could see heavy
17 flame showing from the street.

18 As I was about 3 blocks away I confirmed what I saw and it
19 was heavy flame showing from the street at Geary and Parker. I
20 went on scene, pulled a second alarm and then proceeded to walk
21 down 2 blocks from where we parked because -- well, one of the
22 reasons was that Battalion 7 had reported heavy fire gas
23 explosion, have all units post out one block. And she also made a
24 notification to evacuate at one-block radius. And that's all I
25 remember hearing from her at this time.

1 I approached the scene and made a face-to-face with Chief
2 Kalos who was Battalion 7 and she gave me a quick briefing on what
3 they had, gas explosion, construction workers, possibly three
4 construction workers missing, unaccounted for. They are starting
5 to deploy a 2½-inch line onto the -- what we could call the main
6 fire building, which was the 3300 Geary, to slow down any spread.

7 We quickly recognized that we're not going to be able to put
8 out the gas fire, so we had to go into a surround -- get our arms
9 around it and try to keep this fire from spreading along Parker
10 and along Geary.

11 I then -- Engine 21 reported in and I directed them to setup
12 a multi-versal on the corner of Geary and Parker across the street
13 and to squirt water onto the 3300 Geary. Truck 12 also reported
14 in and they -- I directed them onto Geary to setup a ladder pipe
15 and to squirt water onto the roof of 3300 Geary.

16 I directed Battalion 7 -- she was going to be assigned
17 division Alpha and she had all of Geary Street, she would have all
18 the master streams, would be charge of all the master streams on
19 Geary Street. I then think directed Battalion 5, Chief O'Connell, to
20 -- he pulled up behind me, I had a command post setup at Parker
21 and Geary on the southeast corner, southeast corner.

22 He pulled up behind me and I redirected him to go around onto
23 Parker with the instructions to stop this fire from making a run
24 down Parker. So, he pulled around the block, came up Parker,
25 positioned himself and he immediately called for two engines and a

1 truck, which I sent over there. I'd have to refer to some notes
2 on which exact companies those were. It was Truck 5 Engine 38 and
3 the third company was Engine 12. And they setup a defensive
4 operation on Parker north of Geary there.

5 And then 3 Engine showed up and I had them deploy a multi-
6 versal water curtain onto the H&R Block building. I don't know
7 the address off the top of my head, but I designated that as
8 Delta. And then I had Chief Bokura (ph.) Battalion 4 be in charge
9 of -- he was assigned to division Delta. And there was obvious
10 radiant heat threatening that building, and so we started to take
11 actions to prevent that from catching fire.

12 So, at this point I have division -- I mean, I have Battalion
13 7 in charge of division Alpha, which is all of Geary Street. I
14 have Battalion 5 in charge of division Charlie which is Parker
15 Street north of Geary. And I have division Delta, Battalion 4,
16 Battalion 4 Bokura was in charge of division Delta.

17 At this time, Battalion 2 Chief Hickey (ph.) pulled up and
18 asked for assignment and I told him to go over to Bravo, which
19 would be the building next to the 3300 -- west of 3300 and to
20 evaluate and make sure we could stop this fire from going into
21 Bravo. So, he was assigned Bravo.

22 At that point, PD confirmed that I wanted a one-block
23 evacuation, and I said, yes. The timeline when they -- PD was
24 there when I got there when they confirmed that they wanted a one-
25 block evacuation, the timeline I'm unclear on, but it was pretty

1 quick once I was squared away there.

2 And then we also had still that report of three unaccounted
3 for construction workers, which turned into five. At some point
4 there was a report of five unaccounted construction workers.
5 Rescue 1 pulled upon scene and I told them to do a surface primary
6 on the street surrounding this explosion and to see if they also
7 get primary into the 3300, that's a primary search, 3300 Geary.

8 And they -- at some point, I'm not sure of the timeline,
9 within 10 minutes, 15 minutes they cleared it and the primary was
10 negative, negative results. PD then approached me and said -- I
11 forget the sergeant's name. The names I don't remember. I can
12 remember his face.

