

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: ROBERT ALARID

San Francisco Police Department  
San Francisco, California

Saturday,  
February 9, 2019

## APPEARANCES:

ROGER EVANS, Senior Pipeline Incident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

SUNIL SHORI, Utilities Engineer  
California Public Utilities Commission

DAVID MULLIGAN, Accident Investigator  
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(PHMSA)

JASON KLEMM, Operations  
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I N T E R V I E W

(11:39 a.m.)

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2  
3 MR. EVANS: We're on the record with Mr. Robert Alarid, A-l-  
4 a-r-i-d. Good morning. Today is February 9th, 2019. My name is  
5 Roger Evans. I'm the investigator with the National  
6 Transportation Safety Board out of Washington, D.C. We're at the  
7 San Francisco Police Department here in San Francisco, California.  
8 It is now 11:39 a.m. local time.

9 This interview is being conducted as part of the  
10 investigation into the PG&E gas release and ignition that occurred  
11 on February 6th of 2019. It is -- excuse me. This accident is  
12 NTSB Case Number PLD19MR001.

13 The purpose of the investigation is to increase safety, not  
14 to assign fault, blame, or liability. NTSB cannot offer any  
15 guaranty of confidentiality or immunity from legal or certificate  
16 actions.

17 This interview is being recorded and may be transcribed at a  
18 later date. A copy of the transcript will be provided to the  
19 interviewee for review prior to being entered into the public  
20 docket.

21 Mr. Robert Alarid, you are permitted to have one other person  
22 available, with you during this interview. Please tell me what  
23 your decision is regarding that.

24 MR. ALARID: I can call her, and then we could just put her  
25 on speaker phone, since she's not able to get here.

1 MR. EVANS: But have -- but are you -- earlier you said you  
2 could be by yourself?

3 MR. ALARID: Yeah. I can be by myself.

4 MR. EVANS: Okay. That's fine. Because she can get a copy  
5 of the transcript.

6 MR. ALARID: Yeah. She said just send her a copy, so I'm  
7 okay.

8 MR. EVANS: Okay. So we are going to have no representative.  
9 Okay. I'd like to go around the room now and have each person  
10 introduce themselves, the spelling of their name, their agency and  
11 affiliation, or affiliation. We'll start to my left and proceed.

12 MR. KLEMM: Jason Klemm, J-a-s-o-n, K-l-e-m-m, with Pacific  
13 Gas & Electric.

14 MR. SHORI: Sunil Shori, S-u-n-i-l, S-h-o-r-i. I'm with the  
15 State of California, the Public Utilities Commission.

16 MR. ALARID: Okay. I'm Robert Alarid, R-o-b-e-r-t,  
17 A-l-a-r-i-d, with City Rise Safety and Services Traffic Control.

18 MR. LANG: My name is Mike Lang, M-i-k-e, L-a-n-g. I'm a  
19 compliance specialist with Pacific Gas & Electric Company.

20 MR. MULLIGAN: David Mulligan, M-u-l-l-i-g-a-n. I'm with the  
21 Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

22 MR. GIL-BLANCO: Jorge Gil-Blanco, J-o-r-g-e, G-i-l hyphen B-  
23 l-a-n-c-o. PG&E, Pacific Gas & Electric Company.

24 MR. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

25 INTERVIEW OF ROBERT ALARID

1 BY MR. EVANS:

2 Q. Thank you, Robert, for agreeing to speak with us today, on  
3 such short notice as well. So we have the spelling of your name,  
4 and the company you work for is again?

5 A. It's City Rise Safety and Service.

6 Q. Okay, that's --

7 A. In Lodi, California.

8 Q. And that's spelled C-i-t-y space R-i-s-e?

9 A. Correct.

10 Q. Okay. Of California. And where are they located, just in  
11 the --

12 A. We're located in Lodi, California.

13 Q. Okay. So before we begin anything about this particular  
14 accident, we'd like to get some background information on you. So  
15 can you give us a rundown of your background, where you worked the  
16 last 10, 15 years?

17 A. Okay. I worked with Statewide Safety and Signs, and which we  
18 did was, we did traffic control on the freeway. And then we set  
19 crash cushions, aerial signs and permit signs throughout  
20 California.

21 Q. And how many years were you there?

22 A. I was roughly there about, I'd say up, a couple times, about  
23 8 to 9 years.

24 Q. Okay. Have you served any sort of an apprenticeship or  
25 certificate programs? You have any OQ training, anything like

1 that?

2 A. Yeah. Back in '95 I started apprenticeship, that is for  
3 traffic control for Statewide Safety and Services. I've been in  
4 the union, the Laborers International American Union for close to  
5 22 years.

6 Q. So you're still a union laborer?

7 A. Absolutely.

8 Q. Okay. Union laborer with 22 years. Okay. And what -- the  
9 local you're with, what is it again?

10 A. The local I'm with now is 304.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. National -- International American Labor Union.

13 Q. Okay. Okay, so you left Statewide, and then from Statewide  
14 you went to City Rise?

15 A. Yeah. That's correct.

16 Q. Okay. And how long have you been at City Rise?

17 A. I've been at City Rise almost 2 years now.

18 Q. Okay. And just give us a rundown of what you do for City  
19 Rise, just some of the basics.

20 A. What I do at City Rise is I do traffic control on the city  
21 streets and such, as far as loan closures, lane shifts, shoulder  
22 closures and stuff like that.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. And flagging, four-way flagging operations, two-way flagging  
25 operations, where we have to use an arrow board and a truck arrow

1 board. It depends how many lanes we have to take.

2 Q. So as traffic control, where do you get your work orders  
3 from? How does all that happen?

4 A. I get that from the company boss and stuff, and the dispatch.  
5 And then they usually send the location of where they're going to  
6 be working. And they'll just, they'll send it to me. And then  
7 I'll look at the traffic plans in a day before, before I even  
8 arrive on the job site.

9 Q. Okay. So, for the case of, you know, the one we're working  
10 on here right now, how long had you been associated with that  
11 work?

12 A. With MasTec?

13 Q. The Geary Street --

14 A. Since Tuesday. Before the came out and started digging, they  
15 had the saw cutters come out here, and which they do is, you know,  
16 cutting, cut the line of where they're going to be working. So  
17 they're doing optic fiber, so they'll cut -- the saw cutter will,  
18 was going up on westbound, up towards Geary Street, up towards  
19 Spruce and Burke. They were cutting all the way across the  
20 intersections. And then on the next day, which would be on 6,  
21 February 6 is when they start pulling up the asphalt, to actually  
22 do the digging and lay the optic fiber.

23 Q. So we drew this sketch. It's kind of wild, but you get an  
24 idea. The Hong Kong restaurant's up there, and H&R Block.

25 A. Yeah. That's on Parker. Yeah.



1 Q. Yeah. So, when you were saying there was other work going  
2 on, was that coming from the east side, or the west or what?

3 A. No. The work was going on -- they -- so they went from  
4 Parker, and they went up, westbound, going up to the next street,  
5 which would be Spruce Street.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And then, of course, just the -- this incident happened, and  
8 then they're going to go up from Spruce, on Geary, westbound, up  
9 to Burke. But they never got to that because of the incident.  
10 But what, they did cut from Parker up to Spruce. And then what I  
11 did is I set my lane closure from the corner of Spruce, which is  
12 the street coming parallel.

13 Q. Right.

14 A. And then I sit on the corner of Spruce and Geary, and then  
15 ran my taper, the arrow board, which was required. And then ran  
16 all the way to Parker, and they started on the opposite side of an  
17 intersection on Parker. So I ran my line, my lane closure a  
18 little past on Parker, the intersection.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. That where they had the equipment parked.

21 Q. Okay. Can you define for us, or describe for us, when you  
22 talk about taper and board?

23 A. Okay. The taper is when you come off the curb, you run a  
24 line of -- it depends of the speed of the traffic. And then  
25 depend -- that'll be the length of the taper. And that's usually

1 the line will come up, and then we actually take that lane. And  
2 then it tells you, if there's a straight line of cones, with the  
3 distance of the closure and the location they're going to work.  
4 So you -- so by me setting it up on the, on Spruce, that's like  
5 the buffer zone to the area, so cars are having to merge over  
6 properly, and then it gives them a little cushion room to work, so  
7 the traffic is not merging right up on the location of the area  
8 where they're working.

9 Q. So it's going from two lanes to one?

10 A. Yeah. It's going from two lane to one.

11 Q. Okay. Okay. And then, your role with regard to, you know,  
12 the guys who were doing this kind of work, the excavation, you  
13 know, excavating, they have equipment there to pull the concrete  
14 out of the ground and all of that, describe for us how, what your  
15 role is when that activity starts taking place.

