



# National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Office of Railroad, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Investigations

**Interview Regarding Investigation PLD20LR001**  
**Enbridge Inc. Natural Gas Pipeline Rupture and Fire in Hillsboro, KY on May 4, 2020**

Name: Tom ATKINSON

Department: GAS CONTROL

Title: DIREKTOR

Date of Interview: 5/30/20

I have reviewed my transcript(s) from the above referenced accident and:

I have no comments to make.

My comments are submitted herewith.

My comments are marked on the attached copy.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

ENBRIDGE INC. NATURAL GAS \*

PIPELINE RUPTURE AND FIRE \* Accident No.: PLD20LR001

IN HILLSBORO, KENTUCKY, \*

ON MAY 4, 2020 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: TOM ATKINSON, Director of Gas Control  
Enbridge, Inc.

Via teleconference

Wednesday,  
May 13, 2020

APPEARANCES:

ALEXANDRIA COLLETTI, Investigator in Charge  
National Transportation Safety Board

ALVARO RODRIGUEZ, Accident Investigator  
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

THOMAS WOODEN, Vice President  
Engineering and Asset Management  
Enbridge, Inc.

DANE JAQUES, Attorney  
Steptoe and Johnson, LLP

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:09 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 MS. COLLETTI: We're on the record for the Tom Atkinson  
4 interview. Good morning. Today is May 13th, 2020. It is now  
5 10:09 a.m. Eastern Time. My name is Alex Colletti. I'm the  
6 investigator in charge for this accident for the National  
7 Transportation Safety Board in Washington, D.C.

8 We're holding this interview remotely via audio conference  
9 call. This interview is being conducted as part of the  
10 investigation into the Texas Eastern Transmission natural gas  
11 release and fire that occurred on May 4th, 2020, in Fleming  
12 County, Kentucky. The NTSB case number for this accident is  
13 PLD20LR001.

14 This interview is being recorded and may be transcribed at a  
15 later date. A copy of the transcript will be provided to the  
16 interviewee for review prior to being entered into the public  
17 docket. This is your opportunity to correct things that the  
18 transcriber may have incorrectly transcribed; it's not your  
19 opportunity to add and elaborate on things. So if you have  
20 something that's factual that you'd like to add, during the  
21 interview is the best time.

22 You're permitted to have one other person present during the  
23 interview. This person is of your choice. It can be an attorney,  
24 spouse, supervisor, friend, family member, or no one at all.

25 Tom, for the record, please state the spelling of your full

1 name, your job title, and who you have selected to be present  
2 during the interview.

3 MR. ATKINSON: Tom Atkinson, T-o-m, A-t-k-i-n-s-o-n.  
4 Director, Gas Control, and I've chosen Dane Jaques to represent  
5 me, and he's currently on the phone.

6 MS. COLLETTI: Okay, great. Now we're going to go around the  
7 call, so to speak, to introduce ourselves. We'll start with  
8 Alvaro, then Tom Wooden, and then Dane. Per the usual, guys,  
9 please spell your name and titles. Thank you.

10 MR. RODRIGUEZ: It's Alvaro, A-l-v-a-r-o, Rodriguez,  
11 R-o-d-r-i-g-u-e-z. I'm an accident investigator with the Accident  
12 Investigation Division of PHMSA in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

13 MR. WOODEN: Good morning. This is Thomas Wooden,  
14 T-h-o-m-a-s, W-o-o-d-e-n, Vice President of Engineering for  
15 Enbridge, and also a party coordinator for the investigation.

16 MR. JAQUES: My name is Dane Jaques, spelled D-a-n-e,  
17 J-a-q-u-e-s. I am a partner with the law firm Steptoe and Johnson  
18 in Washington, D.C.

19 MS. COLLETTI: Okay, great.

20 Well, Tom, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today. I  
21 really appreciate your time. It's an important task we have to  
22 collect the information we can from your memory of that day. I'm  
23 going to ask you to provide a lot of details for us, as much as  
24 you can remember. Please don't speculate; just provide what you  
25 can remember.



1 title is Director of Gas Control. So I've been in the industry  
2 since I got out of college.

3 Q. Okay, great. Well, it's always nice to talk to someone that  
4 knows what they're talking about. Thanks for filling me in on  
5 your history.

6 So I want to back up to the day of the event, the 4th, and I  
7 want you to really take a moment if you need to; I know it's been  
8 a few days. Think through where you were at the time, starting  
9 when you received any kind of notification to when things were  
10 essentially fully blown down. Just walk us through the entire day  
11 from when the control center was first notified to, like I said,  
12 when the lines were blowing down.

13 Take your time. As much detail as possible. This is a long  
14 talking stretch, so if you need a break, feel free to ask for one.  
15 We'll go back after that and I'll ask you some kind of procedural  
16 questions, but for right now, I'd just like to start with the  
17 event itself.

18 A Yes, can do. Let me just say several prefatory items. In my  
19 control room, under normal circumstances, pre-COVID, we operate  
20 six control desks that handle or are responsible for 13 pipelines  
21 across the continent.

22 Those areas of responsibility are delineated pretty,  
23 pretty -- from a workload perspective, pretty evenly. So any  
24 given day, pre-COVID, we would have six controllers in the control  
25 center. They work 12-hour shifts, what we refer to as modified



1 DuPont schedule.

2       When COVID came upon us, like everybody else, it changed how  
3 we viewed our operation to the extent that we, we determined that  
4 we did not want any of our staff to be sick and nor did we need  
5 any of the, you know, the virus to get anywhere near anyone in my  
6 control room.

7       So we decided to take the 6 feet distancing to a larger  
8 distancing. So I moved three control desks on a vacant floor on  
9 two, and then I left three control desks on three. So I have it  
10 split. It's one control center and, you know, we maintain  
11 physical distancing and that type of thing.

12       We're still in that configuration. So on the second floor,  
13 I've got three controllers operating, three consoles they're  
14 responsible for assets. And then three controllers working three  
15 consoles on the third floor, operating, you know, assets.

16       At the time of, on May 4th, in an effort to continue to make  
17 sure my management staff is not exposed to COVID, we had -- we  
18 began working from, just like everybody else, everybody was  
19 working from home. And the way I structured that is that I have,  
20 at any given day, one manager and two specialists on location  
21 every week.

22       So I have three managers that report up to me, plus two other  
23 specialists that are outside of operations reporting to me. Those  
24 managers have two specialists each that report up to them. So,  
25 over a three-week -- you know, we're on a rotation, so over three

1 weeks, I have one manager and two specialists in the office,  
2 including myself. I'm here every day.

3 And so I have a manager and two specialists every day.  
4 They're responsible for providing support on a daily perspective,  
5 on a -- or even a shift-by-shift perspective on operations. My  
6 job is merely to support them in the operation of all the  
7 pipelines from a 5,000-foot level, so to speak. And the managers  
8 and the specialists handle day-to-day operations.

9 So what you have in front of you is a timeline that was put  
10 together that came from different sources. It came from SCADA  
11 data. It came from controller's log notes. It came from phone  
12 call recordings. So all this is just an amalgamation of  
13 information.

14 As you can see, if you'll take notice on the right hand side  
15 of the outline, just for convenience sake, we've added line ten  
16 pressure, which is the, the line that ruptured on valve section  
17 one in (indiscernible). So all that, all the pressures at the  
18 corresponding times are there for just convenience sake.