13 He said that he believes that the construction workers are
14 all accounted for because he talked to the foreman. And I said
15 bring that foreman here, I want to confirm that. So, he did and
16 we then confirmed that all the construction workers were accounted
17 for. And the primary in the Hong Kong restaurant and the floor
18 above was also cleared by Rescue 1.

19 It was also reported by division Charlie that the electrical
20 wires were threatened, high voltage wires were threatened on
21 Parker. And so, I special called PG&E Electric. Battalion 7, on
22 the initial arrival, she special called PG&E Gas. At this point,
23 neither one had showed up and my -- if I remember correctly, there
24 was an ETA of 10 minutes.

25 Timeline-wise, PG&E showed up confirmed that obviously we

1 needed this gas shut off as soon as possible, and then at another
2 time PG&E Electric showed up. I told them I needed that
3 electrical wires on Parker shut down and they had that mitigated
4 or shut down fairly quickly for the electrical.

5 Second alarm unit starts showing up and I started having them
6 supply master streams and assisting with Delta and Charlie,
7 division Delta and Charlie, and Bravo just kind of spread them out
8 around the perimeter.

9 Third alarm units showed up, a lot of them I had them stand
10 by. I didn't want to commit them until I had a good assignment
11 for them, meaning I didn't want to just start throwing companies
12 at this thing. I wanted to make sure where we needed them the
13 most. And then, so I gradually started to assign third alarm
14 companies to as water supply mostly and assist with division
15 Charlie. Division Charlie had his hands full.

16 Division Delta was -- there was some radiating heat breaking
17 windows, but other than that there was no impingement into the
18 building because I had some units in there stopping anything. We
19 had units on the roof of division Delta also.

20 At some point I had to make a decision about whether we're
21 going to go into 3300 Geary. We were still having heavy fire from
22 the gas line impinging on the corner of that building and it
23 started -- I started to get reports of it being compromised and it
24 was likely to collapse on that corner. So, after discussion with
25 some Battalion chiefs and with the chief of the department we

1 decided we are not going to go make entry into 3300 Geary Street
2 and we would stop it at Bravo, which was the next building to the
3 left.

4 We also setup a water curtain to protect -- okay. So, we
5 had -- so, PG&E had to get access on Parker and Geary on the
6 southwest corner to start digging, and so we had to let some
7 trucks in. We had to move some apparatus. They got in, they
8 started digging. They gave us about an hour timeline, is the
9 report I got, it's going to take to shut this thing off.

10 I notified my division supervisors that it was going to take
11 an hour and everybody is to hold strong, we're going to be here a
12 while. And then eventually we started having a lot of PG&E
13 workers there and we setup a water curtain between the gas portion
14 of the fire to protect them. So, I had some hand lines there.

15 I'm going to say about an hour and a half into it timeline-
16 wise about an hour and a half would be my guess, could be an hour
17 and 45 minutes, the gas got shutoff. At that point, we started
18 shutting down master streams and started making entry into the
19 main fire building which was 3300.

20 The Charlie building, which is the building -- it's one whole
21 building but it was separated by addresses so we designed that as
22 the Charlie building. They started making entry into Charlie to
23 extinguish that. And then we had entry into Bravo starting to
24 extinguish that. Division Delta was okay.

25 We were on the cusp of having some water supply issues, but

1 at the time we were able to setup enough water supply to help with
2 all these master streams. And in the back of my mind, if another
3 building got going out I would have had to strike a forth alarm
4 and I would have had to bring hose tenders so we could start
5 leading from high pressure hydrants that were a couple blocks
6 away.

7 That was a major operation, but I confirmed with my division
8 group supervisors or my division supervisors that they had the
9 fire contained to those buildings and wasn't spreading so we were
10 able to hold this to a third alarm.

11 Once the gas was shutoff we were able to put out the fires in
12 Charlie and the main fire building and Bravo fairly quickly. I
13 mean, it probably took 20 minutes to get containment and another
14 20 to get under control. Those are rough timelines.