16 A. Okay. When they're -- when they start working and actually  
17 digging out, and pulling the dump trucks in there, and pulling the  
18 cement and dirt and stuff, they have to stay within my lane  
19 closure. So they can't -- of course we have two lanes still open,  
20 on Geary, on westbound, so they have -- the traffic's still  
21 flowing that way. And then one lane, I have shut down, and they  
22 have to stay within my closure as far as work and stuff like that.

23 And dumping -- when the dump truck come they have to notify  
24 us, so we can hold traffic, and we can go according to the light,  
25 because it was on an intersection of Parker and Spruce. So they

1 have to comply to our standards and how we do things out there.

2 As far as the digging and stuff, that's all on them and what  
3 they do and how they do it and stuff. But it's still, from the  
4 experience I know, that they have to stay within the closure to  
5 where we're working and stuff. They can't just start cutting over  
6 here and then moving towards the areas that we don't have no  
7 closure and no part of on the TCP, which would be the traffic  
8 control plans.

9 Q. So in this particular case, when you were doing traffic  
10 control, who was your main contact with the team, the crews that  
11 were doing that work?

12 A. Colin (ph.).

13 Q. Colin was?

14 A. Yeah. And he was the one running the excavator, on the mini.

15 Q. And had you worked with Colin in the past?

16 A. No. This is the first time I worked with him.

17 Q. Okay. Did you say -- would you say that he was a, you know,  
18 a follower of the rules, or was he a renegade?

19 A. I would say --

20 Q. Was he conservative, liberal?

21 A. I would say he was average, as far as his experience and his  
22 work ethic. What -- compared to the guys I work with, and the  
23 contractors I work with were way, a bigger skel, you know what I  
24 mean, as far as the procedures and working with us, traffic  
25 control and stuff. I mean, numerous times I had to let him know

1 that if you're pulling across this intersection, you have to let  
2 us know. You can't just pull out there and have your guys move  
3 the cones. You know what I mean? We're maintaining our closure,  
4 because if you move my cone, and you leave that open, then you're  
5 leaving a gap in my closure, and I have a problem with that.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. So, I have to maintain my own closure, and you have to notify  
8 me when you're going to pull out, so I can move the cone and stop  
9 traffic and work, coordinate with my other partner, which does  
10 traffic control, and then we can get you safely across, to dump  
11 your load or pick up equipment and then come back to the  
12 intersection where you're working.

13 Q. Okay. So, from what you've described, it sounds like that  
14 when they start their work, you're there the whole time?

15 A. Absolutely. I was standing right there, on location, in the  
16 intersection on Parker and Geary.

17 Q. So did you arrive on that scene at the same time that the --  
18 I mean, you were there when they started cutting? You were there  
19 when they started --

20 A. I was first one there before they even got there, because I  
21 started setting my prewarning signs way up on Geary. And then, so  
22 we have to set prewarning signs, to let the traffic know that  
23 there's, we're taking a lane, you know what I'm saying, so we'll  
24 set our road work, you know, right lane closed ahead, and so on  
25 and so forth with the arrow board. And then at 9 o'clock, when

1 it's time to take that lane, I put my arrow board in position,  
2 raise it up, turn the lights on, and then run my taper and my  
3 (indiscernible). And then that's when they, and only then, they  
4 can come out into that lane and start working, which they comply  
5 to all procedures as far as what I told them and how we're going  
6 to do this.

7 Q. So, are you relieved, or is there someone -- do you have  
8 someone else that helps you? Or are you the only person that does  
9 this for the --

10 A. I have another -- I had another guy with me out there.

11 Q. Oh, so there's two of you out there?

12 A. There's two of us. Yeah.

13 Q. And what was his name?

14 A. His name was Jonathan, J-o-n-a-t-h-a-n, and that's Davis,  
15 last name, D-a-v-i-s.

16 Q. He does the same thing you do but he's just --

17 A. He's a lead, yeah.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. With City Rise and Safety.

20 Q. And he's City Wise as well? City Rise as well?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. So, I mean, we discuss what we're going to do before we even  
24 do it, as far as, I mean what signs he's going to set up in what  
25 location, and which streets he's going to set up his street

1 warning signs and what side I'm going to -- we split the job in  
2 half, me and him, and we're in totally in compliance and agreement  
3 of what we're going to do. So at 9 o'clock sharp, they're safe to  
4 pull out to a lane and start.

5 Q. Okay. So what is your authority as, under that kind of  
6 position out there doing traffic control and all that? I know you  
7 can tell them to stay within the confines of the cones and all  
8 that, right?

9 A. Absolutely.

10 Q. And if he wants to move outside the cones, he has to come and  
11 see you, and you have to coordinate that?

12 A. Yeah. We can -- in the traffic control plans, it was just to  
13 take one lane, you know, a right lane closed ahead, and that was  
14 on Geary on westbound. And that was the farthest we would go. So  
15 he can't move his equipment out. So according to that, he has to  
16 just follow procedures what I'm telling him, you know.

17 And we had -- I had a lane closed on the opposite side of  
18 Parker, between Parker and Spruce, and then since the lane closure  
19 continued on Geary, past Parker, I would -- on the intersection I  
20 had to put another lane closed. And I had to make sure to tell  
21 him, because a couple of times he wanted to move my lane closure,  
22 and I said, you can't do that.

23 And he said, well it's in the way, and I said, well you're  
24 going to have to work around it, because this needs to be here.  
25 We need to let people know we have a lane closure and it's going

1 to continue on the other side of the intersection on Parker and  
2 Gary. And it's to our protocol. I can't just go by what they do,  
3 you know what I mean?

4 Q. Right.

5 A. He specialize in his (indiscernible), while I do that in my  
6 traffic control.

7 Q. Okay. And as far as your authority, do you have stop-work  
8 authority? Can you -- can -- according to your rules and your  
9 instructions and stuff, can you tell someone who's doing something  
10 and -- just to stop what they're doing?

11 A. Yeah. I can -- certain -- if they're endangering the people  
12 around us and the traffic and the flow of the traffic, and I see  
13 the guys, I'm out here to protect which is, be the contractor,  
14 right? Yeah. I can call in and have them -- call in my safety  
15 guy and tell them that this is dangerous, this is unsafe, and we  
16 need to make some calls here, to get this taken care of. And I  
17 have did that a few times on a few different jobs.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Because it's my responsibility to make sure the  
20 pedestrians -- because we're obstructing traffic, and we're  
21 obstructing pedestrians walking through. And it's my job to make  
22 sure it's safe, and they can get around, and fast and safe as  
23 possible through the construction zone.

24 Q. Okay. But as far as if you saw someone digging with a  
25 bucket, you know, excavator, and they were -- and there was no

1 shoveling going on, could you stop that?

2 A. I can warn them, but I don't think I can actually have, stop  
3 them, because I'm not part of that, the digging and stuff.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Like they can't tell me to do my traffic control if they're  
6 not part of that. I can't tell them how to do their job. But  
7 through the experience that I know, yeah. It's not a procedure  
8 where -- if they have a gas main exposed, you have to dig it by  
9 hand. They -- everybody should know that. But that's the level  
10 of experience --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- of each individual.

13 Q. Let's -- now that we have that out of the way, let's talk  
14 about your -- I mean, you know, I think we all know, a little bit  
15 after 1:00, the accident happened on February 6th. Tell us about  
16 who you saw, what you saw, and just, you know, from the moment you  
17 got on the scene that day, you know, who you had discussions with,  
18 what -- you know, what you saw.

19 A. Okay. When we got to the scene, we set up the closure, like  
20 always, perfect. At 9 o'clock we took the lane, and they pulled  
21 out. And they -- the day before they had did the saw cutting, so  
22 they started pulling out the cement, you know, which is street, to  
23 prepare their optic fiber and stuff. So everything went smooth to  
24 then.

25       Toward about noontime, the public works, is Mark Anthony, I



1 would believe his last name is.

2 Q. Yeah. Mark Anthony.

3 A. Yeah. He came out on the job site and, you know, he talked  
4 with the contractor, which is Colins and stuff, as far as, you  
5 know what I mean, the procedure of what they're doing and stuff.  
6 I had no idea -- I guess he had no idea they were supposed to be  
7 digging on Parker, to my understanding, so they had words and  
8 stuff. He mentioned a fine. I don't know what's going on between  
9 that.

10 But he came out to me and he said, you guys are doing a  
11 wonderful job keeping -- because there was a, the Hong Kong Lounge  
12 had a lot of people, so we were escorting people around that  
13 intersection. Not only we had two sidewalks closed, but it was  
14 through a major intersection is Geary, you know, Geary Boulevard.  
15 So it kept -- one -- it kept us busy as far as the traffic and  
16 pedestrians, you know.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. And they continued to work through their lunches and stuff.  
19 So there was no break. You know, we're not going to take lunch  
20 because they're not taking lunch, and there is no way possible  
21 we'll be able to take a lunch or a break because we got too much  
22 movement here, and I want to make sure we keep the guys safe,  
23 which is the contractors, the pedestrians and the community, and  
24 the traffic as well.