19 Q. Okay. I'm going to stop you for just a second, Tom Atkinson.  
20 I'm going to take us off the record really quickly.

21 (Off the record.)

22 (On the record.)

23 MS. COLLETTI: We are back on the record for the Tom Atkinson  
24 interview. And Tom, I'll go back to you. And again, thank you  
25 for your patience.

1 MR. ATKINSON: Thank you. One last bit of information that I  
2 wanted to convey before we get into the timeline is give you a  
3 sense that the controller on Desk D, which is on the third floor,  
4 he was operating assets from Egypt, Mississippi, to Western  
5 Pennsylvania, and on into Indiana, including the pipeline that  
6 goes across Tennessee. So, again, all of my consoles have equal,  
7 equal workload, but to give you a sense of what kind of assets the  
8 controller was operating on that desk.

9 The first indication, the first -- at 3:39, gas control on  
10 Desk D received a call attendant alarm at Owingsville Station. A  
11 call attendant alarm is merely a notification that something needs  
12 attention to at Owingsville. Not necessarily a bad thing because  
13 we had call attendants all across our systems. It was just an  
14 alarm to come in that raises -- it allows -- it notifies the  
15 controller that something needs to be taken care of, or take a  
16 look at the compressor station.

17 At 3:40, we get our first call from a young lady, a lady in  
18 Hillsboro, Kentucky, and stating that the woods were on fire, that  
19 the gas blowing, and the person that took that call was on the  
20 second floor. Tim Winders (ph.), he took the call.

21 And while he was on the call talking to the lady, getting all  
22 her information -- we got blanks we need to fill in when we get  
23 calls from landowners, that type of thing. So he was receiving  
24 information from the lady, asking her things, and then on the same  
25 shift, on the second floor, one of my senior controllers overheard

1 the conversation with Tim Winders on the first call.

2 And he goes over to his desk and looks at the address that  
3 she gave, then went back to his desk -- so he went back to his  
4 desk and pulled up an application that we named EMAPS. EMAPS is a  
5 mapping tool, very, very, very similar to Google Maps or whatever,  
6 except this mapping tool has our pipelines as layers introduced to  
7 it. So Billy is entering the address of the initial call into  
8 EMAPS, while Tim, the other controller, is still on the phone.

9 At 3:42, we get another call reporting a fire over the hill.  
10 And then at the same time, at 3:42, Bart Johnson -- he's an area  
11 supervisor in transmission -- calls into the control room and  
12 states that his, his people in Hillsboro were wondering if there  
13 was a pressure drop on the pipeline.

14 He was talking to Joe Garza. He is my controller that is  
15 working that console where Owingsville -- you know, that set of  
16 assets that I spoke to earlier. He's talking to Joe Garza and he  
17 says, ask him the same thing about the pressure drop, and Joe  
18 confirmed at that time that there was a pressure drop on the  
19 sections of Owingsville and tells Bart that a stop timer is  
20 activated.

21 This is a different alarm than the call attendant. But a  
22 stop timer alarm is just a notification to the controller that  
23 there are some parameters at the station PLC that are, that the --  
24 that they're unable to meet. And if the controller doesn't change  
25 some of those parameters, for example, suction or discharge, the

1 station, the programming is designed to take the station offline  
2 automatically.

3 At 3:43, my senior controller on floor two notifies a  
4 controller on three that we have a rupture on Owingsville suction  
5 and, you know, he used the EMAPS tool. He was able to validate  
6 where it was from the location perspective, and he notified Shawn  
7 Wilson (ph.), who's a controller on three, that we have a rupture.  
8 At 3:46, the same senior controller, Billy Davis, notifies the  
9 Owingsville operator to get back to the station.

10 Now, I'll pause here for just a minute, if I can do that, and  
11 say that the majority of the compressor stations that are being  
12 operated on this segment of pipe, and across a lot of our assets,  
13 are automated. What that means is that there might be someone, a  
14 station operator, at the station during the day, but at a  
15 particular time in the afternoon, whether that's 3:30, 4:00,  
16 whatever that might be, people leave.

17 So Owingsville is a remotely controlled station and has a  
18 station operator assigned to it, but they leave for the day.  
19 They're a date -- day people. Same as the compression station to  
20 the north of Wheelersburg -- of Owingsville. Wheelersburg is also  
21 remotely controlled and was unmanned at this time. Owingsville  
22 was unmanned at this time. And for -- to help maybe further  
23 understand where we're fixing to go is, within this larger segment  
24 of pipe, there are no remotely controlled valves.

25 So I say all that to begin the discussion about what the

1 controllers can or can't do in response to a rupture at  
2 Owingsville in valve section one. The only thing that we can do  
3 is notify personnel, field personnel. And so that's what you see  
4 at 3:46, a senior controller notified the operator for  
5 Owingsville, who is not on location, and he says by all the data  
6 he looks at, it appears -- and the address, it appears that we  
7 have a rupture in valve section one. And the operator then says,  
8 I'm 30 to 45 minutes away.

9 At 3:46, Steven Courtney (ph.) -- he's also one of my  
10 controllers on two -- notifies the manager on location and Bobby  
11 Pollard (ph.); Bobby Pollard is a specialist. So I had Bobby  
12 Pollard, Cody Fokes (ph.), two specialists were on duty here in  
13 the building, and Wayne Page (ph.) was manager on duty.

14 And then, at 3:47, Owingsville station goes offline. So  
15 exactly what I said, if the parameters aren't changed on a stop  
16 timer alarm, the unit will go off. Because typically, it just  
17 means the unit is not needed based on programming. It's not  
18 uncommon to have a stop timer alarm. It's not uncommon to have to  
19 change set points, or whatever that might be, to get a station out  
20 of stop timer. But again, at 3:47, the station goes offline. And  
21 at the same time, my other specialist, Cody, calls Bart Johnson --  
22 he's a responding supervisor in the field -- and they talk about  
23 what's going on.

24 At 3:42, my second specialist that is here in the building  
25 calls the operator at Wheelersburg, which is the compressor

1 station, the unmanned compressor station to the north of  
2 Owingsville, and asks Luke, the operator, to head back to the  
3 station, the compressor station, because there's a belief that  
4 there's a possible (indiscernible) or rupture, and we're going to  
5 need to get some valves closed.

6 At 4:00, Joe Garza, the controller working Desk D, is already  
7 interacting with Tennessee or Kinder, at Hanging Rock, and we  
8 request them to shut in. It's a receipt point. Kinder was giving  
9 us gas, and Joe was merely working through preventing more product  
10 from entering that segment.

11 According to SCADA history, line 10 and line 25 were isolated  
12 at Owingsville at 4:04. Line 15 was already isolated. So that  
13 was at 4:04.

14 At 4:06, Joe Garza, my operator on Desk D, called the  
15 operator in Wheelersburg again, because Billy had called him  
16 earlier and requested him to isolate the station and block all  
17 flow heading south on all lines.

18 At 4:08, the area manager for Owingsville, Randy Dean (ph.),  
19 called and notified us that he was sending employees to the  
20 rupture site.

21 At 4:16, the operator at Wheelersburg -- again, the station  
22 to the north of Owingsville -- called and verified that the line,  
23 lines 10 and 15, were isolated at Wheelersburg.

24 At 4:19, we again made another call to Tennessee, or Kinder,  
25 and asked them to shut in Hanging Rock. Again, that's the receipt

1 from -- a receipt point in that area where Tennessee gives gas to  
2 us.