15 At that point, once we started picking up I started order
16 ladder pipes to be shut down -- well, that happened a little bit
17 previous. Ladder pipes to be shut down. Those had to be shut
18 down slowly so not to cause any water hammer. And once we started
19 having those shut down and we started getting containment and
20 under control we started letting units go back in, pick up and
21 start to go back in.

22 I'm not sure of the time again, but I'm going to say around
23 5:00 I told Battalion 7 that she was in charge and I shortly left
24 thereafter. There was a reunification center setup in front of
25 Mel's, a couple of Muni buses there. Red Cross was there for any

1 displaced tenants. At the time that this was happening I did not
2 have a bunch of people there to direct towards there, but I guess
3 towards the end of the day as they started coming home from work
4 they started reunifying at that location.

5 Water Department was there. They were helpful in locating
6 and supplementing the water supply in the surrounding hydrants.
7 That's all I got for this -- at this time that I could think of.

8 Q. That's excellent. That's the amount of detail I was looking
9 for. Thank you.

10 A. Okay.

11 Q. I'm going to go back to the very beginning because I want to
12 make sure I understand the designations of the Alpha, Bravo,
13 Charlie, Delta --

14 A. Okay.

15 Q. -- which building was which. So, Charlie I take it to
16 understand is the 3300 Geary.

17 A. No.

18 Q. No, okay.

19 A. There is a separate address on --

20 Q. That's where I (indiscernible).

21 A. -- Parker and I think it's 195 Parker is the address.

22 Q. Okay. That's -- and that was Battalion 7?

23 A. That was Battalion --

24 Q. Or --

25 A. That was Battalion 5.

1 Q. 5, 5.

2 A. But when I --

3 Q. 5, Charlie, okay. Sorry.

4 A. When I initially designated Battalion 5 as division Charlie I
5 didn't have a building, specific building in mind I just wanted
6 him to stop that fire from going down Parker. So, that division
7 is all encompassing.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Okay. It could have been multiple buildings.

10 Q. Just in the Parker direction?

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. Okay, okay.

13 A. Yeah, yeah. And same with Alpha, technically Alpha would be
14 the building across street -- across the street from Geary on my
15 back behind me --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. -- but I designated division Alpha as Geary Street just --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- just to have -- to break up this event into chunks, to
20 manageable chunks.

21 Q. Okay. And Alpha was Battalion 7. Is that --

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. -- correct? Okay. A Battalion Delta, which was over the H&R
24 Block --

25 A. Correct.

1 Q. -- building.

2 A. That's Battalion 4.

3 Q. Battalion 4, okay. And Bravo, can you -- I missed Bravo.

4 A. That's Battalion 2.

5 Q. Battalion 2, okay. And what were they covering?

6 A. I forget the -- there was a big sign on that building. I
7 don't know the address, but it was right next to 3300 Geary.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. That's Bravo. That building directly next to the Chinese
10 restaurant. There's like a dog grooming place or something, I'm
11 not -- something like that.

12 Q. Okay. I just want to back up to some of this and I'm going
13 to walk through it to make sure I understand the big picture --

14 A. Um-hum.

15 Q. -- of the steps that were taken and the order they were taken
16 because you did a lot of different activities --

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. -- at a lot of different times so I just want to have it
19 clear in my mind.

20 A. Sure.

21 Q. So, essentially Battalion 7 is first on scene. They're
22 pulling first alarm.

23 A. Correct. Got dispatched as a 21 Box, which was an engine
24 truck and Battalion chief for apparently a gas leak.

25 Q. Okay. And then after that you guys are heading in route.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. And once you're arriving there you're seeing a heavy
3 flame visible 3 blocks away and you're pulling a second alarm.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. You requested at that time evacuation from PD for a
6 one-block radius?

7 A. No. Battalion 7 requested that while I was --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- in route.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And then I confirmed -- when PD made a face-to-face with me I
12 confirmed that, yes --

13 Q. Okay, great.

14 A. -- that's what we need.

15 Q. Do you have any idea about how long that took to get that
16 confirmation from PD or how long it took to execute those
17 evacuations?