25 Q. Okay. So, what was the -- when did you first make note of

1 seeing the excavator? What did -- what --

2 A. Well the excavator was on Geary past Parker, at the very tip,  
3 at the end of my closure. And that's when they start pulling up  
4 and, you know, the ground, and start digging up by hand, to run  
5 their optic fiber. And everything was going smoothly. Of course,  
6 when they got into a intersection, that's when things started  
7 getting a little hectic, because they --

8 Q. At that point, where did you see the excavator at that point,  
9 when you --

10 A. Well the excavator was about right in front of the Hong Kong  
11 Lounge. And then, because the dump truck left, to dump his load  
12 and then come back, and then that's where they're going start  
13 picking up the stuff they start pulling up out the ground. And  
14 when he came in, he pull in to the, on Parker side, and backed up.  
15 So they were right on the tip of the intersection, the excavator,  
16 which would be the big one, and they start loading up all the rock  
17 and other materials they were pulling up on the ground.

18 Once that was done, I got the dump truck out of there, on  
19 Parker. And then he took the mini, and he was right on the tip of  
20 that intersection, digging that corner.

21 Q. And which way were his tracks position? North-south, east-  
22 west?

23 A. His tracks, the back side of that excavator was facing the  
24 westbound on Geary. And I was on the real tip of that  
25 intersection, right behind him, doing traffic control.

1 Q. Okay. So that's just a sketch that we had earlier. North is  
2 up and, you know, Geary's running east and west. That is an inset  
3 of that, of where the accident occurred up there at that, that's  
4 an enlargement. And believe it or not, that -- we're showing 4-  
5 inch pipe and 2-inch pipe, and that little thing looks like a  
6 barrel at the bottom, that's actually the, our depiction of the  
7 mini.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. So are the tracks going east-west, do you recall, or are they  
10 going north-west on north side?

11 A. Do you -- I can step over there and show you.

12 Q. Yeah. Yeah, you can --

13 A. Okay.

14 Q. In fact, you can erase that --

15 A. Okay. The -- I think it was the 4-inch line. You still have  
16 two lanes going this way.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. And then he started from digging on Geary, coming this way.  
19 Right. And then he was laying the material. When he got to the  
20 corner this way, that's where he was -- I had my lane closed right  
21 here on the tip. And this is where I was positioned, standing.  
22 Then I had my other flagger right here.

23 And then this, of course this side was closed, and the side  
24 was closed this way because this, we had a big old trench right  
25 here. And then when he started digging this way, started inching

1 his way this way, right into the tip right here, that's when, you  
2 know, I took a look down into the trench, and I was like well, we  
3 got a main line here. We got a 4-inch main here. I hope he don't  
4 hit this main on us.

5 Q. So --

6 A. But they were still using the excavate.

7 Q. Yeah. So when you observed the trench itself, did you  
8 actually see yellow pipes?

9 A. I seen the -- I seen it exposed, yeah. Very, on the top part  
10 of it.

11 Q. Oh, just the very top surface of it?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Did you see the east-west portion, or the north-south, the 2-  
14 inch?

15 A. I didn't see the 2-inch, but I seen, I definitely seen the 4-  
16 inch. And then the actual, where they were digging and stuff, it  
17 wasn't -- it didn't seem according to how you guys usually dig.  
18 You have 2 feet on each side as far as the digging and stuff. So  
19 it was, it was pretty narrow, you know what I mean. And that  
20 worried me, to companies that I work for and things, that I seen,  
21 there was a higher level, and we had a lower level of --

22 (Simultaneous speaking.)

23 BY MR. EVANS:

24 Q. So when you say it was narrow, they didn't have enough  
25 material moved from -- it was like a small narrow trench, not like

1 a pit or a sloped --

2 A. Yeah. For as far as that, that 90 where it turned on  
3 Parker --

4 Q. Right.

5 A. It seemed a little narrow, as far as to be in there with that  
6 digger. It made me nervous. Just standing by the digger, the  
7 little mini, made me nervous, because I'm -- there's nowhere I can  
8 stand but in that corner right there, and do my traffic and watch  
9 what (indiscernible) and cars, because these guys were right here  
10 in my dead lane, but we had two lanes on westbound which was still  
11 live, so we had constantly Muni buses, trucks, delivery trucks,  
12 you name it, bicycles and everything else coming down, so I had to  
13 make sure that, you know, everything was safe for these guys.

14 Q. So, you don't recall -- I mean, you said you saw the, you saw  
15 the surface of the 4-inch, but not the 2-inch at all?

16 A. I didn't see -- I didn't get -- I didn't go into that and  
17 see, look into the hole, but when I did look and see, I seen  
18 bottom lines, everything was exposed, coming towards Hong Kong  
19 Lounge.

20 Q. But you say it was exposed, it was -- this is pre-accident?

21 A. This is before the explosion. Yeah.

22 Q. And what -- how much of the width of the excavation was the  
23 pipe exposed? I mean, a foot of it, 2 foot of it, 5 feet?

24 A. I'd say, I'm saying about the width of the mini. We had a  
25 couple of inches on the digger on that. So I don't know the width

1 of the scooper they were using, but yeah, it was a few feet.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Enough to get in there and dig in there, you know, and get  
4 the dirt out and stuff.

5 Q. So, when you say that you saw the pipe was -- if you're  
6 saying -- is it a matter of seeing the top edge of the pipe? Are  
7 you seeing half the pipe? Or --

8 A. The top, the part, top part. And they had, there was other  
9 pipes there that were exposed, which I had no idea what they were.  
10 It could have been the 2. On the -- Geary, on this part, there  
11 was pipes going across here that were exposed.

12 Q. Okay. So you -- 2 to 3 feet of exposed yellow, you saw  
13 yellow, 4-inch yellow, you said, in the (indiscernible).

14 A. I seen the 4-inch yellow in the corner. These pipes right  
15 here were all gray.

16 Q. Okay. But I just want to make sure, inside the trench you  
17 saw 4-inch inch, about 3 feet of the 4-inch pipe?

18 A. The top part of it.

19 Q. Just the top part?

20 A. Yeah. So I knew that that was our main here.

21 Q. Okay. And when you observed that, was the bucket anywhere  
22 near that?

23 A. He was -- the bucket, when he came up to the corner, he had  
24 the back end of that mini at the tip of that intersection on  
25 Parker and Geary. I had -- and I'm standing in the corner. He

1 had just the back side of that. And I'm standing right behind  
2 that, so I couldn't see as far as what he was digging and how he  
3 was digging it. But they were using the digger.

4 Q. Okay. And did he move the machine from that position and  
5 start digging anyplace else?

6 A. They were, continued digging with that machine, into that  
7 trench.

8 Q. Was this throughout the accident?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 MR. EVANS: Okay. That's all the questions I have for right  
11 now.

12 MR. KLEMM: Jason Klemm, PG&E.

13 BY MR. KLEMM:

14 Q. Did you see paint markings on the pavement, you know, before  
15 they started saw cutting, cutting it away?

16 A. There was mark -- yeah. That, on Tuesday, there was markers,  
17 you know what I mean, but as far as inside, I don't know if there,  
18 if it was marked, if it was unmarked. I'm not sure.

19 Q. Going back to your point, in front of Geary, they exposed a  
20 line that was gray; is that correct?

21 A. Yeah. A few, a bunch of them.

22 Q. And then in the corner there, it was yellow plastic that you  
23 saw the top of?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Did you see a T, where you saw the yellow lines, where two

1 lines intersected?

2 A. I didn't see that. And the thing is, you know, we're to be  
3 on point, alert and aware, but my focus was on traffic and  
4 pedestrians, not actually in hands-on, as far as the digging. But  
5 of course I'm going to still be concerned because, you know, we're  
6 all there to, you know, to go home, and make it home. So I try to  
7 keep aware of how things are doing and stuff.

8 Q. So you are saying that you were on the corner of Parker and  
9 Geary, and Jonathan was on the other side of the intersection; is  
10 that correct?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. So you're right next to where the excavation was occurring?

13 A. Yeah. Approximately about 4 to 5 feet, right on top of the  
14 main.

15 Q. So through the course of the day and the excavation, what  
16 tool was used the most, by the excavators?

17 A. The bucket, pulling the dirt out of there.

18 Q. If you had to estimate how much their digging was hand  
19 digging versus the excavator, what would you say?

20 A. Well, after they got the top surface off, with the rocks and  
21 stuff, then of course they would have to use the little cat, you  
22 know, to pick it up and put it in the dump truck. And then they  
23 would dig out scoops of the soft dirt on top, and then those guys  
24 would come in there and do the, around the exposed pipes and  
25 stuff, hand digging.