3 At 4:20, transmission, Blevins -- it's his last name; I don't  
4 recall his first name -- notifies us that the valves at Muses  
5 Mills, which is the first valve section north of Owingsville,  
6 where the valves were isolated, and you could see the times. So  
7 at 4:23, the last valve was closed, in effect, isolating valve  
8 section one.

9 At 4:29 -- now, let me just take a pause here and then kind  
10 of characterize what is transpiring in the control room. I had a  
11 second manager who lives about five minutes away, he -- well,  
12 probably ten. He also came up here to help and assist in the  
13 work. Because gas control in this segment of pipeline had no  
14 arrows in the quiver, in essence, other than stopping the  
15 stations, we had no ability to isolate. But once the line is  
16 isolated at 4:20, the valve sections on all three lines, that's  
17 when our job begins.

18 At the time, the controller that's responsible for  
19 Owingsville is also responsible for -- we were running nine other  
20 compressor stations at the time. Various amounts of horsepower,  
21 but we were running nine at the time. Once we enter into  
22 isolating the line, the controller then is responsible to work off  
23 all of the compressor stations south of the rupture, south of  
24 Owingsville, and all of the stations that are moving gas towards  
25 Owingsville, to the north of Owingsville.



1           At the time, we were moving about one -- somewhere in the  
2 neighborhood of 1.4 BCF, and the controller then had to do  
3 something with that 1.4 that's coming from the north and then  
4 augment that 1.4 with southern storage. So the coordination of  
5 southern storage, which is down here on the Gulf Coast, all of the  
6 compressor stations south of Owingsville, the compressor stations  
7 north of Owingsville, and our northern storage assets all had to  
8 be coordinated and shut down.

9           So once valve section one is isolated, we began to shut  
10 stations down. So at 4:29, Cody, my specialist, spoke to Bart,  
11 supervisor in the field, and confirmed what we already assumed,  
12 was that all lines were isolated. Then you see a series of calls  
13 by the controller regarding these activities I just kind of  
14 characterized. Joe Garza, the controller, calls Danville, which  
15 at the time was running three turbines. It is just south of  
16 Owingsville. He knocked them off, took them offline.

17           And then at 4:40, one of my other controllers got a  
18 confirming call from Owingsville verifying that the blocked valves  
19 were closed -- the tap valves -- the tap blocked valves were  
20 closed at Owingsville and confirmed that line 15 bypass was  
21 closed. These are just a confirming phone call. We already knew  
22 from SCADA that they were closed.

23           Then you see at 4:42, the controller calls Wheelersburg, once  
24 the line is isolated, and has him open the bypass on lines 10 and  
25 15 to reestablish flow to Dean at Hanging Rock. So that's a power

1 plant that is in between Muses Mills and Wheelersburg. So he was  
2 -- so the controller was just bypassing Wheelersburg so that the  
3 power plant can stay online once valve section one was isolated.

4 The controller then, at 4:52, calls Gladeville, which is a  
5 compression station in Tennessee. They were operating, they were  
6 running horsepower, and he wanted them to shut down. At 4:55, he  
7 also spoke to the operator at Mount Pleasant, Tennessee, and asked  
8 him to shut down. And then there was a customer call to Deana  
9 (ph.) about resuming flow at the power plant. 5:04, we called  
10 Tompkinsville, which is in Kentucky, and have them shut down,  
11 which is south of Danville.

12 And then there were other stations taken offline to the north  
13 in similar timeframes. But by 7:11, my manager, my second manager  
14 that was here at the time, talked to Rob Bartels (ph.), who is an  
15 area supervisor, and confirmed that the desire for the field was  
16 to double block, or in essence, go to the next valve section and  
17 isolate there. And he talked to Bartels at 7:11, and Bartels  
18 confirmed that valve section two's isolated on all three lines.

19 And then, by 8:44, all of the lines are blown down at  
20 Owingsville. And that ends the timeline.

21 MS. COLLETTI: Well, thank you very much for walking me  
22 through that time. I appreciate it. I want to back up to a  
23 couple of specific things, and then I want to talk to you about  
24 some of the data that I received. And then just some general  
25 questions about how your control room operates.

1 BY MS. COLLETTI:

2 Q. If we go back towards the beginning of the event, 3:36, we  
3 see the pressure drop. If we're looking by the minute-by-minute  
4 data, it's about a five percent drop, minute-by-minute, it drops  
5 100 pounds in about four minutes. Right? So the question from me  
6 there is what kind of rate of change alarms do you have around  
7 that? What are those set at? You know, I understand that you got  
8 a call attendant alarm, but it sounds like that's a very general  
9 alarm that can have various levels of urgency.

10 I'm wondering why we're not seeing some sort of essentially  
11 rupture alert, saying 100 pounds in four minutes is very  
12 significant, and that's a large drop. Now, I understand that you  
13 saw that on 10 and 25 at the same time, so it's hard to  
14 distinguish exactly which line, and that makes sense to me. But I  
15 think at that point, you know, we can tell that there's something,  
16 there's something going on. So I'm wondering why there aren't  
17 more alarms at, say, 3:37 and 3:38 and 3:39 and 3:40 and 3:41,  
18 aside from just one call attendant alarm.

19 So can you walk me through kind of how your alarms are set up  
20 around that, what rate of change alarms you have with regards to  
21 pressure and all of that?

22 A. Okay. If you'll give me a minute, Alex.

23 Q. Sure, that's fine. Take your time.

24 A. At the time of the rupture, we had rate of change alarms on  
25 the discharge. There are not rate of change alarms on the suction

1 because we, we found that running engines -- starting and stopping  
2 engines created false alarms into the control room, and every time  
3 we would start and stop an engine, the rate of change -- our rate  
4 of change alarms, if applied to the suction, would trigger a false  
5 alarm into the control room.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And we decided that we did not want false alarms coming into  
8 the control room. So subsequently, there weren't any rate of  
9 change alarms on line 10, or any of the three lines.

10 Q. Okay. So, something --

11 A. We did get low -- I'm sorry.

12 Q. No, that's okay. Go ahead. Go ahead, please.

13 A. Well, I was just going to say, we did get alarms on the  
14 suction of Owingsville once the pressure hit 425, is when we began  
15 getting alarms. So we did get alarms at 425, and the low level is  
16 set at 400.

17 Q. Right, yeah. And I get that. That's 225 pounds, right?  
18 Which is a pretty -- that's a pretty big drop. And this is an  
19 instantaneous fracture -- instantaneous rupture. So I guess my  
20 thought here -- and I understand, I completely get the need for  
21 reducing the number of alarms that are coming into the control  
22 station. Like I said, I've worked with control rooms before. I  
23 did measurement and gas quality, and a large part of my role was  
24 working with the control room and helping them deal with all of  
25 those kind of issues.

1 But something I've seen that's been successful on other  
2 pipeline operators is essentially a more complicated control  
3 logic, which is essentially, if we're making changes to the  
4 compressor station itself, then our rate of change alarm is  
5 essentially overridden. So you can still have a rate of change  
6 alarm when you're at a steady state, which is what we were  
7 doing -- what was happening at the time of this rupture, but --

8 A. Well, let me --

9 Q. Go ahead.

10 A. To add a little bit to that, Alex, we were heading down that  
11 exact path prior to COVID where we would, where we would force the  
12 algorithm to look at the engine status or engine speed, or a  
13 particular data point at the compressor station and suppress alarm  
14 notification until, until the recycle valve went closed.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. And we were looking at trying to work a more complicated  
17 scripting in SCADA, but we weren't successful. I mean, we're  
18 still -- I don't have anybody here in the office to be working on  
19 that.