18 A. PD came up pretty quick and wanted to confirm that that's
19 what they wanted, and I said, yes. And then there was a point --
20 the time I don't remember, but they came back and said, okay, we
21 got everything evacuated up to -- within two buildings of this
22 fire, we can't do those buildings.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. We don't want them entering those. There was too much
25 radiant heat.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. I said, okay, we'll take care of those.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. So, we covered H&R Block, one building over, the Hong Kong
5 restaurant building, and one or two buildings behind I'm not sure
6 how many we covered, and then Bravo. That bigger building in
7 Bravo 2 which the big green building, I'm not sure if PD evacuated
8 that or we did. I'm pretty sure PD did.

9 Q. Okay. Okay. Once you guys are on site you're quickly
10 recognizing that it's gas-fed fire, you're not going to be able to
11 put it out and you're working to surround the area.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. And contain, which is where you're designating the
14 different designations for --

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. Okay. And there's a lot of other smaller actions in here.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Just trying to get the big picture.

19 A. Um-hum.

20 Q. PD is starting on their evacuations. You're hearing reports
21 of three to five missing folks and you're --

22 A. Construction workers, yeah.

23 Q. -- and you're sending search and rescue.

24 A. Yeah, rescue, yes.

25 Q. Okay. Okay. That took about 10, 15 minutes, we're not

1 finding anything as -- which makes sense because there was no one
2 there.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Okay. And then PD is confirming -- and who did they bring?
5 Was it one of the excavation folks? You had said a foreman that
6 --

7 A. It was one of the -- yeah, the construction workers that were
8 working (indiscernible) --

9 Q. The construction worker foreman, okay.

10 A. Yeah, yeah.

11 Q. Great, great. Just wanted to make sure it wasn't a PG&E
12 foreman as opposed to --

13 A. No, no.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. No, no, it was a construction guy.

16 Q. Just clarifying, okay. I believe I heard something about
17 electric poles --

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. -- electric fire. Can you talk about that a little bit?

20 A. So, there was two poles that were on the northwest side of
21 Parker right next to Geary that were threatened by the gas fire
22 and they started to burn and we had concerns that wires were going
23 to start coming down. So, that was going to be a major issue if
24 that happened, so we tried to get PG&E Electric on that quickly.
25 And I would say that was mitigated fairly quickly.

1 Q. Okay. Throughout this time you're getting additional
2 companies coming, you're having them provide essentially backup
3 support for the battalions that are actively working on those --

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. -- four designations. Okay. Making decisions not to enter
6 certain buildings at that time because of the fear of collapse.
7 And PG&E is letting you know that it's going to take about an hour
8 to close down.

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. About how long into the incident did PG&E notify you of how
11 long it would take? If you don't remember, that's okay.

12 A. Yeah, I don't remember a timeline.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. I actually -- I had Battalion 1 was there, Chief Yee, and I
15 was using him as kind of a liaison to make face-to-face with PG&E
16 and let's get an update. And so, he did that and he's the one
17 that came back and reported that the electrical was shutoff and
18 that it's going to take an hour. That timeline, yeah, I don't
19 know, it could be 20 minutes into this, 20 minutes since PG&E Gas
20 showed up. I don't remember --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- specifically because --

23 Q. That's okay.

24 A. -- there was gas, there was electric, and --

25 Q. There was a lot of moving parts at the time.

1 A. Yeah, yeah.

2 Q. No, that's okay. PG&E requested a water curtain while they
3 were doing the excavation?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And so, you guys provided that for them. And then the gas
6 shutoff occurred. From there obviously were no longer worrying
7 about the gas-fed fire, were worrying about the buildings around.

8 A. Correct.

9 Q. So, you guys worked to extinguish those specific fires. And
10 I believe in my timeline I have 20 minutes to contain and 20
11 minutes to control. Is that correct?