1           So they did -- and that seemed fairly professional, and it  
2 went well. But when they got to that corner, that's where, you  
3 know, I mean it was hard to get anybody in there, as far as, you  
4 know, they were still using the mini.

5 Q.    So you're saying the trench was very narrow, so they used a  
6 mini instead of people going in the hole. Is that what you're  
7 saying?

8 A.    Well, what I'm saying is, when they got to that corner, the  
9 trench was going towards Parker now. So now we got a 90 degree  
10 turn here. And then they would start pulling up the dirt from  
11 there, and the concrete and stuff. And then that's where it got a  
12 little hectic.

13 Q.    Got it. And what were you doing when you heard that release  
14 of gas?

15 A.    Okay. I was standing and watching traffic, and I heard a big  
16 poof, you know, and it was nothing I ever heard before. It was a  
17 loud (mouth noise), and just blowing. And I turned, and then I  
18 fell down. I got up, and of course, I seen a huge size of gas,  
19 gray, you know, shooting up to the sky, above at least 300 to 400  
20 feet. And, you know, Hong Kong Lounge is a two-story building, so  
21 it shot up.

22           And he's, Colin's sitting on the mini, you know, as he -- you  
23 know, as this thing blows the gas up. And my guy's standing  
24 there, and it comes up about at least 400 feet. And then, for the  
25 450 feet, which is a -- I know 200 feet. I know 400 feet, because

1 that's where I, you know, I do my traffic control, how I measure  
2 my prewarning signs, that distance.

3         So when it came up to a long distance way up high above us,  
4 it formed a mushroom, poof. And then, of course, when it -- you  
5 know, I told everybody just to run. I said, this thing's going to  
6 blow, because it kept (mouth noise). It was just shooting up, and  
7 it was just loud. And he had to -- he jumped off the excavator,  
8 which I didn't see him jumping off, you know, but when the  
9 mushroom come down, you know, it engulfed the mini, which caused  
10 the explosion of the gas, because you could smell it. When it  
11 came up, you could smell it. It was in our face. It was burnt  
12 out. It was really strong, you know.

13         I'm surprised it had just, didn't knock him out, from just  
14 that gas going into your system, you know what I mean, and  
15 breathing it. But it didn't. And then everything from that  
16 point, escaping worked out perfectly, as far as there was no  
17 mistakes. There's no one tripped. There's no one, you know,  
18 hesitated. I just said run, and then right about 6 to 8 seconds  
19 later, it blew, in a big ball of fire into that intersection.  
20 Went up.

21         There was a couple of cars coming down. They immediately  
22 stopped, because I'm running on westbound up towards Geary. And  
23 when that ball of fire disappeared, then that's when the flame  
24 from that 4-inch main blew up. And it just made a loud (mouth  
25 noise) and lifting all over the place, as far as the restaurant.

1 It leapt all over the building across the street, the  
2 intersection. It was enormous. That was before the Fire got  
3 there, or anybody got there onsite.

4 The first person that got there I think was the San Francisco  
5 Police, into the intersection. Two of them. One of them on  
6 eastbound on Geary, coming up. And then black male was down  
7 there, and the other one on Spruce, which I was making, running my  
8 distance to, 500 feet to shut the road down for emergency and  
9 evacuation.

10 And even at the intersection of Spruce and Geary, it just  
11 felt too close to be. So I had San Francisco Police drive up  
12 another intersection, which will be -- excuse me, which will be  
13 Burke, and that was approximately about a thousand feet.

14 Q. So you saw the plume of gas go up, you said kind of like  
15 smoke. Did you see or feel any dirt come up with that plume?

16 A. Oh yeah. There was dirt. It was everything, gravel, you  
17 know, all the dirt from the excavating, all the stuff around that,  
18 because you had piles of that stuff, you know what I mean, to be  
19 transported to a dump truck. Yeah, that just blew, you know, and  
20 stuck everywhere. It stuck all over my face and stuff. And then  
21 I just continued to run across the intersection and made it up to  
22 Spruce.

23 And then San Francisco Police pulled up, and I had him go up  
24 to Burke, which would be the next block up, which would be a  
25 thousand feet, to shut the traffic down from there. And then I

1 felt unsafe to be on the westbound at Geary, so I crossed the  
2 street, on the other side, on the eastbound, because I thought it  
3 was going to trench up and come up towards the intersection on  
4 Spruce.

5 Q. When you heard the release of gas, you said earlier that  
6 Colin was on the excavator; is that correct?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Was that excavator on?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. What was it doing at that time?

11 A. It was digging. When -- he was digging into the hole.

12 Q. Were you able to see? I mean, when you heard the noise, did  
13 you immediately kind of look to see where it was coming from?

14 A. Oh, absolutely.

15 Q. What did you see?

16 A. I seen the dirt, and gas and fragments of the cement, the  
17 asphalt, shoot up and just explode right in front of -- and this,  
18 I mean, the size of this table, this gas, this great gas just  
19 shooting up, you know. And you could feel it in the ground and  
20 just (mouth noise). It was like a earthquake but, you know, just  
21 (mouth noise), and just shooting up. And when it went up to  
22 approximately 400, 450 feet, it just formed out everywhere.

23 And you could see, you know, the cloud of this gas, and  
24 you -- of course, you -- on the edge of the gas, you can't see  
25 through it, because it become blurry. So then you could start

1 smelling it, and then that's when I was like, okay, we need to run  
2 out of here, and get out of here. And within seconds from that,  
3 we made our escape.

4 Q. So where was the bucket at that point of when you heard the  
5 gas release?

6 A. The bucket, from that point, was on the tip of that, of  
7 Parker and Geary. And when he punctured that 4-inch main, he  
8 pulled that bucket and then laid it down right there next to that  
9 hole.

10 Q. So did you say that he hit the pipe with the bucket from the  
11 excavator?

12 A. Absolutely. He punctured the pipe up, because if it -- if he  
13 would have punctured it from underneath the thing, I don't think  
14 we would, none of us would be here, because the gas would have  
15 spurted sideways, probably around that whole area. By puncturing  
16 it from the top of it, it blew the gas upwards.

17 And then it wasn't just a little puncture, it was big  
18 puncture, from where I take it, as much as gas is coming out of  
19 there. I think that kind of saved us, until we're, to escape the  
20 explosion itself.

21 Q. And do you know, after the gas release happened, what may  
22 have ignited the gas?

23 A. I'm not a expert in that, but you put two and two together,  
24 when the gas came down, you know, common sense told me that we  
25 need to run out of here, because we got an excavator that's been

1 digging for hours, and it's hot. And we got an exhaust pipe. We  
2 got an engine in there, and everything else heated up. And when  
3 that thing comes down, and that gas, within seconds, that thing's  
4 going to blow.

5 And sure enough, that's exactly what happened. When it came  
6 down over the excavate, we had seconds to -- I had do not enters  
7 on each side of the intersection with my lane closed, and my  
8 flagging paddle right there, and yes, it was time to leave, real  
9 quick here.

10 Q. So after the excavator hit the gas main and you heard the  
11 noise, did they move the bucket of the excavator, or they  
12 immediately jump off?

13 A. He moved the bucket, and he immediately jumped off. I didn't  
14 think he made it out of there. I know me and my partner for City  
15 Rise, because he was on the other side of the intersection, I knew  
16 we were -- you know what I mean, I didn't know if we were going to  
17 make it, as far as when it did blow. You know what I mean? But,  
18 you know, I said let's run out -- let's -- it's time to run. We  
19 got to get out of here. This thing's going to blow.

20 And of course, when we're running, then it blew, flamed, then  
21 we ran, the actual ball of fire, which was behind us a few feet,  
22 and then that's when I knew that we might survive this.

23 As far as Colin, who punctured a line, I never seen him  
24 jumped off the excavator.

25 Q. But you did see him move the excavator from where it was

1 excavating?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 MR. KLEMM: Thank you. I don't have any other questions.

4 MR. SHORI: Sunil Shori with the California Public Utilities  
5 Commission.

6 BY MR. SHORI:

7 Q. Robert, this entire time, you said Colin was on the  
8 excavator. Was there anybody in the hole, in the pit itself, in  
9 the excavation itself?

10 A. When he was pulling the bucket out, they were digging and  
11 shoveling stuff out. But when he got to that intersection of  
12 Parker and Geary, I didn't -- I no longer seen nobody in there,  
13 because he had that butt end of that mini on that intersection,  
14 and I had to let him know that he can't -- it's just way out in  
15 that intersection, because we have traffic coming off of Parker,  
16 making that right turn to Geary, and then we have two lanes coming  
17 off of Geary, coming -- going westbound, and this is the farthest  
18 you can go, this co-line. I can't extend my co-line past that  
19 white zone.

