

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

ENBRIDGE INC. NATURAL GAS *
PIPELINE RUPTURE AND FIRE *
IN HILLSBORO, KENTUCKY, *
ON MAY 4, 2020 *

Accident No.: PLD20LR001

* * * * *

Interview of: BART JOHNSON, Area Supervisor
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

I N D E X

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>PAGE</u> |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Interview of Bart Johnson: | |
| By Ms. Colletti | 6 |
| By Mr. Rodriguez | 36 |

I N T E R V I E W

(8:13 a.m.)

1
2
3 MS. COLLETTI: We're on the record for the Bart Johnson
4 interview. Good morning. Today is May 11th, 2020. It is now
5 8:13 a.m. Eastern time. My name is Alex Colletti, 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 or 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: an attorney, spouse,
24 supervisor, friend, family member, or nobody at all.

25 Bart, 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 this interview.

3 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, my name is Bart, B-a-r-t, Johnson,
4 J-o-h-n-s-o-n. My position is area supervisor at the Owingsville
5 compressor station, and my representative is Dane Jaques.

6 MS. COLLETTI: Perfect. Okay. Great. Normally we'd be
7 going around the room, but since we're doing this recording style,
8 we're going to do this, we're going to start with introductions.
9 We'll start with PHMSA and then we'll go to Enbridge and then
10 we'll go to representatives. Please spell your name, your title,
11 and who you're representing.

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: My name is Alvaro Rodriguez, A-l-v-a-r-o,
13 Rodriguez, R-o-d-r-u-g-u-e-z. I am an accident investigator with
14 the Accident Investigation Division of PHMSA.

15 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Tom, you're up next.

16 MR. WOODEN: Sorry about that.

17 MS. COLLETTI: No, that's okay.

18 MR. WOODEN: My name is Thomas Wooden, T-h-o-m-a-s,
19 W-o-o-d-e-n. I'm the Vice President of Engineering and Asset
20 Management for Enbridge and the party coordinator for this
21 incident.

22 MR. JAQUES: My name is Dane Jaques, spelled D-a-n-e,
23 J-a-q-u-e-s. I'm a partner with Steptoe and Johnson, and I'm here
24 on behalf of Bart Johnson.

25 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Perfect.

1 Well, Bart, thank you for agreeing to interview with us
2 today. I really appreciate your time. It's an important task we
3 have to collect any information we can from your memory of that
4 day. I'm going to ask you to provide a lot of details for me, as
5 much as you can remember.

6 I don't want you to speculate; just provide me with what you
7 can remember. If I ask a question and you don't remember, you can
8 say that you don't know. That's just fine. However, the more
9 information you can give me, the better.

10 INTERVIEW OF BART JOHNSON

11 BY MS. COLLETTI:

12 Q. Before we get going on the day of the accident, though, can
13 you let me know a little bit about your background, you know,
14 where all you've worked? Did you start with Enbridge originally
15 or with TechCo or, you know, what are your qualifications?

16 A. Right. Okay, sure. So I was lucky enough, out of college,
17 to be chosen as an entry-level pipeliner at the Danville
18 compression station. I was in the position for several years.

19 Also at the Danville compressor station, an opportunity for a
20 station operator became available. I applied and also received
21 that promotion, was in that position for several years as well,
22 and then another opportunity became available. That was a
23 corrosion technician in the -- one of the two in the Stanford
24 area. I was in that position also for several years.

25 And then the opportunity for area supervisor here at the

1 Owingsville compressor station, that opening occurred, and applied
2 and also was lucky enough to get this position as well, so -- and
3 I've been up here in this position for going on 6 years now, so
4 that's my background.

5 Q. Okay. So I'm just going to --

6 A. And it's all been with Texas Eastern.

7 Q. It's all been with Texas Eastern. So I'm just going to
8 summarize that really quick. You've been working there a while
9 and you know what you're doing. That's great. That's really
10 great. It's nice to talk to someone that's experienced and that's
11 worked in several different areas of it.

12 So you've worked out in the field, you've -- well, you're
13 still working in the field, obviously, but you've worked in
14 corrosion, you've worked at station operator, the whole deal,
15 pipeliner, all that. So that's great. I'm sure your guys
16 appreciate that you've done all of their roles as well.

17 Well, I want to backup to the day of the event, and take a
18 moment if you need to, but think through where you were at the
19 time that you first received notification of the accident and, you
20 know, what was going through your mind, anything that you can
21 think of at all, and then walk me through from that moment up
22 until the moment that the fire was out, any calls you received,
23 any actions you took, anything that the guys did out in the field.

24 So this is the long portion of talking for you. So like I
25 said, if you need a break, take it, so -- but this is the talking

1 bit.

