

National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Office of Railroad, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Investigations

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

Name: Barry Blevins		
Department: Operations-Owingsville Sta.		
Title: Light Equipment Operator		
Date of Interview: 5/10/20		
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 attache	d 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

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Interview of: BARRY BLEVINS, Light Equipment Operator

Enbridge, Inc.

Via teleconference

Monday, May 11, 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

ITEM Interview of Barry Blevins: By Ms. Colletti By Mr. Rodriguez By Ms. Colletti By Ms. Colletti 20

INTERVIEW

2.0

(10:37 a.m.)

MS. COLLETTI: We're on the record for the Barry Blevins interview. Good morning. Today is May 11th, 2020. It is now 10:37 a.m. Eastern Time. My name is Alex Colletti. I'm the investigator in charge for this accident for the National Transportation Safety Board in Washington, D.C.

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

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

You're permitted to have one other person present during the interview. This person is of your choice: an attorney, spouse, supervisor, friend, family, or no one at all.

Barry, for the record, please state the spelling of your full

name, your job title, and who you have selected to be present 2 during this interview. 3 MR. BLEVINS: Okay. My name is Barry Blevins, B-a-r-r-y, 4 B-l-e-v-i-n-s. I am a light equipment operator at my operating area -- or my section that I report to is the Owingsville, 5 6 Kentucky, Compressor Station. And I work for Enbridge. 7 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. And who have you selected to be with 8 you on the call? 9 MR. BLEVINS: Dane. 10 MS. COLLETTI: Dane Jaques? 11 MR. BLEVINS: Yes, ma'am. 12 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Perfect. Great. Okay. Now we're all 13 going to introduce ourselves on the call. We'll start with PHMSA, 14 then Enbridge, and then Dane. And again --15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Good morning. My name is --16 MS. COLLETTI: And again, please spell your name. 17 Alvaro. 18 MR. RODRIGUEZ: (Indiscernible). Good morning. My name is 19 Alvaro Rodriguez, A-l-v-a-r-o, R-o-d-r-i-g-u-e-z. I am an 2.0 accident investigator with the Accident Investigation Division of 21 PHMSA. 22 MR. WOODEN: Good morning. This is Thomas Wooden, 23 T-h-o-m-a-s, W-o-o-d-e-n, Vice President of Engineering and Asset

Management for Enbridge and party coordinator for the

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investigation.

MR. JAQUES: My name is Dane Jaques, D-a-n-e, last name, J-a-q-u-e-s, and I'm a partner with the law firm of Steptoe and Johnson.

MS. COLLETTI: Okay, great.

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Barry, thank you for agreeing to interview with us today. I really appreciate your time. It's an important task we have to collect the information we can from your memory of that. I'm going to ask you to provide a lot of detail for me or as much as you can remember. Please don't speculate; just provide what you can remember.

If I ask you a question and you don't know, it's completely fine to say that you don't know. The more you can give me, though, the better.

INTERVIEW OF BARRY BLEVINS

BY MS. COLLETTI:

- Q. Before we get started on that, can you tell me a little bit about your background? Did you start at Texas Eastern

 Transmission? Have you always been a light equipment operator?

 What are your qualifications?
- A. Okay. I started with Texas Eastern as a temporary laborer in April of 1984. I worked off and on till 1990 as a temporary laborer. In April of 1990, I got to come to the company fulltime as a pipeliner. I was a pipeliner -- in the position from '90 till 2007. And in 2007, I was promoted to light equipment operator.

Q. Okay.

2.0

- A. Which is the title I currently have.
- Q. Bart did say that you were experienced. I see that he wasn't exaggerating. Seems like you've been there quite a while. That's good. I like talking to folks that know what they're doing.

Well, here's the part where I'm going to make you work. I really just want you to walk me through the day from the first person that called you and notified you of the incident to the moment you went home and you were off duty from the incident. Every detail you can think of, everything that you did, you know, if you operated valves, how you did so. Really, just the more detail, the better.

Again, this'll take about 30, 45 minutes, and that's fine.

And if you need breaks in the middle, feel free to ask for them or whatever you need, so just take your time.

A. Okay. I received a call -- I was at my home. I received a call from Bart Johnson at 4:44 p.m. He instructed me to go to the Muses Mills valve site, which is the first site north of the Owingsville station, and I made my way to the site and arrived at 5:15 p.m. I received a phone call from Bart instructing me to shut all three mainline valves, and I started that at 5:20 -- well, I started at 5:15, actually, closing the valves, and I had them -- the first one, Line 15, closed at 5:20; Line 10 closed at 5:22; Line 25 closed at 5:23 p.m.