20 So I was a little bit blind spot, but when he turned the  
21 excavator towards Parker, and the bucket was towards Parker,  
22 that's when I seen the, what lines were exposed and what --

23 Q. Okay. And again, I want to be clear on this, and I want to  
24 ask it one more time. So in essence, right -- how far before the  
25 gas being released were you actually looking towards the

1 excavation, actually looking towards Colin on the excavator?

2 A. I'd say about 40, 50 seconds.

3 Q. Okay. So --

4 A. Not even a minute.

5 Q. Okay. So the minute before, you were looking at it, and then  
6 you turned your attention to something else?

7 A. I turned my attention to the traffic.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Because I have -- counselor, you -- from -- if it wasn't from  
10 the traffic, I had the pedestrians coming across on Geary, and  
11 they were coming across on eastbound, so I'd have to escort them  
12 across, because everybody was going to the Hong Kong Lounge, the  
13 restaurant. So when I turned, and everything was clear, there was  
14 no traffic -- thank God for that, and no pedestrians, besides the  
15 people in the restaurant, that's when I heard him puncturing the  
16 line.

17 Q. Okay. So as soon as you heard the puncture, the noise, did  
18 you look towards the excavation?

19 A. Well it knocked me over. I fell down.

20 Q. Okay. So, could you see the excavation at that point? Could  
21 you see the location at that point?

22 A. Absolutely.

23 Q. Whether you're on the ground or whether you're standing,  
24 would -- but your eyes are towards that?

25 A. Right on that -- that's -- my eyes went straight to where he



1 punctured.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And that's when I seen that gas line, right on the corner of  
4 Parker and Geary.

5 Q. Okay. So again, at that point, did you see -- you didn't see  
6 anybody in the excavation, you didn't see anybody jumping out, or  
7 coming out of the excavation?

8 A. There was no -- I couldn't even see nobody stand on the  
9 sidewalk, because the gas was so dark and so loud, and the dirt  
10 and the debris was shooting out of there. It made it impossible  
11 if I seen -- if there's somebody in that hole. You know, I don't  
12 know if somebody was actually in the hole, if they jumped out of  
13 the hole during that -- when he actually hit that main.

14 Q. Did you talk to anybody else from Colin's group, Colin's  
15 company, other than Colin that day?

16 A. After the explosion or before the explosion?

17 Q. Before the explosion.

18 A. Yeah. I talked to Mark Anthony, which is the public works.

19 Q. Well, but he's not -- he doesn't work for Colin, right?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Okay. So for -- working for Colin, was there anybody -- did  
22 you see any other folks that worked for Colin, or that you knew to  
23 work for Colin there?

24 A. Yeah. I talked to the contractors and stuff, from MasTec,  
25 yeah.

1 Q. Okay. So did you know anybody by the name of Freddie that  
2 works for Colin?

3 A. Yeah. I met Freddie, and I met Felix, for MasTec.

4 Q. Where was Freddie at that time? So the 45, 50 minute --  
5 seconds before, when you looked at the excavation, and then again  
6 when you looked at it after you heard the noise.

7 A. I'm not sure where none of those guys were. I knew where  
8 Colin was because he was on the excavator, the mini. And then  
9 we're -- it was -- you know, we worked through lunch. We worked  
10 through breaks. These guys are constantly working, you know. And  
11 we had a deadline to pick up by 3, so I made sure that, you know,  
12 they would do -- have to stop working by 2, according -- so we can  
13 pick up on time and have everything picked up, every cone off that  
14 road at 3 o'clock.

15 So I didn't notice where these guys were. They were moving  
16 around, all around at the holes and stuff, cleaning up. They had  
17 equipment. Some guys were grabbing the, you know, the pipe and  
18 stuff, to lay it into the hole.

19 Q. Okay. So, you don't know where they were, but you didn't see  
20 anybody at the enclosure, inside the enclosure at that time?

21 A. They were in there digging, and moving around, and moving  
22 equipment, and running that condo, to the corner of Geary. To --  
23 he ran -- to he start finishing digging that out, and that's where  
24 they're going to just wait and run the optic, you know, fiber.  
25 But as far as -- they were moving all around, but they were all

1 right there. There was five guys that were all right there on  
2 scene.

3 Q. Okay. On scene, but who -- was there anybody in the hole,  
4 anybody in the excavation itself?

5 A. There were -- I think there was a kid in there. Yeah.

6 Q. And it wasn't Freddie?

7 A. I'm not sure. I'd have to see him. There was a bunch of  
8 them. I'm not totally sure. They may be at that point, you know,  
9 because all I know is, Colin made it because I have a video when I  
10 ran out, and I turned around and I see him running on the back, so  
11 I was like okay, he must have jumped off and got -- he made it,  
12 and followed but, you know, I think he went down the east way,  
13 eastbound way from the fire, because he couldn't have went the  
14 other way because the fire was right behind us, and where he was  
15 running away.

16 Q. Okay. So, you mentioned the video. So do you have video,  
17 then, of this -- of any time while you were on the scene on that  
18 day?

19 A. Yes, sir. I do.

20 Q. Okay. What period of time does that video cover?

21 A. It covers right when it -- right after the ball of flame went  
22 up, and then ignited with the actual flame, and it was making a  
23 (mouth noise), right. That's when I start filming it, because I  
24 wanted to see the, if it was going to blow and start coming,  
25 telling up towards Spruce, you know what I mean. I crossed over

1 on the east side of Geary, so I figured that would be the safe  
2 zone, which I'm approximately about 500 feet away.

3 And then I had the San Francisco Police a thousand feet away  
4 on the intersection, stopping traffic on both sides of Geary. So  
5 I figured, let me take a film of this.

6 Q. Okay. So you started videoing this event after the fire  
7 started?

8 A. After the fire started, correct.

9 Q. Okay. Do you have any video of any of this area, especially  
10 the excavation site prior to the gas being released?

11 A. No, because I don't -- we're not to pay attention to what  
12 they're doing as far as their job and stuff. Our job  
13 qualifications is to watch traffic, and to keep these guys safe,  
14 and the pedestrians and the community. So my -- I will take  
15 pictures of my closure and stuff like that.

16 Q. Okay. So, you do have pictures then, like after you've done  
17 your taper, after you've set up your traffic controls? Do you  
18 take photographs of that?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. Okay. What was your interaction on that day with Mark  
21 Anthony, from the City?

22 A. The City wasn't too happy with the individual, as far as the  
23 safety concerns and stuff. So he was -- they had words and stuff.  
24 And he was there for approximately probably about 45 minutes, and  
25 then right after he left, which was maybe 20 minutes later, that's

1 when the explosion occurred.

2 Q. But you started -- you mentioned something that you heard,  
3 related to the discussion they had. Do you have anything specific  
4 that you can provide, in terms of what was -- what was it that you  
5 believe the city inspector wasn't happy with?

6 A. You have to ask Mark for that. I'm not sure what the --

7 Q. But did you hear anything yourself, in relation to that  
8 discussion?

9 A. No. He just wasn't happy with the excavation, because it was  
10 supposed to go towards Parker, you know what I mean? And it was  
11 supposed to just be on Geary. So when he starts inching his way,  
12 and making a L on Gary and Parker, he had a problem with that, and  
13 he was mentioning that to him. And they just continued to do what  
14 they do and start digging.

15 Q. Earlier, also you -- in response to one of the questions, you  
16 said you saw everything exposed. Do you have any background in  
17 construction yourself other than what you do now? Do you have any  
18 experience in construction or --

19 A. No, no. I always do traffic control, but I worked around big  
20 companies who did, were contracted to PG&E. So I know the lines,  
21 you know, the size of the lines, if it's electric, if it's opti-  
22 fiber, if it's sewer, if it's water, if it's gas.

23 Q. Okay. You talked a couple of times about the 4-inch gas  
24 pipe. So when you looked down and when you saw just the top of  
25 the pipe, how did you know that was a 4-inch pipe?

1 A. Well, you know, a 6-inch pipe would have an equator of a  
2 bigger circle on the top of the dirt. And then the 4-inch would  
3 be less than that, so if it was a 6 I would know that, you know what I  
4 mean, we got a nice curve where it rounds off at the top. And I didn't  
5 see that.

6 Q. Okay. So you estimated, in your opinion, that it was 4-inch  
7 because of --

8 A. It was 4-inch.

9 Q. -- what you were able to see --

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. -- top-wise?

12 A. I didn't see no markers and stuff like that if it was a 4 or  
13 a 6, and so --

14 Q. So, and again, along the top of whatever you could see,  
15 how -- did you see that along the entire trench? Did you just see  
16 it in a, like patches or something, or how much of that top of  
17 that line were you actually able to see within the trench?