2 A. Understood. I'll get my drink of water here.

3 Q. Yeah. Yeah. I'm sorry, I'd offer you water normally, but I
4 feel -- so, you know, I'm normally a better host, but --

5 A. No, no. Believe me, I understand it so -- I understand all
6 the precautions. We're trying to continue to take those into
7 account out here as well.

8 Q. It's a weird time, yeah.

9 A. So I will try to get started here. As far as when I first
10 heard about the incident, so it was right at 4:41 p.m. I was
11 actually sitting in front of my house; I had just got home, stayed
12 a little late prepping for the next day work activities.

13 So I was actually sitting in front of my house and received a
14 phone call from Bryson Price, who stated that he had actually
15 received a phone call from the Owingsville dispatch, who is
16 actually a friend of his, stating that they received several phone
17 calls up in the Hillsboro area of a potential pipeline rupture,
18 and asked me if I wanted him to go check that out. I stated, yes,
19 that I did, and we needed to be working -- locating the area and
20 working and making sure that we're getting emergency response out
21 in that area. I left immediately after that. About 4:42 is when
22 I left, and I was headed to the event site.

23 In transit, went ahead and called our out ~~(indiscernible)~~ ^{gas}
24 control in Houston to see if they were having any phone calls
25 about anything or seeing any pressure drops or anything like that.

1 They said that they were, they were looking into it, and that they
2 were noticing a drop in pressure. But I went ahead without having
3 that exact, you know, mileage and went ahead and decided to
4 dispatch personnel.

5 At 4:44, I called Barry Blevins, who works for me, the light
6 equipment operator and also works as a daily pipeliner as well, as
7 far as some of the job duties, and I dispatched him to the ~~south~~ ^{north}
8 section because I knew he was in the Hillsboro area via the
9 earlier phone call. Dispatched him to the valve setting
10 immediately north of that, which would have been at Mile Post 517,
11 which we call Muses Mill valve, mainline valve setting, and told
12 him that if we needed to -- because we didn't have verification,
13 but also previous learnings, we need to go ahead and shut all
14 three of our lines, being (indiscernible) line and 15 and 25
15 isolate.

16 The next phone call I made was to Joey Grimes. Joey Grimes
17 is our station operator here at Owingsville station. Explained
18 the situation to him and also dispatched him, but I dispatched him
19 because of his knowledge of the station being the station
20 operator. I dispatched him back to Owingsville compressor
21 station. He was actually picking up some materials for his house
22 in Morehead at the time but quickly said he would get back to the
23 house, get -- and get down here.

24 A minute after that, at 4:46, I called Billy Grimes, who is
25 our electrical controls technician here at Owingsville compressor

1 station and also qualified as the station operator as well here at
2 Owingsville, and I dispatched Billy to the station to help with
3 isolation of the incident here at the station, which is at Mile
4 Post 502.

5 So immediately after that, I contacted Scott Trusty at 4:47.
6 Scott Trusty is our station mechanic but was previously a utility
7 pipeliner, so his knowledge of the right-of-way and the location
8 both inside the station and out on the right-of-way. I dispatched
9 Scott to assist Barry Blevins at the Mile Post 517, Muses Mill
10 valve setting, to assist with getting all three lines isolated.

11 So after that, right at 4:48, I called Randy Dean, who is my
12 area -- who is my boss, the area manager for the Stanford area, to
13 inform him of the incident and discuss, you know, kind of the
14 current situation, kind of where we were, the fact that we had
15 personnel en route to isolate the situation. And he said he would
16 assist as well getting help as well.

17 So I called Bryson Price back, who was the person who
18 initially called me to ensure, you know, site security, that we
19 had gotten a hold of emergency management, the services, and
20 stated that there were personnel that were in the Tom Ishmael
21 area, as far as emergency management personnel.

22 At 4:52, I called gas control back to see if they could
23 identify which line, they could tell if there was a pressure drop
24 on that line and see if they were able to tell which one it was.
25 Cody Fokes (ph.) called me. He is a gas control specialist in

1 Houston. And then I updated him on the situation at that time.
2 So, again, we had personnel dispatched both to the station as well
3 to the immediate valve setting north of Owingsville to isolate all
4 three lines.

5 At 4:55, I contacted Billy Grimes back who, was our EC PIC
6 that I had dispatched to Owingsville station, to ensure that he
7 was able to reach the site, that there weren't any barricades or
8 any type, you know, traffic public that he wasn't able to navigate
9 through, and I just wanted to ensure that he was clear up on as
10 far as isolating the station and getting this on all three lines.
11 So I just wanted to make sure that all that was clear.