12 A. That's once the gas was shutoff.

13 Q. Once gas shutoff, yeah, right, obviously.

14 A. Yeah, yeah.

15 Q. Yeah, once you get rid of the fuel.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Yeah, right, right. Sorry, apologies.

18 A. That's a rough estimate that --

19 Q. Okay, okay. You talked about having some issues with the
20 water supply if --

21 A. Well, we were -- okay. I'm sorry, go ahead.

22 Q. No, that's okay, please, please.

23 A. We were right on the edge of having a water supply issue
24 because we had --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. -- so many master streams going. We were able to manage with
2 what we had, but if it gotten -- if this fire had gotten any
3 bigger we would have had to go on to the next alarm with a plan to
4 use high pressure hydrants from I believe California Street and
5 Turk Street.

6 Q. Okay. Let me see, if you could give me a favor because I'm
7 having a hard time visualizing the different locations.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. If you could write -- draw for me, you know, Geary, Parker,
10 where the different Battalions --

11 A. Okay.

12 Q. -- the different locations were, I'd appreciate it. It's
13 going to be -- because if I try and do it in my head there's a
14 good chance I'll mess it up. Oh, yeah.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Drew a picture yesterday.

16 MS. COLLETTI: Oh excellent, okay.

17 MR. HALE: CP, command post, (indiscernible). You just
18 wanted divisions, is that --

19 MS. COLLETTI: That is fantastic. Yes, that's exactly what I
20 was looking for.

21 MR. HALE: I had staging up there. I don't know if that
22 matters, but I had staging up there.

23 BY MS. COLLETTI:

24 Q. Staging over here?

25 A. On Spruce.

1 Q. Okay. On Spruce? Okay. That is extremely helpful. Just to
2 make sure that I understand the different acronyms.

3 A. Um-hum.

4 Q. Bravo, Bravo Unit 2?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Okay. Fire Bravo?

7 A. Fire building. That would be --

8 Q. Fire building.

9 A. -- considered the main fire building is what we were calling
10 --

11 Q. Main fire building, which is 3300?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Okay. The Hong Kong building. Charlie, Delta, Delta 2,
14 okay, fantastic. Thank you very much.

15 A. Sure.

16 MS. COLLETTI: That's going to be the end of my questions for
17 this round, so I'm going to hand it off to --

18 MR. COCHRANE: Okay, thank you. Yeah, Michael Cochrane, San
19 Francisco Fire. I just have one question for the chief, but
20 before that just pulling up to that fire, evacuations, lost
21 civilians, utility impingement, possibly losing a block and 123 of
22 our members arriving and orchestrating that was an outstanding
23 job, Chief Hale, and thank you.

24 MR. HALE: Thank you.

25 BY MR. COCHRANE:

1 Q. The only question is, do you think there was proper
2 representation and good updates given by PG&E throughout the
3 incident?

4 A. Yes. I spoke with several -- I want to say at least three
5 face-to-face with three different PG&E personnel, one was
6 electric, one was gas, and then the only -- I have one guy's card
7 who was very helpful and that's the only name I remember. Sorry,
8 I got to put my glasses on, Jason -- or James Wickham or Wickham.

9 He was by my side most of the time giving me updates, but
10 there was a couple other PG&E folks that when we started
11 discussing some actions that worked out. Yeah, once they were on
12 scene, I mean, PG&E started going to work right away. There was
13 no doubt about it that they had a big problem on their hands. So,
14 to answer your question, yes.

15 MR. COCHRANE: Thank you, Chief.

16 MS. WEST: Kim West. I have no comments.

17 MR. HALE: Thank you.

18 MS. WEST: No questions.

19 MR. SARINA: Nathan Sarina, CPUC.

20 BY MR. SARINA:

21 Q. So, have you performed on any other joint exercises or
22 anything -- PG&E is required to reach out to some of the fire
23 departments, the public liaison so I don't know if that is at your
24 level or what level that's going to per se, but have you been
25 involved with any of that?