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. We are going down that road, we just got caught up with  
22 COVID.

23 Q. Yeah. It's interesting to me because rate of change alarms  
24 aren't necessarily new. Right? So I can see, I can understand  
25 working on it recently, and I get that. But like, when I left the

1 individual, we had them on the suction side of our compressor  
2 stations, at least on EPNG. But that's, but that's a different  
3 story. Okay. We've talked about that.

4 So I want to talk about -- a little bit more about the call  
5 attendant alarm. Can you explain to me in more detail as to what  
6 all we might, what all might cause a call attendant alarm to go  
7 off? What levels of urgency are we talking about? How large is  
8 the range?

9 A. Well, I'll give it a shot.

10 Q. Well, here's a better way, here's a better way to phrase it  
11 then. What are the triggers for the call attendant alarm?

12 A. I can't speak to all of the triggers. I can speak to just  
13 what I know.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I do know that, for example, high H2S -- I'm sorry, high  
16 hazardous atmosphere, fire, ESD, the critical alarms that are  
17 associated roll up into call attendant. So if there was a fire or  
18 hazardous atmosphere, I'd get both alarms. I'd get call attendant  
19 and hazardous atmosphere.

20 But then there are other alarms that rolled up into the call  
21 attendant stream that pertain to local issues like low lube oil,  
22 low glycol, no water, a booster pump didn't kick on. Those types  
23 of things roll up into call attendant, and it's merely an alarm  
24 for my guys, or gals, my controllers to call the person on call.

25 And we don't have any way to determine what causes the call

1 attendant, other than those few things I mentioned that were, you  
2 know, fire or UV or IR, that type of thing.

3 Q. Okay. So you said when Bart Johnson called in, he spoke to  
4 Joe Garza. Is that correct?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Okay, and Joe was on the second floor?

7 A. He was on third.

8 Q. He was on third. Okay, and the call also came into the third  
9 floor? Or was that on the second floor?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. No, it came in on third.

13 Q. Okay, okay.

14 A. Understand, understand, Alex, that all calls ring on all  
15 floors.

16 Q. Yep.

17 A. So whatever calls come in, they ring simultaneous on two and  
18 three.

19 Q. Right, right. And it's just whoever picks it up.

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. I was mostly just trying to figure out where the guys were  
22 situated, who's on what floor. So --

23 A. I got you.

24 Q. -- if Joe Garza is next to Tim Winders and Billy Davis, or if  
25 he's on a separate floor and can't hear them discussing.

1 A. Joe Garza is on a separate floor, and Tim Winders, Courtney,  
2 and Davis are on second floor.

3 Q. Okay, okay. So he isn't hearing that conversation,  
4 essentially.

5 A. Correct.

6 Q. Correct, okay.

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. But on a non-COVID situation, he would normally be hearing  
9 that conversation.

10 A. Absolutely.

11 Q. Okay, okay. Just wanted to make sure I really had that clear  
12 in my mind. So can you, can you talk to me about that  
13 conversation between Joe and Bart, a little bit more detail, what  
14 you know? And I'm going to be talking to Joe later to get more  
15 detail from him, but your understanding of essentially, was Joe  
16 aware of what was going on at the time and all of that?

17 A. The only thing I can comment on is what's stated here.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. This was, this was a recorded phone call.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And the information that's here comes directly from that  
22 recording.

23 Q. Okay, great. This is the nice thing about gas control,  
24 almost everything's recorded. It's a double-edged --

25 A. Yeah, sometimes --



1 Q. It's a double-edged sword. Right?

2 A. It's a double-edged sword. It sure is.

3 Q. It's a double-edged sword. I know, I know. It's definitely  
4 a double-edged sword. I always used to tell them, I was like, you  
5 don't call them and complain because they've got everything on  
6 record.

7 A. That's right.

8 Q. They don't forget there. Okay. Well, let's see. And then I  
9 want to go down to the stop timer. So I want to make sure I  
10 understand what set off the stop timer alarm and then how that  
11 worked. So the stop timer, that was started because they were  
12 seeing -- it was seeing pressure drop? Or was that another  
13 trigger that started that?

14 A. We typically run Owingsville, which moves the gas from the  
15 north to the south, on discharge control. So whatever that  
16 discharge was, the station was controlling on the discharge. Now,  
17 in the control schema, there's several loops at Owingsville:  
18 pressure discharge, pressure suction, and flow. For us to operate  
19 efficiently, we found for us, we operate on discharge, right? So  
20 most of our stations that are remote are operated on discharge.

21 At Owingsville, at the time, the suction set point was set,  
22 in essence, out of the way, and the pressure set point was at 565.  
23 So within normal ranges of operation, Owingsville would never get  
24 -- I mean, not never, but under normal operating scenarios,  
25 Owingsville would not see 565 on the suction on either 10 or 25.

1 So the stop timer engaged -- so as the pressure dropped, the PLC  
2 recognized the pressure on 10 and 25, and when it hit 565, the  
3 units started to slow down. That's what it's programmed to do.

4 But once the station got to where it could not slow down  
5 anymore and still hold the 565, once the pressure dropped below --  
6 once the pressure dropped, I believe -- I can't -- I don't know  
7 for sure, for certain, but I believe if the program sees 10 pounds  
8 less than what is being asked, so if the pressure was 555, and the  
9 set point is 565, and the units cannot slow down anymore, the stop  
10 timer begins. It's a clock.

11 Q. Yeah. Okay.

12 A. It's kind of like a clock.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Does that make sense?

15 Q. Yep, that makes perfect sense.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. Okay. That was my understanding the first time through, I  
18 just wanted to make sure that I had still gotten that. So,  
19 essentially, the turbines there were turned off remotely because  
20 of that timer.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. So, essentially, and that was -- is that something where, in  
23 this case, the decision is made to allow that to happen because a  
24 rupture is suspected? Or is that because there's so much going  
25 on? Or what's the thought process behind that?

1 A. It was allowed to run until it fell off so that we can pull  
2 as much product away as we could.

3 Q. Okay, makes sense.

4 A. And so it was, it was -- you know, it doesn't hurt the  
5 engines to go off on stop timer, so the decision was made to leave  
6 them on and let it pull down as far as we could.

7 Q. Okay, that makes sense. That makes sense. Okay. So I want  
8 to go kind of off your timeline here, which I really appreciate --  
9 and, again, I'm so sorry for taking us off the record for that --  
10 and go to some of the data that I've gotten, which was the alarms.

11 There were -- and you may not know the answer to this, and if  
12 you don't, that's fine. It looks like the day of the rupture,  
13 there were at least -- yeah, the day of the rupture, that morning  
14 at 9:30 a.m., there's a call attendant alarm in Owingsville;  
15 12:46 p.m., there's a call attendant; 1:16, call attendant;  
16 1:20 -- yeah, so there's, you know, two or three of them coming  
17 in. Is that a normal number of call attendant alarms for any give  
18 station on any given day when they're running?