After that, I was instructed to lock and tag the valves out,

wait for which is normal procedure for us for security and (indiscernible)

Scott Trusty. I instructed him to stay there, and then I left the site and proceeded toward the -- or I left the valve site and proceeded toward the incident site.

From there, a little later on, it was about 6:00 or something in the neighborhood -- 6:46 p.m., after talking to Bart Johnson, (indiscernible) on the phone, I came to the Owingsville compressor station, picked up a light plant (ph.), which is a generator with that pull with lights on it on wheels where you pull down the pickup truck and you can -- it has four big floodlights on it. You can turn up, telescope it out. I felt like we need some light out there at the incident site. I came to the Owingsville compressor station and picked that up and then returned to the site.

You guys want me to just keep right on going or --

- Q. Yeah. Just keep on keeping on.
- 16 | A. Okay.

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- 17 | Q. Yep.
 - A. Okay. When we arrived at the site, we could see some residual flames coming out of the pipe, and we waited there. The Forestry Service was on-site along with some other emergency personnel. And the Forestry Service, we told them that they couldn't get into the site until the fire died down. There was some adjoining brush around the area and there was some -- that was on fire. And during that time, Bart also told me that they were going to start lowering the pressure expirating or cycling

the gas out of the other two lines, which they did.

And once all of the other two lines were -- the gas was out of those two and the flames died down, at approximately 9:20 p.m., meeting we had a (indiscernible) the Forestry Service folks and myself and another employee, Ben Bloom (ph.) from the Danville, Kentucky, location, we went down to the incident site with our leak detectors. We walked the site to make sure it was safe, and then we allowed the Forestry guys to go around the adjoining area and put out the small fires.

After they did that, when we walked back to the top of the hill, I was informed that the other two lines, line 15 and 25, were down to zero PSI. And Ben Bloom and I stayed out on the right-of-way on the longer end all night for security reasons, so none of the onlookers or whatever would come out, and we stayed there till approximately 7:30 in the morning Tuesday morning when we had some other folks who were working relieve us. I mean, that's pretty much in a -- that's just in a nutshell what I did, so --

- Q. Okay. Thank you very much for that. I want to back up to valve operation --
- 21 | A. Yes, ma'am.

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Q. -- when you're getting to the valves. I want you to talk me through what it looks like when you get to Muses Mill. What all is involved in operating those valves, why you chose the order to close that you chose, what all decision making is involved in that

process -- I'm not familiar with that site. I know some things about valve operation from when I worked out in the field, but it's -- you know, I was in measure, so I'm more gas chromatograph kind of girl than I was grease and valves.

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So help me out in terms of, you know, what kind of valves are these? What all did you have to do to get them closed? What all did you have to do to make sure they were locked out and tagged out? And what does that process look like?

A. Okay. As far as determining -- at the time that I was instructed to close off three mainline valves, I didn't -- information hadn't been passed on to me actually which one had ruptured, so I started with line 15 first because that's the first one when I walk -- unlock the gate and walked into the valve site. So there are gate valves, all three of them, of course, two 30-inch and a 36-inch, and you have to turn supply gas on, which comes up off the pipeline itself. You have to turn the supply gas on, and then there is a handle on the side of the valve body that you mainly operate.

I started line 15 into the closing stage. I then walked to the next line, which was roughly 25 foot over. Did the same thing on line 10, started it, the closing stage. And then line 25 was approximately 25 foot also over from line 10. Did the same thing with it. By the time I had all three of them in the closing sequence, or whatever, then I went back to line 15. It was fully closed. I shut the supply gas, bled the bleeder down. Went back

to 10, same thing. Went back to 25, the same -- repeated the same process.

Then I went back to line 15, and we have what they call handwheels that's out there. You put those on after you bled the gas off. The operator, you put those handwheels on the stem that's sticking out, then you manually make sure that they have closed 100 percent. I did the same thing on all three of the mainline valves. And then I had a lockout/tagout box in my truck with chains. Each person has their own assigned locks, and I had tags in the kit, also. And I went to my Emergency Response Manual, which is in the trucks, that have a detailed sequence on lockout/tagout, and I followed that and locked and tagged the affected valves.

- Q. Thank you very much. Yeah. For me, I'm used to being in the shed with the chromatograph and the RTU and all of that, so that's the -- the valves, I've seen it done, but it's different. It's a very different process than messing with measurement equipment, so thank you for walking me through that. Did you notice --
- 19 A. You bet.
- 20 Q. -- anything unusual or anything act up for you during that 21 process?
- 22 | A. No.