1 A. I'm not quite sure what your question is.

2 Q. Okay. So, under PG&E is required to -- or have you ever
3 participated in any joint exercises prior, not incidents --

4 A. When you say -- okay. So, you mean drills, okay.

5 Q. Drills, drills.

6 A. Okay.

7 Q. Yes, drills.

8 A. I don't know if I -- I don't know that I have. we have been
9 drilled and been given handouts and discussed PG&E operations, and
10 I know there were some setup where there was a unified drill, but
11 me personally having attended that, I don't believe so.

12 Q. Okay. But to the best of your understanding there have been
13 drills with other folks --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- within the department. Okay.

16 A. yeah, yeah.

17 MR. SARINA: No further questions at this time.

18 MR. HALE: Thank you.

19 MR. SOUZA: Kevin Souza, PG&E. Assistant Chief Rex, I was
20 Gas IC --

21 MR. HALE: Okay.

22 MR. SOUZA: -- man on site. We had conversations throughout
23 the incident.

24 MR. HALE: Actually, you're not the face that I put -- I
25 remember the other guys face.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I told you he was in here.

2 MR. HALE: I know.

3 MR. SOUZA: I look different with a hard hat.

4 MR. HALE: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

5 MS. COLLETTI: If it makes you feel better, I met him the
6 first day I was here; on the second day I introduced myself again.

7 MR. HALE: I know.

8 MS. COLLETTI: The hard hat for some reason --

9 MR. HALE: Yeah.

10 MR. SOUZA: So, thank you for your support on this event.

11 BY MR. SOUZA:

12 Q. One of the topics that we were working together on was
13 whether or not the electric was off.

14 A. Um-hum.

15 Q. I know we had a great response from them turning it off, but
16 the concern that I had and you had was we couldn't tell. I don't
17 think we --

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. -- took a while to get confirmation that it was off.

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. There was that unknown period, right? So, would you agree
22 that we needed some improvement on confirmation to the ground that
23 that was -- that that line was controlled because there was, I
24 believe, a little bit of a delay I getting that to you.

25 Q. Yes, definitely.

1 A. Okay.

2 Q. It almost seems like there should be -- like with BART
3 there's a word safe clearance and, you know, there's a couple
4 different stages of turning this electrical off and if we had
5 something like that in place that would probably be a good idea.

6 Q. Okay. And the gentleman that was by your side, Jim Wickham,
7 he is our liaison for fire, police, a lot of that communication
8 was happening as our IC structure is setup between him and I, and
9 then he brings that information --

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. -- back to you. And I was also in communication with -- I
12 don't remember the woman's name, but she was in a light brown
13 jacket.

14 A. That's the chief of the department.

15 Q. Chief of the department, yeah.

16 A. Yeah (indiscernible).

17 Q. She's like -- that was my contact as we were working through
18 this. Any suggestions on your part in the way Gas responded and
19 communicated short of the hour timeframe that was off because of
20 some of the issues that we were having finding lines? Any
21 improvements that you can suggest for us?

22 A. Well, we need to get you guys there faster. I mean, we have
23 PG&E Gas and Electric events all the time, nothing of this major,
24 but, I mean, we need you guys there faster. So, either being able
25 to respond Code 3 or Plan B, I guess, is possibly a police escort

1 to get you from Point A to Point B, but I mean it almost seems
2 like it should be automatically dispatched on any working fire.
3 And maybe you are, but we're not getting you there.

4 Q. I appreciate you saying that because that was something that
5 was discussed between my team, the supervisors were having issues
6 with that and we agree that a police escort and this for our first
7 responders and employees responding to valves --

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. -- would have helped in this situation due to the traffic,
10 the roadblock, and the fact that a flashing orange light on the
11 top of a PG&E truck doesn't make, you know, cars get out of the
12 way.

13 A. Yeah. They're not -- people on Valencia Street are not going
14 to understand what's happening over here on Geary Street.

15 Q. Exactly.

16 A. Yeah.

17 MR. SOUZA: So, no, I appreciate that and we are definitely
18 going to look to implement something like that. Thank you. No
19 further questions.