19 A. Well, the best I can tell you, Alex, is during the day, you  
20 know, there are a number of people at the station. That would be  
21 something that you would probably need to talk to the station  
22 people about. If they're doing work out there or it -- I mean,  
23 there could be a lot of things that the station is doing locally  
24 that would generate the call attendant.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. I just, I can't -- I don't -- my answer is I don't know.

2 Q. Okay. That's fine. That's totally fine. I'd rather you say  
3 that than anything else.

4 Okay. What's a typical alarm set, alarm acknowledge kind of  
5 time for something that's not complicated? How does that, how  
6 does the process work? So like on a lot of these call attendant  
7 alarms, I'm seeing a -- it's set by OBCIS, which I'm assuming is  
8 your algorithm, or your software.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And then it's acknowledged within a minute, maybe two  
11 minutes. What's kind of a normal timeframe for setting and  
12 acknowledging alarms?

13 A. That depends on what the alarm is. We've got three different  
14 priorities of alarms. And generally, on -- you know, the call  
15 attendant is not a critical alarm. It's an alarm that needs  
16 attention. Without looking at the data, I mean, we track  
17 acknowledgments and acknowledge alarms that, for a warning -- I  
18 mean an urgent alarm, which would be call attendant alarm, to  
19 acknowledge that, I don't have the information in front of me. I  
20 was wondering where you were looking at -- what time are you  
21 looking at, Alex?

22 Q. I'm looking at -- so the first one I'm thinking -- looking at  
23 is -- let me see. The -- it's at 12:46 on 5/4.

24 A. Yeah, hang on just a minute.

25 Q. Yeah, sure.

- 1 A. I need to pull up the data.
- 2 Q. That's okay. I can send you the file I have as well, if  
3 that's easier.
- 4 A. It might be easier.
- 5 Q. Yeah. I know how long the audits sometimes can take.
- 6 A. Let's see, I got -- I got it. Let me open it up.
- 7 Q. Okay. Yeah, so essentially what I'm seeing is, at 12:46, an  
8 alarm set for call attendant, and then an alarm set for three  
9 stopped -- there's three stopped units right in a row. And then  
10 immediately, the alarm is acknowledged, all within the same  
11 minute.
- 12 A. Yes. That would be, that would be expected.
- 13 Q. Okay.
- 14 A. That would be expected. Now, you see at 12:46, you get a  
15 call attendant and the units drop off line.
- 16 Q. Yep.
- 17 A. Now, there was something going on that was not a controller  
18 action. That was something that was happening at the station that  
19 was causing those units to go offline. I wouldn't -- without  
20 doing some significant investigation, it'd be probably better to  
21 talk to the field as to why the units went offline. But that was  
22 not, it was not an action that the controller took at 12:46.
- 23 Q. Okay.
- 24 A. When the units went off.
- 25 Q. So, essentially, yeah. And I'm seeing that. It's just an

1 alarm that's showing up, essentially showing that the units are  
2 offline.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. It's -- but he's -- is it, essentially, he gets the call  
5 attendant alarm, and he sees it in combination with the units off,  
6 and that helps him make a decision, in terms of acknowledging --  
7 I'm trying to get through the thought process of how your folks  
8 acknowledge alarms when they come in.

9 A. They're required to acknowledge the alarm when it comes in.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. As expeditiously as they can. But that may, that may --  
12 there may be factors and they may want to trim some data, and  
13 there's some other tools that the controller may need before he  
14 acknowledges the alarm. Most of the time, on urgent -- I mean, on  
15 urgent and critical, it's pretty quick.

16 Q. Okay. Now, what would be the criteria for clearing an alarm?  
17 How does that work? How does that process work? Is there a  
18 standard procedure in terms of, we're talking to the field, we're  
19 confirming everything on that end before we're clearing the alarm?

20 A. Well, within our system, Alex, the controller cannot clear  
21 the alarm until it's returned to normal.

22 Q. Okay. Okay. That makes sense. All right. I want to step  
23 back to the configuration of the system at the time of the rupture  
24 and what you guys were able to see versus what the field knows.  
25 So we know line 15 is isolated, and I'm assuming you guys knew

1 that going in.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Yeah, because of the online work. Yeah, that's something  
4 that you would obviously keep gas control in the loop on. So, 15,  
5 or 10 and 25 are tracked fairly well together until valves start  
6 getting closed. Right? And then it's pretty apparent which,  
7 which line is the rupture line.

8 A. Correct.

9 Q. Are you -- can you see from the control room that crossovers  
10 are open or closed? Or do you know that those lines are  
11 essentially joined or not joined? What all do you see?

12 A. In this section of pipe between Owingsville and Wheelersburg,  
13 the controller -- there is nothing to see. There's no remote,  
14 there's no remote valves, there's no telemetric valves. We don't  
15 know whether the cross opens -- crossovers are opened or closed.  
16 That is the responsibility -- that knowledge is endemic to  
17 transmission.

18 Q. Okay, okay. So would that information be something that  
19 would assist you in making decisions in the control room?

20 A. Well, that'd be speculation, and I'd rather, I'd rather not  
21 get into that. I mean, it's speculation. I mean, all I can speak  
22 to is the timeline and what we can and what we can't do.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. We -- the only thing we could do at the time was to request  
25 all three lines isolated and the upstream and downstream

1 compressor stations, and that's really the only arrow we had in  
2 the quiver.

3 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. I think that's going to be my first  
4 round of questions. So I'm going to pass you to Alvaro next. But  
5 thank you very much. I appreciate it.

6 MR. ATKINSON: Thank you.

7 BY MR. RODRIGUEZ:

8 Q. Hi Tom. This is Alvaro Rodriguez. I'm going to  
9 (indiscernible) investigation with (indiscernible). Thank you  
10 very much for your time and providing a detailed timeline. Can  
11 you please confirm some things for me: What do you mean by  
12 offline?

13 A. In regards to a compressor station?

14 Q. Yeah. I think you mentioned that in the timeline. Let me go  
15 back and see exactly the time. At 3:47.

16 A. Offline in gas, in our vernacular, is the engines are taking  
17 -- are stopped and are no longer pumping on those lines. And  
18 generally, when that happens, the engines go offline; they're no  
19 longer pumping. And then once the differential gets -- closes up  
20 between the suction and the discharge, the bypass valves open.  
21 That's kind of what I mean by offline. They're no longer pumping.

22 Q. Okay. Thank you very much for that.

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Also I want to confirm, where is upstream and downstream?  
25 What is north, what is south -- which station is south, which



1 station is north from the rupture?

2 A. Okay, all right. Thank you. Owingsville, Wheelersburg --  
3 Wheelersburg is north of Owingsville, directly, it's the next  
4 station downstream of -- well, it's north of Owingsville, and  
5 Danville compressor station, which is in Danville, Kentucky, is  
6 south of Owingsville.

7 Q. I see. And where is the rupture?

8 A. The rupture is just north of Owingsville.

9 Q. Okay. Thank you. And let me see what else I have. And so  
10 when, when the control room -- and I think Alex asked this  
11 question maybe. In the control room, can you see or even decide  
12 if any main valves are opened or closed?

13 A. We cannot.

14 Q. Okay. So you couldn't see the time -- or well, I will ask a  
15 better question. By looking at the pressure from SCADA, can you  
16 tell when line 10 was closed?

17 A. By looking at SCADA, we were able to determine when the, when  
18 the tap valves were closed in Owingsville, and by looking at  
19 SCADA, we were able to tell when the valves were closed at  
20 Wheelersburg, which is the compressor station to the north.