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- 23 | Q. Okay. How often do you operate those valves?
- A. Well, that's a good question. You know, whenever we do pipeline maintenance work, it requires us to operate them. I do

1 | that, but we have a person that that is his specific job, and he

- 2 | inspects them at different frequencies during the year and
- 3 operates. As far as myself, just whenever the job calls for me to
- 4 | close valves, I do so.
- 5 \parallel Q. Okay. So you're not the person that does the like annual
- 6 | inspections or --
- 7 | A. No, ma'am.
- 8 Q. Okay. Got you. That makes sense. How familiar are you with
- 9 the Muses Mill site? It sounds like you've been there a few
- 10 | times.
- 11 A. Yes, ma'am. Very familiar.
- 12 | Q. Okay. How difficult is it to get there? Like can you
- 13 describe, you know -- say, about a 30-minute drive, what that
- 14 drive's like? How to get there? I'm not familiar with the area
- 15 and I'm not there, so, you know, do you have to off-road at all?
- 16 How accessible is the right-of-way? What does that -- what's
- 17 | getting there look like?
- 18 A. Okay. It is right off the road. But to get
- 19 | from my home location, I went US- to the Interstate I'd
- 20 | head east to | exit off Interstate | I took
- 21 | Highway | Went to the
- 22 end of it, turn on Kentucky and went probably
- 23 miles, turned up Kentucky Highway drove about miles and
- 24 then turn up Road, which is a road, about
- 25 | miles up there. And like I said, the valve site is approximately

- 1 feet off the edge of the road with gravel laying right
- 2 | through it.
- 3 $\|$ Q. Okay. So it's not really it's -- that it's difficult to
- 4 | access. It's just a distance thing.
- 5 | A. No, it's not difficult to access at all.
- 6 Q. Okay. It's just a matter of miles. Okay.
- 7 | A. Yes.
- 8 Q. Okay. Are all you guys about equidistant from Muses Mill?
- 9 mean, in terms of, you know -- how spread out is everybody in the
- 10 | area?
- 11 | A. Well, we let folks live in different areas (indiscernible)
- 12 | but I am the closest person from my home location to the Muses
- 13 | Mill valve site.
- 14 | Q. Okay. You mentioned after the line time was blown down and
- 15 | the flames had kind of gone down a little bit, you and Ben Bloom,
- 16 | with leak detectors, helped out the Forestry Service to look for
- 17 | hotspots and things like that. Are those leak detectors standard
- 18 | equipment that you have with you? Is that the like four-gas
- 19 | monitor?
- 20 | A. Yeah.
- 21 ||Q|. What kind of equipment is that?
- 22 || A. The one I have is a pipeliner 636 (ph.), a flame ionization
- 23 detector.
- 24 | Q. Oh, okay. Oh, it's an FID. Perfect. Great.
- 25 | A. Yes, ma'am.

- 1 Q. Yeah, those are nice. Yeah. I've heard -- I just wanted to
- 2 | kind of get an idea of what you were working with in terms of a
- 3 | leak detector, if it was a -- in terms of, you know, when you get
- 4 | the call and he's -- you have a lot of experience, so I think I
- 5 | know what the answer to this question's already going to be, but
- 6 I'm going to ask it anyway. You get the call from Bart and he
- 7 | says, I need you to go shut these valves down at Muses Mill. You
- 8 | get out there, do you feel prepared to do -- do you feel like you
- 9 | know what you need to do when you get out there?
- 10 A. Yes, ma'am. Absolutely.
- 11 | Q. Okay.
- 12 | A. We have simulated emergencies periodically during the year,
- 13 | and I'm -- like I said, I am very comfortable in performing that
- 14 | task.
- 15 \parallel Q. Okay. Is there anything you think that you wished you guys
- 16 | had organized a little bit better ahead of time or afterwards?
- 17 | You know, maybe communication or talking with the emergency
- 18 response folks, or maybe having the emergency response folks
- 19 | after -- while the fire was still burning afterwards? Anything
- 20 | you can think of.
- 21 A. No, ma'am. I actually think that the response time and the
- 22 | steps that we went through was very much highly organized, and
- 23 | we -- I think we responded very quickly in figuring where the site
- 24

was.