18 A. I seen it, I'd say about probably less than a foot. But it  
19 was right on the corner of Parker and Geary.

20 Q. Okay. And that's the only thing you saw, was that 1 foot --

21 A. As far as the gas line, yeah.

22 Q. -- of that line, nothing else yellow, nothing else that you  
23 could see in --

24 A. All the other lines were gray. And they were running towards  
25 the Hong Kong Lounge, underneath it.

1 Q. Okay. So other than that 1 foot of yellow, you didn't see  
2 any other yellow within that enclosure?

3 A. I didn't see nothing else, but they were still doing the  
4 digging, as far as removing the dirt.

5 Q. Were they -- so, and also, they were still shoveling at this  
6 point? So you said there still guys in there with shovels?

7 A. They were digging and then shoveling, because that's how they  
8 get the -- actually trench out where they can do the prep work, to  
9 put the optic fiber pipe in there and start doing the wiring  
10 stuff.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. They had all that set to the side, ready to go in.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Piece by piece.

15 Q. All right.

16 MR. SHORI: That's all the questions I have. Thank you.

17 MR. LANG: Thanks. Mike Lang, with PG&E.

18 BY MR. LANG:

19 Q. Robert, what time did you release the closed lane to Colin  
20 from Kilford Engineering?

21 A. What do you mean, release it?

22 Q. You stated that you closed a lane for them to work, right?

23 A. Yeah, that -- and that --

24 Q. So that you released that, that lane for them to be able to  
25 work in?

1 A. That was at 9 a.m. sharp.

2 Q. Okay. And then, could you remind me, Robert, right where you  
3 were standing again --

4 A. Okay, sir.

5 Q. -- when you first heard the release of gas?

6 A. Okay. I was standing right -- this is westbound on Geary. I  
7 was standing right here, approximately. And that, the digger was  
8 facing right here. And then of course, you got the bucket. And  
9 this is where I was standing. I had my sign here, and then I had  
10 a lane closed right here.

11 Q. And that would have given you a full view of the excavation  
12 in the trench?

13 A. It gave me a full view. And when he started turning the  
14 excavate this way, then I had -- I'm standing on the corner. I'm  
15 on the back end of it. You know. And if you would -- he was  
16 positioned to excavate the dirt out of there. You know what I  
17 mean? And me standing right there, I looked down and seen what  
18 was exposed, and then I seen the lines coming this way as well,  
19 the gray lines.

20 Q. All right. And you observed the bucket hit the yellow pipe?

21 A. I didn't observe that. I --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. When I turned around, I heard it.

24 Q. Okay. So, after you heard it, and you turned around, did you  
25 see the bucket out of the excavation, or was it still right there?



1 A. Yeah. I seen the bucket move, and then lay it down on the  
2 asphalt, next to the trench hole. And then he seen the gas and  
3 the fumes and the dirt shoot up.

4 Q. Okay. Did you hear any slow leak, or hissing noises, or did  
5 it just erupt, like suddenly?

6 A. It was erupt. It was a loud (mouth noise).

7 Q. Nothing small leading up to that?

8 A. No. It was an explosion.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Explosion. It didn't -- not explosion, I mean, as fire, but  
11 explosion as puncturing the top of the line.

12 Q. All right. Prior to that, did you have to remind Colin or  
13 anyone from Kilford Engineering to adhere to any safety  
14 instructions that you had previously given them?

15 A. As far as him -- I let him know that he can't move my lane  
16 closed. That has to stay in the corner of the intersection,  
17 because my lane closure went across the intersection of Parker and  
18 Geary. So I said, that has to stay here. You can't move it so  
19 you can dig there. It needs to stay here, because it's my  
20 prewarning signs for the traffic. They need to know the lane's  
21 still closed on the corner of Parker and Geary. And then, he  
22 needs to stay in the closure of my right lane closed ahead.

23 Q. And did he adhere to all your instructions, or did he, at any  
24 time --

25 A. Yeah. He --

1 Q. -- kind of break any of those rules, then you had to remind  
2 him?

3 A. He followed procedure, what I was telling him.

4 Q. Okay. Okay. After the event, did you talk, or have a  
5 conversation with any of the excavators?

6 A. I had a conversation with Colin, the one who punctured the  
7 line. He asked if I was all right, and I said, I'm all right, I'm  
8 a little shaken (sic) up. You know, and I was like, you know,  
9 you hit the main. You know, you could have killed us. You know  
10 what I mean? I was a little shook up, so I was like, you know --  
11 I just kept on telling him, I said, you hit the fucking main, you  
12 know.

13 Q. Right.

14 A. And I said -- and I -- you know, from that point he said, are  
15 you all right? And, you know, are you going to be all right? And  
16 then I was like, I'm all right. It's just, you know, it was just  
17 a little -- we didn't know who survived. I said, where's all the  
18 other guys? And he said, I don't know, and I was like well, you  
19 know, where's the other guys at? And, you know, so -- you know,  
20 at the time, my partner was a little shook up too, because he  
21 thought we lost a lot of people in the Hong Kong Lounge. So he  
22 was in tears.

23 Q. Did Colin acknowledge or describe what happened after you  
24 told him that he hit the main?

25 A. No. He was in shock. It just happened within seconds, from

1 when the gas blew up, the asphalt, and it shooting out of that 4-  
2 inch into the sky, to where I'm telling them, telling everybody to  
3 run. As far as the other guys, I didn't know where they were  
4 positioned at, because I was on the other side of the excavator,  
5 but I'm sure they heard me. And I'm sure they seen the gas, and  
6 everybody got, ran the other direction. I didn't see him jump off  
7 the excavate, but he must have jumped off and made his escape.

8 Q. And you didn't talk to any of the other employees?

9 A. I didn't talk to no -- he's the only one I talked to.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And I talked to one of the bosses for MasTec.

12 MR. LANG: Okay -- questions I have. Thank you.

13 MR. MULLIGAN: Hi. This is Dave Mulligan with PHMSA.

14 BY MR. MULLIGAN:

15 Q. Robert, I just, you know, just briefly, if you could get on  
16 that map again. Just kind of walk us through your last sight of  
17 where everything is. Now you mentioned there was a Jonathan  
18 Davis. Was he onsite also with you?

19 A. Yeah. He's onsite. We're both leads for City Rise.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. I'm a safety, traffic control safety, and --

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. -- he was onsite too, in the intersection right here. I'm  
24 standing right here in the intersection of Parker --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. -- and Geary, approximately about 4 to 5 feet away from that  
2 corner where they're excavating. And my partner was right here,  
3 is on the corner right here, in the intersection of Parker and  
4 Geary, which we were still -- and this lane was taken (sic) right  
5 here, on Geary westbound, so we were watching traffic on the  
6 westbound, and then we're watching traffic coming down the hill on  
7 Parker, because the people coming down on Parker would either make  
8 a left, or right.

9 So the people coming down and making a left on westbound on  
10 Parker, is the people we need to watch, because they're coming  
11 down off the hill on Parker. And I wanted to make sure they're  
12 coming down on a moderate speed. If not, I would stop them, me  
13 and him would stop them to a complete stop, and then direct them  
14 to the intersection, to the two lanes on Geary.

15 Q. Okay. So you -- just to get a frame of reference. So let's  
16 say -- take this as the explosion of this corner, right?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. The excavator is sitting here, and the tracks are -- you're  
19 saying that you were, not on the curve, but you were closer to  
20 here?

21 A. Well, I was --

22 Q. Because this lane's closed, right?

23 A. Yeah. I was on the street right behind the excavator right  
24 here. So, yeah. The sidewalk's here. So --

25 Q. Yeah. Sidewalk's over here, right?

1 A. Yeah. I'm on the street.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Because I'm doing traffic control, as far as -- we have no  
4 business being on the sidewalk doing, as far as doing traffic  
5 control. So I was on the corner, right on the tip, but I was on,  
6 inside my closure.

7 Q. Okay. So you, would you say you were on the east side of the  
8 excavator?

9 A. Yeah. You could say I was on -- yeah, on this side right, on  
10 the excavator.

11 Q. Okay. And so did the excavator, was he digging from, on  
12 Geary at first? And then he swung over and started digging on  
13 Parker?

14 A. That's correct.

15 Q. Okay. And then, who else -- your last -- you know, I guess,  
16 that you remember, where -- Colin was on the excavator, Jonathan  
17 was across the street, at the other -- at Geary and Parker. The  
18 other workers that you observed, the last time you looked over --

19 A. They were still on Geary, in the area -- they were prepping  
20 the area where they were just laying the optic fiber pipe. And  
21 some guys are getting the wire and stuff, and run -- getting that  
22 ready to set in position. Once he did the excavator, then they  
23 were going to run that last piece. They had all this connected.  
24 All this was connected.

25 This one piece right here, and this corner wasn't connected.

1 They were still digging. And that area, that's what the area Mark  
2 Anthony (indiscernible) having words about, because they were  
3 digging in that very tip of that.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. As far as any markers, I didn't see none of that.