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. And but we could not -- while we supposed or, you know,  
23 guessed when the valves were closed in Muses Mills, we didn't know  
24 that until the person that went, the transmission personnel went  
25 to Mills, closed the valves, and notified us that the timing of

1 all those valves. We saw the pressure drop significantly on line  
2 10 once the valves were closed at Muses Mills, but we didn't know  
3 that until the technician called.

4 Q. I see. All right. Thank you very much. Let's see what else  
5 I have. One more question for clarification. When you talk about  
6 isolated, means, when you receive a call from the technician  
7 confirming that the valve was closed, what do you mean by  
8 isolated? I saw it in the timeline at 4:04 p.m. and at 4:16, but  
9 I want to confirm what it is.

10 A. Where I used the term isolated, I'm using it in the context  
11 of either there's -- either we validate, verify, or we hear, get  
12 information from other people that there's no longer gas being  
13 pushed into that, into that segment. So we were looking to  
14 isolate valve section one, which is on line 10 north of  
15 Owingsville. But when we made the call to Owingsville and  
16 Wheelersburg, to the station attendants, and request them to  
17 isolate, by that, we man shut horsepower down and close all  
18 mainline block valves to prevent gas from moving through the  
19 station.

20 Q. I understand. Thank you very much for doing that.

21 A. Thank you, sir.

22 Q. And let me see if I have any other questions. When -- do you  
23 know, or what is the threshold for the pressure? I think it's  
24 something similar to Alex, Alex was asking, with the drop from 655  
25 to 580, 3:36 to 3:39, is there any threshold or set point in the

1 control room?

2 A. I don't, I don't know. Can you ask the question again?

3 I'm --

4 Q. Yeah, definitely. My question was, if I want to see or  
5 identify an alarm, how can I determine what is the pressure  
6 difference in order to start seeing an alarm? Do you think  
7 from -- going from 655 to 580 is enough or not? Or that's out of  
8 the control room?

9 A. As I mentioned to Alex, we had -- let me look at this. So  
10 the alarms, the low was 425, and the low level was set at 400.  
11 And that's where we had the alarm set.

12 Q. All right.

13 A. In the control room, just in context, right, the controller,  
14 no matter what desk or console you're operating on, is evaluating,  
15 monitoring, and controlling using a lot of data points. A lot of  
16 data points. It's a lot of information for the controller to  
17 monitor. And that's why we use alarms. The call attendant is not  
18 a critical alarm. The stop timer's not critical. But they are  
19 alarms that help a controller do his job, and that's where we had,  
20 that's where we had the alarms set both on line 25 and line 10.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: All right. Well, thanks a lot. At the  
22 moment, I don't have any other questions, but I really appreciate  
23 your time, but also describing very well what I was asking.

24 MR. ATKINSON: Thank you, sir.

25 MR. RODRIGUEZ: You're welcome.

1 MR. WOODEN: Hey, Tom. This is Tom Wooden. I maybe had just  
2 one or two questions for you.

3 BY MR. WOODEN:

4 Q. Tom, you talked about the compressor unit and stop timers.  
5 Kind of that call attendant, it kind of triggers that call  
6 attendant alarm. You know, and I think you described it as kind  
7 of a low suction pressure alarm in this instance. But are there a  
8 lot of other alarms that go, or a lot of other parameters that can  
9 trigger one of these stop timers? And if so, what types of alarms  
10 are they that'll take off the compressor unit?

11 A. Well, let me just see if I can clarify a little something. I  
12 don't know that the incident caused the call attendant alarm at  
13 Owingsville. The stop timer alarm does not necessarily generate a  
14 call attendant. So we have two separate, two separate  
15 notifications. One was a call attendant at 3:39. I don't know  
16 what caused that. For the stop timer alarm, the stop timer alarm,  
17 depending on -- there are a sundry of local actions that would  
18 cause -- can cause a stop timer alarm. Is that what you're  
19 asking, what those might be?

20 Q. Yeah. What's that range of operating parameters and other  
21 things like that that could cause that?

22 (Simultaneous speaking.)

23 A. In regards to Owingsville, who were running turbines, the  
24 stop timer is indicative of generally the compressor station not  
25 being able to meet the set points that are inputted.

1           The logic within the PLC, and I'm going to make sure I don't  
2 get up over my head here on programming, but the logic on most  
3 remote controlled stations is that there's several control loops.  
4 In Owingsville's case, there is a discharge control loop, there's  
5 a suction control loop, and there's a flow control loop.

6           On any one of these control loops, the controller could  
7 choose to operate. As I mentioned earlier, we chose to -- we  
8 choose to operate on discharge control. The stop timer at  
9 Owingsville, the turbines went into stop timer because the  
10 incoming pressure got lower than the suction set point, which was  
11 565, and the units were not -- could not slow down anymore. And  
12 the pressure continued to drop.

13           As another example, at several of my electric stations, a  
14 stop timer is indicative of the units exceeding their electric  
15 demand, or electric set point, or how the -- the megawatt set  
16 point that I might put in there. So the stop timers across the  
17 enterprise are there to protect the station, whether it's electric  
18 or turbine or reciprocal, and it's a -- it's just a matter of  
19 local protection for the units.

20 Q.   Okay. Thanks. I guess the other question I have for you is  
21 we looked at the incident -- the approximate pressure at the time  
22 of the incident on the north side, or suction side of Owingsville  
23 station was 655 on a system that had an MAOP of 936, I believe.  
24 So, as we've talked to the folks in the field and -- kind of was  
25 that, you know, quite -- 300 pounds below the MAOP, based on your

1 kind of oversight in the system, is that 655 a pretty -- is that  
2 in what you would call in the normal range of operations?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Just based on the fact that it's off the suction side of the  
5 station, I guess it -- you know, get that differential across the  
6 station to move the gas off.

7 A. Yeah, I mean, that's -- we were running three units at  
8 Owingsville, and like I said, I believe we were moving almost 1.4  
9 billion cubic feet, and to do that, to do that and particularly  
10 with only one line coming out of Wheelersburg, 655 is pretty  
11 normal at moving that flow.

12 Q. Okay. Thanks. I just kind of wanted to clarify that.

13 MR. WOODEN: Alex, I don't have any other questions.

14 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Thank you, Tom. That was the first --  
15 this is Alex again. That was the first of my questions on my  
16 round two.

17 BY MS. COLLETTI:

18 Q. Tom, I want to talk to you really quick, back about the COVID  
19 procedures, just because I interrupted to take us off the record  
20 to try and get the timeline. To make sure I understand, the  
21 supervisor and two specialists, were they in the office? Or were  
22 they teleworking?

23 A. I had a manager and two specialists that were on location at  
24 the time.

25 Q. Okay, on location. Okay, great.

1 A. And then, and then maybe, I can't recall, maybe a short time  
2 after, after the phone call that I got telling me about the issue,  
3 I was not here. But I requested a second manager to come in.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Who lives about ten minutes from here.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. So during the event and subsequent actions, I had two  
8 managers and two specialists working with the control room to  
9 coordinate all this activity.

10 Q. Okay, okay. I just wanted to make sure. I couldn't quite  
11 remember and wanted to make sure I had gotten that. I remembered  
12 you bringing a second person in, but I just wasn't sure if that  
13 was remote, over the phone, how that was working. It's a strange  
14 world these days.