25 $\|Q$. Okay. Is Muses Mill one of the farther valves sites for you

- 1 | to get to, or are they all about 30 minutes away or in your area,
- 2 or how does that --
- 3 A. No, ma'am.
- 4 | Q. Okay.
- 5 A. That's actually one of the closest ones --
- 6 | Q. Okay.
- $7 \parallel A. --$ to the Owingsville station.
- 8 \parallel Q. Okay. So can you talk to me a little bit about that area and
- 9 how it's kind of set up?
- 10 | A. You talking about just the Owingsville area, or --
- 11 | Q. Yes, sir. Where you work. So, you know, the -- so, if Muses
- 12 | Mill -- so, Muses Mill's the closest one to the station, right?
- 13 | So, if -- and it sounds like that's a fairly close one. If this
- 14 accident had happened, you know, a little farther away, what kind
- 15 | of response times are we looking at, is kind of where I'm
- 16 | thinking -- is where my brain's going, so --
- 17 || A. Well, some of the other -- just going up the pipeline, the
- 18 | next valve site north of Muses Mill, the Highway 59 (ph.) valve
- 19 | site, it'd probably take about 45 minutes to get to it. And then
- 20 | there's one above it that is actually in our area of
- 21 | responsibility is the primary emergency responders, and it is what
- 22 | they call Beauty Ridge valve site, and that'd probably take
- 23 | somewhere around a hour to get to it.
- 24 | Q. Okay. When there is an emergency, how do you know who's
- 25 going to be doing what? Is that laid out through Bart? Is that

- something you guys have decided ahead of time? Is that just based on your experience or location, or how does that all work?
 - A. It's either laid out through the area supervisor or whoever is the person in charge. And, you know, Bart's my immediate supervisor, so if Bart's not off somewhere, it'll be Bart. And if he is out-of-pocket, they always designate another supervisor that's around close who would be the one that will be handling
- 9 Q. Okay.

emergencies.

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- A. So, like I said, it's always -- if one supervisor's out-of-pocket, the next closest one steps in, and we know ahead of time that -- if we have issues, to go to, so --
 - Q. Okay. I've got one last question for you before I pass you on. Can you just talk me through kind of what a normal day looks like? And I know that's a big question because I've been out on the field, and I know there isn't a normal day. So just kind of what some of your responsibilities are in general, what that might look like, what you might be doing, where you might be going, that kind of thing.
 - A. Okay. A normal or a regular working calendar year, (indiscernible) start at 7:00 in the morning and (indiscernible) work (indiscernible) the afternoon. We go home at 3:30. But when we arrive at the compression station every morning, we will have a pre-job meeting and discuss the days buy-ins. With the COVID-19 deal, we don't all meet in one room. Bart will come around to

each person's individual office and stand out in the hall, and we'll discuss what we're going to do for the day.

It could be if there's issues here in the compressor station, assist

I (indiscernible) with those. If there's routine -- whether that be routine or anything else in the compressor station. Same thing applies out on the pipeline. If there's issues with any routine or non-routine in the area of the compressor stations, in our area, I go from time to time to those locations and assist, also. So that's pretty much it in a nutshell.

But we do -- one other task we do, first thing in the one morning, we check our phone calls to make sure (indiscernible) that we're going to be involved in or not going to be a conflict or not conflict --

Q. Okay.

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- 15 A. -- on calls, so that's pretty much it in a nutshell. That's 16 a brief overview.
- Q. No, that's great. That's exactly what I was looking for.

 18 Thank you.
- 19 | A. Yes, ma'am.
 - MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Well, I'm going to pass you off for the rest of the first round. We'll start with Alvaro. And please introduce yourself.
- MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Alex.
- Well, first, thank you for providing the timeline for this event.

- 1 MS. COLLETTI: Don't forget to introduce yourself.
- 2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: My name is Alvaro.
- 3 MS. COLLETTI: Yeah. There you go. Got it. Sorry.
- 4 MR. RODRIGUEZ: My name is Alvaro Rodriguez. I am an accident investigator with PHMSA.

6 BY MR. RODRIGUEZ:

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- Q. And my first question is about if you have any idea which would be the cause of the incident?
- 9 A. No, I do not. It would be speculation on my part. That's 10 not my -- not for me to comment on. I really don't know.
- Q. No problem. And do you have or do you usually have discussions about any possible surveys of the area or maintenance to any of the lines or anything that you think could've been done before the incident happened?
- 15 | | A. You said surveys or maintenance? Was that your question?
- Q. Yeah. Anything that has to do with surveys of the area,
 maybe patrolling for any indications that may have probably tell
- 19 A. No. Don't have any surveys or anything to lead me to believe

something else about how this incident happened?