6 Q. But you don't remember seeing anyone in that ditch, like  
7 before?

8 A. Yeah. I mean, I did. They were in the ditch, doing hand-  
9 digging, but as far as when they were -- right before they did the

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. -- the explosion, no. There was no one hand-digging. He was  
12 in there with the mini.

13 Q. Okay. But the people that you saw hand-digging, were they up  
14 here?

15 A. Yeah. They were right here.

16 Q. Oh, they were over here? Okay.

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. All right. And then -- that's it. In terms of, you said  
19 you, the last time you looked, and then you were kind of blocked,  
20 your view was blocked, because you were on the back side of that  
21 excavator?

22 A. That was right, right before the explosion. Yeah.

23 Q. Okay. But before that, you remember glancing over and seeing  
24 something colored yellow?

25 A. Absolutely.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Before he started making his way on Parker, there was a dump  
3 truck here, on Parker. When that dump truck left, that's where --  
4 it left that area open where I could see. They were trenching  
5 this way on Parker. And they had trenched on Geary. And then  
6 when he started running this way on Parker, right on the corner of  
7 the Hong Kong, right, that's when my view was blocked. But I'm  
8 standing right on the back side of the excavator. And then he  
9 turned the excavator approximately about -- he turned the  
10 excavator about 35 degrees. So on the trench right here, his  
11 excavator about right here, and the digger about right here.

12 And that's when I was blocked from seeing anything like that.  
13 Like I can -- that when -- what I heard, as far as when he  
14 punctured the gas line.

15 Q. And after the incident, fire department was there, and you  
16 were on scene for that whole time, and even after they shut off  
17 the gas and put the fire out?

18 A. Absolutely.

19 Q. You were there the whole time?

20 A. I was there, yeah, through the whole time. I stood in  
21 that -- because we had police doing the shut -- we had to shut  
22 down a thousand feet around that whole area, in the explosion  
23 zone. And fire -- so I had to let the -- I ran cones on the 500  
24 feet so, in the explosion area, so I was letting the fire trucks,  
25 and issuing everybody else in through the closure, and I was

1 maintaining it closed down.

2 Q. Did you -- how -- could you see the trench after the fire was  
3 out? How close did you get to that trench, and look down in  
4 there, to see, after?

5 A. I walked right up and, 2 feet away. I took pictures and  
6 filmed it.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. But it was all filled up with water. I mean, I had water up  
9 to -- because I had some equipment. I had my sidewalk closures,  
10 all my equipment for, I use to do my closure and my sidewalk  
11 closure. So I wanted -- some of that -- most of that equipment  
12 was damaged, right.

13 So, in the process when they put the fire out, I wanted to  
14 get that equipment out of there. There was metal and stuff. I  
15 don't want no one to trip on that, the EMTs, the fire department,  
16 or the police or anybody else. So I wanted to move all that  
17 aluminum burned stuff from my company and get it out of the way.  
18 So I walked into the water, and of course, I wanted to look at the  
19 explosion where I was standing.

20 Q. Okay. But I just want to make sure that -- but you vividly  
21 remember seeing yellow before the incident rather than after?

22 A. Yeah. You didn't see nothing after, because it was all -- it  
23 was filled up like a little lake puddle in there. The whole  
24 trench was -- the whole intersection was just, was water, the  
25 sidewalk and everything else.



1 Q. Could you -- yeah, but you mentioned after the incident and  
2 the fire was put out and everything, could you see the pipes in  
3 there?

4 A. No, you couldn't see the pipes. I'll show you the picture so  
5 it could probably give a better, a clearer understanding what I'm  
6 saying, as far as with the -- where they were putting that out,  
7 all that was just like a little lake, reservoir now, where the  
8 explosion and the fire.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So you couldn't see. It was just from the cement, everything  
11 was blocked. So the water was, of course, deep and you can't see  
12 through it. It was just -- but you could -- the trench was deep.  
13 It left a big hole, as you know.

14 Q. Okay. Thank you.

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 MR. MULLIGAN: That's all the questions I have.

17 MR. EVANS: You have a question?

18 MR. GIL-BLANCO: Mr. Alarid, I understand, I mean, I think so  
19 we all understand -- Jorge Gil-Blanco with PG&E.

20 BY MR. GIL-BLANCO:

21 Q. This is the intersection, north, Parker, Geary east and west,  
22 right?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. So, this part over here, we'll say this is the trench area  
25 over here. You got the restaurant on the corner. Excavator, mini

1 excavator is down in this position over here. Do you recall the  
2 tracks being -- this being Geary, this being Parker, was this the  
3 correct positioning of the --

4 A. No, sir.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. The excavator was on -- the back end of it was on the --

7 Q. So it was --

8 A. -- westbound.

9 Q. So it'd be this way?

10 A. This -- yeah, correct.

11 Q. Okay. So in other words, right now this picture depicts east  
12 and west. It was actually north and south?

13 A. North and south.

14 Q. Okay. Now, what you said earlier that they'd moved, that  
15 they were working over in this direction when they were trenching.  
16 That's where you saw the gray, gray lines, right?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Okay. So that was over in this area?

19 A. Yeah. And that's -- they hand dig that, after they got --  
20 they trenched it.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And so that's why I seen all the gray, all the sewer or  
23 whatever else that is, you know, the water. I seen all that.

24 Q. Okay. Now, we'll say this is the extension of that 4-inch  
25 line, okay? The gray area would be in this area, closer over to

1 this -- that's where you saw the explosion?

2 A. On Geary, yeah.

3 Q. Okay. Going in this direction, did you see any yellow in  
4 this direction?

5 A. On the tip of the -- on Geary and Parker.

6 Q. Uh-huh, so --

7 A. Right there, yeah.

8 Q. Right in this area here?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Okay. Did you see any yellow here?

11 A. I didn't see no --

12 Q. Directly in front of where the excavator was.

13 A. I didn't see no yellow there.

14 Q. Okay. So you didn't see anything that -- like a T or  
15 anything like that in that direction over there?

16 A. No.

17 MR. GIL-BLANCO: Okay. That's all I have.

18 MR. EVANS: Okay.

19 BY MR. EVANS:

20 Q. So, this excavator, was it in that position -- was it moved  
21 after the explosion? Did he actually move it?

22 A. Nothing was moved. Both of them were disintegrated. We had  
23 a bigger one on the corner of Parker, which they use, and that one  
24 was parked over on the side, on the shoulder. And they started  
25 using the little one. And then to -- the explosion, that stood

1 right there in that place too. It was towed out of there. Both  
2 of them were towed out of them on (indiscernible) tugs.

3 Q. Okay. So when we spoke yesterday, we were talking about --  
4 you were showing me photographs. Do you not have a photograph  
5 that shows the position of this right now?

6 A. Yes, I do.

7 Q. And can you call it up for us?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And share it with us.

10 A. Okay, let me see. We got a lot of photographs. Okay. The  
11 smoke -- let's see if we can get a picture of it. Okay, there it  
12 is. That's about the closest, after they put the fire out. You  
13 can see the depiction of the (indiscernible). See where the  
14 bucket's laid down the side?

15 (Machine noise interference.)

16 MR. ALARID: Right there, the bucket was pulled out of the  
17 hole, laid on the side. That's where the (indiscernible).

18 (Machine noise interference.)

19 MR. ALARID: So here's the east and west --

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right there on the corner. He just --

21 MR. ALARID: Okay. So --

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you're facing the Asian restaurant?

23 MR. ALARID: I'm sitting in from of it.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. I got it. I see where --

25 MR. ALARID: Yeah. I'm facing this way.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You're diagonally.

2 MR. ALARID: Here's a better area view of it, actually.

3 Let's see if I can pull it up right here. This will probably  
4 give you a -- that's the closure before, when they're doing the  
5 saw cutting and stuff. And -- okay, right here where the  
6 barricade is, actually facing northbound on Parker, that's where I  
7 was standing. And then that was the excavator right there, with  
8 the bucket on the side. And then that's where I was standing,  
9 right there. And then --

10 MR. EVANS: Just for the transcriber, we are discussing  
11 photographs on a phone, which we intend to get copies of later.

12 MR. ALARID: And here's the end of it, right here. Let me  
13 see if I can get the -- okay, that's afterwards, right there.  
14 Now, let me (indiscernible).

15 (Machine noise interference.)

16 MR. ALARID: I walked up to the -- you can see the excavator  
17 right there.

18 (Machine noise interference.)

19 MR. ALARID: That one is the one they parked on the side.  
20 That's the one they were using, and there's the hole and stuff.  
21 There's the one he was using and (indiscernible).

22 (Machine noise interference; indiscernible conversation.)

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- that's parallel with Parker.