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Can you talk to me a little bit about what you guys do to  
17 onboard new controllers, how that training process works, and even  
18 for the veteran folks, what kind of training and drills they get  
19 on a yearly basis, especially as it relates to abnormal  
20 operations?

21 A. Yep. This may take a little bit.

22 Q. I was going to say, I know this is a big question.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. So sorry in advance.

25 A. No, that's okay. Just wanted to give you the heads up. So

1 if I don't mind saying, and I don't mind saying, I believe that we  
2 have probably one of the most stringent training programs in the  
3 industry. When a -- it doesn't matter whether or not a new hire  
4 has any experience or not, every new hire has to go through our  
5 training program.

6 So that training program consists of four modules. The first  
7 module is get to know Enbridge -- for the lack of a better term,  
8 get to know Enbridge, where we have checklists that speak to how  
9 to get your, how to get -- where things are, where security is,  
10 the mundane items, you know, passwords, email, code of business  
11 ethics has to be done in module one. So it's a -- it's probably  
12 -- it's a pretty extensive checklist and orienting the new  
13 employee to Enbridge. That's done before anything. We got to get  
14 everybody online and acclimated to the control room, where the  
15 restrooms are, fire escapes, that type of thing.

16 Module two to four is the substance of our training program.  
17 Module two is designed to have significant interplay between the  
18 manager and the trainer, which would be a controller, one of my  
19 FTEs, and the trainee. Now, there's an extensive checklist of  
20 actions or activities that have to be checked off in concert with  
21 a discussion with the manager and the trainer for that week. And  
22 it may be several weeks.

23 I mean, the first module is more about the manager talking  
24 about the systems or the system or that desk or wherever they  
25 might be. It's the first step in acclimating a new hire to our



1 assets. It's the first step in acclimating our new hires to our  
2 procedures, our standard operating procedure, to our control room  
3 management plan, to our alarm management plan, to our fatigue  
4 management plan; all of those procedures within the control room,  
5 how to make a phone call to the field, all of those are taught  
6 about in module one -- or module two. So if you can envision like  
7 a hire level, Alex, module two is more about the manager walking  
8 the trainee through an extensive checklist.

9       Module three is a -- more of a conversation between the  
10 controller and the trainee using the -- using a checklist as well.  
11 So that may -- that module duration may be a week before the  
12 controller can move -- or the new hire can move to module two, for  
13 example. Once you get to module two, there's an expectation that  
14 the trainee can speak with some intelligence about the itemized  
15 checklist that we have.

16       And in module four -- excuse me -- module four is not a  
17 discussion so much, or a conversation; rather, it's the trainee  
18 telling or walking the manager through that very set of  
19 checklists. And that may be we weeks and weeks. So, if you will,  
20 all of this is before (indiscernible).

21       So the trainee -- I keep saying trainee -- the new hire has  
22 extensive discussion with the manager, and at the same time, he or  
23 she is working with a controller to begin to acclimate themselves  
24 to console specific tasks, how to navigate -- I mean, even though,  
25 say, SCADA navigation is demonstrated in module one, two, and

1 three, while the controller sits side by side with the trainer,  
2 the expectation is that the trainer has the same checklist and  
3 knows what is expected from that, from the new hire, when they  
4 have the conversation with the manager.

5 So the trainee -- trainer is walking the new hire through  
6 some of those items on the checklist. Until the checklist is  
7 signed off by the manager, trainer, and the new hire, the new hire  
8 moves through understanding the pipeline and understanding the  
9 hydraulics, depending on their level of understanding, background  
10 knowledge. So that, that's months of work.

11 Once they've completed all the checklists and they are  
12 working, we then put them on a rotation. They go into rotation  
13 with a specific controller, and that specific controller is one of  
14 our more senior, more knowledgeable, and then they begin to work  
15 shift work now.

16 I've worked shift work and I know how difficult it is, and  
17 it's not cut out for everybody. So, during that period of time,  
18 it's not just about determining the knowledge level or the  
19 increasing knowledge level of the new hire, it's also trying to  
20 determine whether or not shift work is going to work for them and  
21 their families. We're pretty adamant about explaining and  
22 explaining and explaining and explaining about the need for  
23 familial understanding of what shift work means, not just the  
24 controller.

25 So that happens, and then there's a period of time farther on

1 down the timeline where the controller then, based on manager  
2 evaluation, is ready to be OQ, operator qualified. We have five  
3 covered tasks, and there is a review module for the controller.  
4 It's kind of a like a PowerPoint informational review, and then  
5 he's OQ'd.

6 Now, the OQ piece is twofold. One is a CBT, which is  
7 extensive. But the knowledge of skills piece of OQ is the --  
8 really where you can determine whether or not the controller is  
9 ready to be operator qualified. That consists, generally, of an  
10 8-hour period of question and answer -- questioned by the manager,  
11 answers by the controller -- and it hits for all of the items that  
12 were on the checklist are covered, as well as scenarios, tabletop  
13 scenarios, sequential actions, these types of things. How to, how  
14 to help the controller recognize and AO for example.

15 So all of that happens within the knowledge and skill  
16 section. That's pretty lengthy. It's about 8 hours or so.  
17 Sometimes it's longer. Sometimes it goes into two days. Once the  
18 controller then gets qualified, then they're, then they're put on  
19 shifts and they, they have responsibilities.

20 Now, since CRM, of course, our training, our -- oh, what's  
21 the word, continual training? I thought there was another  
22 adjective for it. But we also -- that was the onboarding, right,  
23 Alex, but we also have an extensive -- oh, shoot, I can't think of  
24 the name -- ongoing training program in the control room yearly.  
25 And in our training plan, we have a matrix of the items that we'll

1 be trained on and covered with all of my controllers, pre-COVID,  
2 twice a year. We typically had two controller meetings; sometimes  
3 they were -- sometimes I needed three meetings in the spring and  
4 the fall, just to get all of my staff in.

5 But the training, the training matrix that we have for  
6 continuous training, is pretty extensive. For example, even  
7 though we -- I mean, we're required to train on our SOPs once a  
8 year, not to exceed 15 months. We do that through a CBT.  
9 However, we additionally train on AO, emergency response, initial  
10 notification -- I can't think of the second one, but we train on  
11 our critical SOPs twice a year, plus what we do on the CBT, as an  
12 example.

13 We also have extemporaneous training with SCADA and ongoing,  
14 continuous training with CRM, for example. So as we have grown  
15 and evaluate the items that we need, we quickly determined that I  
16 need more meetings. So we have the two controller meetings  
17 yearly. We have desk meetings that are just specific to a  
18 particular console. That's only like four people. And then we  
19 also have, through the year, we have CRM training with all our  
20 guys, and we also have SCADA training. Because we found that, if  
21 you don't train them every year, regardless of what we need to do,  
22 people forget. And so we probably have more training than a lot  
23 of people.

24 That's kind of it in a nutshell. I know it was a long time,  
25 but it really was a nutshell.

1 Q. No, that's great. That's exactly what I was looking for.  
2 Thank you very much. I -- it just came to me, I think continued  
3 education? Continued education credits or CEUs?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Might have been what you were talking about. So what's the  
6 distribution of your team? Do you have a good mix of experienced  
7 folks, green folks? What's kind of how -- what's your control  
8 room staff look like in terms of experience?