- 20 that anything really happened here, just the same as any
- 21 other -- no different than any other place on our pipeline
- 22 right-of-way. So, to answer your question, no. I don't have any
- 23 other reason to think that that would've happened.
- MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, thank you. And I think everything else
- 25 has been already asked. I don't have any questions at the moment.

- 1 MR. BLEVINS: Yes, ma'am [sic].
- 2 MS. COLLETTI: All right.
- MR. WOODEN: Barry, this is Tom Wooden. How are you doing 4 today?
- 5 MR. BLEVINS: I'm all right.
- 6 MR. WOODEN: Alex, I don't have any questions for Barry at this time.
- 8 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Great.
- 9 BY MS. COLLETTI:
- 10 Q. Well, I am -- Barry, I just wanted to talk real quick
- 11 | about -- going back to keeping an eye on the site overnight with
- 12 | Ben and using the FIDs with the Forestry Service, so what -- is
- 13 | that something that you guys typically -- I mean, I guess
- 14 | typically do isn't an often thing. Have you had an incident like
- 15 this in your history of working with Texas Eastern that you've
- 16 | experienced?
- 17 A. Yes, ma'am.
- 18 \parallel Q. Okay. Did you provide a similar service at that time?
- 19 | A. Yes.
- 20 | Q. Okay.
- 21 \square A. Yes, we did.
- 22 | O. Which incident was that?
- 23 A. I don't actually remember the year. It was a most recent
- 24 | incident here in the Owingsville area. It happened on the
- 25 southside of the station. It was a -- I can't tell you the exact

- 1 date, but we had a rupture and a fire there, also, and we had
- $2 \parallel$ a -- had some adjoining brush fires and we do basically the same
- 3 thing.
- 4 | Q. Okay. You're not talking about the incident in Danville from
- 5 | last year, correct? That's a --
- 6 | A. No, ma'am.
- 7 | Q. Okay. That's something older. Okay. I was just curious if
- 8 | that's -- I hadn't heard of someone -- of a operator working with
- 9 | the Forestry Service on something like that. I'm sure they
- 10 | appreciated that.
- 11 MS. COLLETTI: That's really it for me.
- 12 Alvaro, do you have a second set of questions?
- 13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: No, I don't have any other questions.
- 14 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Tom, do you have anything?
- 15 MR. WOODEN: Yeah.
- 16 BY MR. WOODEN:
- 17 $\|Q$. Barry, I will just follow up on Alex's question around, you
- 18 \parallel go out there and you walk this leak survey. Why are you doing
- 19 | that?
- 20 | A. Just to make sure that the area is safe for the Forestry
- 21 | Service or if it was emergency personnel or anybody else. We just
- 22 | want to make -- again, make sure that these leak detectors don't
- 23 | show up that there's still potential gas in the atmosphere. It's
- 24 mainly as a safety deal.
- 25 $\|Q$. Okay. I just kind of wanted to get that background.

A. Yeah.

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

MS. COLLETTI: Okay.

MR. BLEVINS: Plus, I'll just add to that, that's pretty much standard procedure if you think there's -- you know, if you suspect there's a leak, it's standard procedure. Let alone, obviously, we had already had a failure, so that's just standard procedure for us to do.

MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Well, Barry, thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it. We all do. Thank you for being open and taking the time to talk to us. It helps us a lot.

In probably about a month, you'll receive a transcript of the interview from me. It would just -- if you could take a look over it. You'll get a -- just a kind of a legalese form from me that says, if there's no errors on the transcript, check this box. If there are errors, you can mark up the transcript or you can send me an email saying on, you know, page X, line Y, she wrote the wrong word or she spelled my name wrong or et cetera, et cetera.

So, other than that, do you have any questions for me or is there anything that I haven't covered that I should've asked you about?

MR. BLEVINS: No. Not that I can think of.

MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Well, thank you so much for your time again. I appreciate it. I hope you have a good rest of your day, and I hope you don't have to do a lot of talking for the rest of

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    your day, so --
 2
          MR. BLEVINS: All righty. Thank you very much.
 3
                         Thank you. This concludes this interview.
          MS. COLLETTI:
                                                                         Ιt
 4
    is 11:12 a.m.
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          MR. WOODEN:
                       Thank you, Barry.
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          MR. BLEVINS: Yes, sir.
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          (Whereupon, at 11:12 a.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 Barry Blevins

ACCIDENT NO.: PLD20LR001

PLACE: Via teleconference

DATE: May 11, 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.

Danielle C. Morgan

Transcriber