20 MR. HALE: Thank you. I would like to say that once you guys
21 get on scene you guys do a tremendous job. I know you're working
22 your best to get it done and we appreciate that. Do we want it to
23 happen quicker, of course we do, but we're not the one in charge
24 of that.

25 MR. SOUZA: We do. Thank you.

1 MR. HALE: Yeah.

2 MR. SOUZA: No further questions.

3 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. This is Alex Colletti.

4 BY MS. COLLETTI:

5 Q. In talking about your interactions with Jim Wickham or Jim
6 Wickham, I'm sorry, did you feel like you were getting all the
7 information you needed from PG&E on a timely manner?

8 A. Yeah. I mean, they were telling me that it's going to take
9 some time. But, yeah, I was, I was getting updates and I felt
10 once they were on scene that we were all on the same page and, you
11 know, they were doing the best they could do and we were doing the
12 best we could do and --

13 Q. So, really the main issue is just them getting on scene, is
14 what I'm hearing?

15 A. Well, yeah. I mean, obviously it would have been nice to
16 have turned that thing off -- if we -- if it was turned off
17 within, I don't know, 20 minutes we would have been a lot better
18 off, right? I mean --

19 MS. COLLETTI: Um-hum. I have no further questions.

20 MR. HALE: Okay.

21 MR. COCHRANE: Mike Cochrane, San Francisco Fire. No further
22 questions.

23 MS. WEST: Kim West. No further questions.

24 MR. HALE: Thank you.

25 MR. SARINA: Nathan Sarina, CPUC.

1 BY MR. SARINA:

2 Q. Could you -- you said Code 3 response?

3 A. Yes. That's red lights and sirens and being able to go
4 against traffic or against red lights, controlling intersections
5 and being able to proceed through it.

6 Q. So, that's lights and sirens response?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Typically I guess (indiscernible) so what you would see with
9 flashing lights --

10 A. Yeah, and they're not adhering to the normal traffic laws.

11 Q. Okay. Thank you. Then could you describe your interaction
12 with the -- I guess the excavator foreman in a little bit greater
13 detail? You met with him and I guess what was the extent of that
14 conversation?

15 A. The extent was, do you have everybody accounted for? He
16 said, yes. I go, is there anybody injured? He said, no. I said,
17 thank you.

18 MR. COCHRANE: All right. Thank you. No further questions.

19 MR. SOUZA: Kevin Souza, PG&E. No further questions.

20 MS. COLLETTI: Alex Colletti again. I'd like to thank you
21 for your work.

22 MR. HALE: Sure.

23 MR. COLLETTI: And that's going to include our interview.

24 MR. HALE: Okay. Thank you.

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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 Rex Hale

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA19MR001

PLACE:

DATE: February 10, 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

Colletti Alexandria

From: Hale, Rex [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 30, 2019 8:19 PM
To: Colletti Alexandria
Subject: Re: Transcript of Interview - NTSB case PLD19MR001

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Hello Alex,
I have only a couple minor changes.
Pg8 Line 19 Replace think with then
Pg9 Line 8 correct name is Chief Bokura
Pg9 Line 16 correct name is Chief Bokura

thank you
AC Rex Hale

From: Colletti Alexandria [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, April 19, 2019 12:52 PM
To: Hale, Rex (FIR)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Transcript of Interview - NTSB case PLD19MR001

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Good afternoon Assistant Chief Hale,

Please see attached for a transcript of your interview on February 10, 2019 for the NTSB investigation into a natural gas release and fire in San Francisco, CA. There is also a short form which will need to be returned along with any corrections you find to the transcription. Thank you again for your time and assistance on this case. If possible, a response would be appreciated by **May 27, 2019**. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to shoot me an email or call me on my cell.

Thank you,
Alex

Alex C. Colletti
Accident Investigator – Pipeline
National Transportation Safety Board
[REDACTED]

Office: [REDACTED]
Cell: [REDACTED]

Fax: [REDACTED]

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