9 A. Oh, well, anecdotally, and that's all I can -- you know,  
10 without -- all I can tell you, Alex, is anecdotally. I don't have  
11 any --

12 Q. That's fine.

13 A. -- hard facts. I do know that, if I was to compare the  
14 average years of service today versus what it looked like five  
15 years ago, we're significantly younger. With the merger -- or  
16 with the acquisition by Enbridge of Spectra, we lost a lot of  
17 people with the merger. And that's people choosing to leave,  
18 that's not --

19 Q. Right.

20 A. That's not, you know, production and head count or anything  
21 like that. People just found other jobs. They didn't want to  
22 work over here by the galleria. There was a lot of different --  
23 but we lost a lot of people.

24 And so for the last couple of years, up until probably  
25 recently, we've been, we've been in a hiring mode. And we train

1 everybody the same, so I mean, you know, when you're in a bind,  
2 you're in a bind for months. I don't know what the average number  
3 is, but I will tell you it's younger than when it was, you know,  
4 2016.

5 Q. Yeah, I understand. I've been on the merger side too. It's  
6 fun.

7 A. Yeah, yeah.

8 Q. Yeah. It's a joy. It's always a great time for people to  
9 retire or get scalped and poached and that kind of thing.

10 A. Exactly.

11 Q. Yeah. Well, I've got one last question for you, and you  
12 touched on it a little bit in the training, but I want to talk on  
13 it in a little bit more detail. And I talked to the guys in the  
14 field about it, but tabletop simulations of accidents and  
15 ruptures, can you talk to me what that looks like from your  
16 perspective? I've got it from the field operations perspective,  
17 but I'd like to hear about it from the gas control side. You  
18 mentioned it in your training discussion, but I'd like more  
19 detail.

20 A. Simulations that the field do, they do that based on what  
21 they're required to do. Sometimes we are involved; sometimes  
22 we're not involved at all. Sometimes they don't even let us know  
23 because of the extensiveness of how they handle their training  
24 with the local agencies and that type of thing.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. In the control room, though, we specifically, every  
2 controller meeting, so that's twice a year, we do tabletop  
3 exercises. And we additionally do every year, we do a -- it's not  
4 a tabletop, it's a simulation, but it's very similar to what the  
5 field does, where it's a gas control driven simulation, not a  
6 transmission driven simulation.

7 And it's designed to exercise our SOPs and our control staff,  
8 right? So they're getting training on, you know, how to evaluate  
9 what does a rupture look like, what asset can be brought to bear  
10 to isolate, and there's a myriad of things that we go through as  
11 we do this simulation in the control room.

12 So we do tabletops where we walk through abnormal operations  
13 through that quarter, or through that four or five months,  
14 whatever it is, and we walk through the tabletops with those  
15 talking about lessons learned, could have, would have, should  
16 have, those types of things. You know, equipment failure, that  
17 type of stuff.

18 And then, as I said, once a year, we have a pretty in-depth,  
19 involved gas control driven training scenario in the control room.

20 Q. Okay. Thank you very much. Talking -- and this is actually  
21 going to be my last question. I know I said the last one was, but  
22 something you said triggered a thought in my mind.

23 Talking about communications with the field, during an  
24 abnormal operations event, do you guys typically designate one  
25 point of contact between the control room and the field? So let's

1 say one controller is talking to one person out in the field, or  
2 is it lots of folks calling lots of people? How does that  
3 communication process work? Is there a standard? What's that  
4 look like?

5 A. It's more the latter, Alex, than the former. We have like  
6 ten lines per phone set. So what happens in this event, it's --  
7 we don't -- people call into gas control, we answer the phone.  
8 There's no one point of contact. Generally, the person that's  
9 working the desk -- for example, in this case, it would be Garza  
10 was working the console for Owingsville.

11 But that doesn't mean that Garza would be taking all the  
12 calls, because Garza is responsible for helping manage the  
13 pipeline incident and not manage phone calls. So my controllers,  
14 I mean, I like the way we do it because it involves other  
15 controllers and other management, and they're able to take the  
16 burden of handling the phone calls off of the controller who's  
17 managing the incident.

18 Q. Okay. That makes sense. That makes sense to me.

19 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Well, I don't have any more questions,  
20 so I'm going to pass you to Alvaro. Thank you very much, Tom. I  
21 appreciate it.

22 MR. ATKINSON: Thank you.

23 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Alex.

24 My only question that I have is can you think of anything  
25 that could have been done differently?



1 MR. ATKINSON: No. I'm satisfied that we did, we did what  
2 we needed to do in a timely fashion.

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Excellent. Thank you very much.

4 MR. ATKINSON: Thank you, sir.

5 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I don't have any other questions. You're  
6 welcome.

7 MR. WOODEN: Hey, Tom, I just had what I think would be a  
8 simple clarification. In your training, you described training on  
9 AO or AOs. I know that's a common industry reference, but what  
10 does that stand for?

11 MR. ATKINSON: Yeah, sometimes I get caught up in acronyms.  
12 So AO is abnormal operation. And I think what's significant about  
13 abnormal operation is that we train on, you know, how to recognize  
14 that. That's part of our training across the year, our continuous  
15 training, whether sequential or however that might be. We train  
16 and help the controllers at least walk through on a tabletop  
17 exercise how to recognize an AO, or abnormal operation. Thank  
18 you.

19 MR. WOODEN: Thanks, Tom. I just, I know it's a real common  
20 regulatory term. I just want to make sure that it kind of got  
21 clarified.

22 MR. ATKINSON: Yes.

23 MR. WOODEN: So, Alex, I don't have any further questions.

24 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Well, that's our two rounds, and though  
25 I may break my interrupt rule from time to time, I never break my

1 more than two rounds rule. So I want to thank you very much, Tom,  
2 for your time. Again, I appreciate your patience on the call  
3 where we had to go off the record and get the document. Thank you  
4 for being so cooperative. I think we've got a good picture of how  
5 your control room works.

6 Is there anything that I haven't asked you about that I  
7 should have? Any kind of detail or anything interesting that  
8 you'd like to share that's additional?

9 MR. ATKINSON: I can't think of anything, Alex.

10 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Well, if anything comes to you at a  
11 later time, Tom Wooden has my contact information, so feel free to  
12 reach out to me at any time.

13 About a month from now, you'll get a transcript emailed to  
14 you. So I'll be getting your contact information from that.  
15 It'll come with a form at the front. If there's no issues with  
16 it, feel free to check the box that says no, no errors.

17 If there are errors, and a lot of times there's misspellings  
18 and things like that, which is just because it's audio versus  
19 written, feel free to write that up either on the document itself  
20 or over email. You can just refer to the page and line number,  
21 and we can make those corrections.

22 Aside from that, I just want to thank you for your time. I  
23 appreciate it. I know we've taken over two hours at this point,  
24 and your time is valuable, so thank you very much for your  
25 assistance.

1 MR. ATKINSON: Thank you, Alex. Appreciate that.

2 MS. COLLETTI: With that, it is 12:09 p.m., and this  
3 concludes the interview of Tom Atkinson.

4 (Whereupon, at 12:09 p.m., the interview was concluded)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: ENBRIDGE INC. NATURAL GAS  
PIPELINE RUPTURE AND FIRE  
IN HILLSBORO, KENTUCKY,  
ON MAY 4, 2020  
Interview of Tom Atkinson

ACCIDENT NO.: PLD20LR001

PLACE: Via teleconference

DATE: May 13, 2020

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.



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Sandra Hirsch  
Transcriber