24 MR. ALARID: So that's the --

25 MR. EVANS: Oh, okay. Yeah.

1 MR. ALARID: That's right at the tip of that, Geary and  
2 Parker right there.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. That's where he was. Yeah.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are we on Parker? Are you on Parker  
6 taking this video?

7 MR. ALARID: I'm on Parker right now.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

9 MR. ALARID: And that's Geary right there, and you can see  
10 there's one lane, and there's two lanes. So see where the  
11 excavator is. I'm on this side. Before the explosion, he had the  
12 excavator turned this way, which I would be standing on the back  
13 side, and then right before the eruption, he had turned this way,  
14 and then his bucket was in there like that.

15 And there's some more views of --

16 MR. LANG: What's the very first video you said that within  
17 seconds you turned around --

18 MR. ALARID: Right here.

19 MR. EVANS: Introduce yourself.

20 MR. ALARID: Okay.

21 MR. LANG: I'm sorry. That's Mike Lang with PG&E.

22 MR. ALARID: Okay. The very first video is this one right  
23 here. This is after the ball of fire disappeared, and then you  
24 have this great flame coming out of that 4-inch. And that's when  
25 I turned -- of course, I'm at a quite distance from here, from

1 where the explosion was, because I zoomed in my camera. So I felt  
2 it was safe enough, because I wanted to film this. And that's --  
3 this is what I seen right here.

4 I tried taking film as I was running, but that didn't come  
5 out too well. It was just pictures of the cement and me running,  
6 so.

7 MR. SHORI: This is Sunil Shori with the PUC.

8 BY MR. SHORI:

9 Q. You know, you mentioned, you know, the ball of flame, and  
10 then you said you saw the big flame. So you saw two different  
11 types of flame, right?

12 A. Yeah, sure. The --

13 Q. Is that what you're saying?

14 A. The explosion, and then the actual gas burning.

15 Q. Okay. So you saw like a ball of flame, and then you saw the  
16 big shooting --

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. -- shooting type flame?

19 A. Yeah. That's this right here. Here you can see -- I got my  
20 lens mostly on the streets here, but it was (indiscernible) the  
21 Hong Kong Lounge, it was shooting up. As they were trying to put  
22 it out, they -- it was shooting up 400 to 500 feet.

23 Q. All right. I'm not sure if somebody asked you before, but  
24 I'll ask again just, did you see the source of ignition? So that  
25 ball of flame that you were talking about, what was near there

1 that you saw? Or did you -- and also, did you see anything where  
2 you saw that ball of flame actually ignite?

3 A. Well, I didn't see nobody there. The only thing -- my common  
4 sense is when the clear gas went up, is shooting up --

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. -- you know, almost like a geyser. Like in Wyoming when you  
7 see the geyser, the Old Faithful geyser, and it shoots up the  
8 water every hour and 14 minutes, well, that's what I seen but it  
9 was gas. So, of course, what comes up got to come down. And  
10 that's when I told everybody to run because we had the mini right  
11 there. The mini is on, he's on the mini and it's going to come  
12 down on the mini over us and we're going to have an explosion over  
13 us, so it's time to run. And that's, to my experience, and that's  
14 what I just told everybody, to run.

15 Q. Okay. So you saw the geyser, like gas flow, but then you  
16 said the ball of flame happened. Did you actually see the ball of  
17 flame start up?

18 A. Yeah, it didn't start. It was just like -- it's something  
19 like if you put your gas on your fireplace, and then you turn the  
20 gas on and it doesn't ignite and then you use like a lighter or,  
21 you know, or a match or something and you put it in an it goes  
22 poof, and then that's -- because you got the gas built up, that's  
23 what it did. And it -- so when it did hit the -- catch on fire,  
24 it made a big old explosion and then disappeared within seconds,  
25 and then that's when that flame came out, appeared.



1 MR. SHORI: Okay. Thank you.

2 BY MR. KLEMM:

3 Q. Jason Klemm, PG&E. You mentioned when he started to come  
4 across to Parker with the excavator that you saw the top of the  
5 yellow gas main at that time; is that correct?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Did you hear or smell gas at that time when you first saw it?

8 A. I didn't smell gas till they punctured it. Everything was  
9 normal.

10 Q. At the time of the release the excavator was actively  
11 excavating?

12 A. He was -- it was digging there. It was approximately about  
13 1:10.

14 Q. The photograph you just showed us had the bucket laying on  
15 the concrete. So after the ignition happened, did he move the  
16 bucket out of the excavation and lay it on the concrete?

17 A. Yes, he did.

18 Q. Was there any other excavation equipment near or in the hole  
19 at the time of that gas release besides the excavator?

20 A. The other excavator was parked on Parker, which I showed you,  
21 and it was parked to the shoulder on Parker and Geary.

22 Q. And there were no other excavators anywhere near that area?

23 A. Just that one in the corner.

24 MR. KLEMM: Thank you. That's all I have.

25 BY MR. EVANS:

1 Q. Okay. Just a couple more. Just for the record, I want to  
2 make sure we get this on there, that you did not hear any -- or  
3 did you hear any sort of contact of the bucket to the pipe, or did  
4 you hear any scraping noise, any of that type of thing?

5 A. I heard the puncture wound as far as him hitting the line.  
6 So I don't know --

7 Q. Describe that for us.

8 A. Well, I heard a -- you know, when the bucket digs and stuff,  
9 of course, you -- it makes a noise, and if it's hitting rock or  
10 it's hitting dirt. But when it hit the top of that main, the gas  
11 shot around the bucket, the blade of the bucket. And, you know,  
12 that -- the gas is shooting around close to the mini, which, thank  
13 God, there was so much pressure it was shooting up like a geyser  
14 and not shooting sideways, because if it did, it would've probably  
15 disintegrated Colin and us standing right there.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. And so the noise was -- yeah, it was a noise that I  
18 recognized; I never heard before but I knew he hit a gas line and  
19 there was no other thing could make a noise like that, explosion  
20 like that as far as (makes noise) and then -- and the debris,  
21 shoot the debris out at us.

22 Q. Are you saying that the noise was something that -- a type of  
23 sound you wouldn't have expected to hear with what he was doing?

24 A. Exactly. If you're working around a compressor and a hose  
25 breaks or you puncture a compressor line or a generator or

1 something, you know what I mean, of course it's going to -- you're  
2 going to hear an air noise leak from that. Well, it's the same  
3 thing with a water noise. They puncture a water line in -- up in  
4 Pinole, in Hercules where I was -- they do the gas lines and stuff  
5 over there. And so when it -- there was an accident and a vehicle  
6 went over and a trailer went over and -- over the bridge and hit  
7 this gas -- I mean, it hit a water line years ago. I'd say this  
8 is like in 1997, '98. And it exploded. But when he hit the water  
9 line, it made a noise like this. But the only thing, it was just  
10 water. But it was hot water, you know, burning hot. So it shot  
11 up in the air, same thing.

12 But with this, this was a gas line and it shot debris and  
13 dirt. Of course, we were close, too. We weren't on a overpass or  
14 nothing.

15 Q. Okay. The other thing I'm curious about, did you hear any  
16 conversations anywhere from anybody, crew members, that said,  
17 "Hey, our boss hit the pipe" or "I hit the pipe" or "Gosh, I guess  
18 I should've" --

19 A. No.

20 Q. -- "been more careful"? You heard nothing at all whatsoever?

21 A. I mean, the only guy I seen was Colin and I seen -- and then  
22 after MasTec's leader showed up, he said the guys and I accounted  
23 for. And he tell me -- he thanked me for being all right and he  
24 said, where's your other guy? And I said, he's about 1500 feet  
25 away up on top of the intersection as far as, you know, doing

1 traffic control. And I said, we're okay. And he said, well, I'm  
2 going to account -- I'm going to try to look for our guys. So I  
3 didn't see none of them when they did -- they notified me that --  
4 Mark Anthony from Public Works notified me that they were safe and  
5 they located them all. I didn't have no words with them. I  
6 didn't talk to them. I seen a few of them walking around, and  
7 that was it.

8 Q. But no admission from anybody or --

9 A. No admission. No conversations, no nothing.

10 MR. EVANS: Okay. Okay, that's all I have. Anybody else?

11 Okay. That concludes the interview. We're off the record.

12 Thanks for agreeing to talk to us today. We appreciate

13 (indiscernible) --

14 MR. ALARID: Absolutely.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

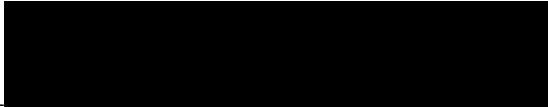
IN THE MATTER OF:           SAN FRANCISCO GAS RELEASE AND FIRE  
                                  FEBRUARY 6, 2019  
                                  Interview of Robert Alarid

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.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Pamela Jacobson  
Transcriber