12 I also called Barry Blevins back at 4:56 to ensure he, too,
13 did not have any issues as he was navigating and driving to the
14 event site -- or I'm sorry, as he was driving to the mainline
15 valve site at Mile Post 517, that he wasn't experiencing any site
16 or onlookers that he wasn't able to navigate through and also to
17 ensure clarity as well, that we wanted all three lines shut.

18 At 4:56 -- yes, 4:56 is when Mike ~~Nichol~~^{Nickel}, who was also works
19 within gas control, called and I updated him on the situation to
20 ensure he also knew that people were dispatched to the site and
21 that all three lines were being shut and EMS was assisting with
22 traffic control and public safety.

23 At 4:57 p.m., I called Randy Dean back, who's my boss, just
24 to update him on the current status of what we were doing.

25 5 o'clock p.m., I called Bryson Price back to get an update

1 to see if -- as far as the site security, if there'd been any
2 initial reports of any missing persons, any initial reports of any
3 evacuated homes, any burning structures that may have been in the
4 vicinity, any of those. We knew down at -- as far as where
5 that -- in that Hillsboro area was, depending on where it was, as
6 far as even somewhat remote, but we didn't have that information
7 at that time.

8 At 5 o'clock p.m., I called Scott Trusty back just to also
9 check on his status, seeing if he was able to -- if he was having
10 trouble navigating to the site because of onlookers and also just
11 to see when he thought he may be able to get onsite.

12 At 5 o'clock p.m., Mike ~~Greenly~~ ^{Greenway} (ph.) called. Mike ~~Greenly~~ ^{Greenway}
13 is our MPO out of the central region office, and I spoke with him
14 concerning emergency response effort as well as the isolation
15 status and where we were in that process. And he asked kind of
16 specific location questions. We told him it was -- that it was in
17 the Hillsboro area. Did not have an exact location at that time,
18 but had an idea. You could see, you know, you could see the --
19 any rupture, seeing the flames obviously, so Bryson was still
20 working his way through there.

21 At 5:05 p.m., Bryson Price called about the event. He
22 confirmed that it was over the top of Martin Mill Hill location
23 and that it was a remote location based on the -- based on his
24 knowledge of the area, meaning that there no neighborhoods, no
25 homes right in that immediate location.

1 At 5:07, I spoke with Jason York (ph.) -- Jason York is Bath
2 County's EM director -- about the situation. Bath County is -- he
3 notified that yes, Bath County is helping assist with traffic
4 control, public safety, blocking access to the event site and
5 coordinating with the Fleming County EMS/EM, with their director,
6 Dwayne Price (ph.), who I talked to at a later time.

7 Let's see. At 5:08 p.m., I spoke with Mike ~~Greenly~~ ^{Greenway} again
8 concerning an updated status and information he was requesting as
9 far as there was an approximate location and event, if there was
10 any type of secondary fires or structures, and there being any
11 reports of any damaged structures or evacuate, anything like that.

12 At 5:09, p.m., Bryson called back about all the entry points
13 that's being secured as far as the perimeters go for access into
14 near the event site.

15 At 5:09 p.m., Skip Holly (ph.) -- Skip Holly is the Otis
16 Construction (ph.) superintendent who was -- who had been in the
17 area performing anomaly investigations. He called just to let
18 know that the personnel that were around the area that he had were
19 -- everybody that they thought had deployed were safe. There was
20 no issues with anybody, and everybody was accounted for.

21 At 5:14 p.m., contacted Barry Blevins to get his ETA, and he
22 said he was battling traffic and onlookers trying to get to the
23 Mile Post 517, Muses Mill location but was, but was making his
24 way.

25 At 5:15 p.m., Cody Fokes -- again, works in gas control --

1 called requesting to also shut line 15 bypass even though it was
2 already isolated from the station, which I went ahead and
3 contacted Billy Grimes and also instructed him to do that at
4 5:16 p.m. He stated that he was at line 15 bypass valve and would
5 shut it immediately.

6 At 5:17 p.m., spoke to Bryson Price again about site security
7 just to ensure that it was, it was in place still, hadn't been
8 breached and that the -- and about the Otis employees and their,
9 and their safety.

10 At 5:20, I spoke to Joey Grimes, and he confirmed that line
11 10 was the line that ruptured, due to he noticed the pressures in
12 the station.

13 At 5:21 p.m., I spoke to gas control about confirmation of
14 line 10 rupture identification; they said the pressure dropped,
15 that was seen.

16 At 5:22 p.m., I had confirmation from Barry Blevins that line
17 10 mainline valve into ¹⁰⁻~~(indiscernible)~~ 367 was closed; line 15,
18 mainline valve 15-522 was closed; and line 25-7 -- I'm sorry, line
19 25, 25-735 was also closed.

20 At 5:23 p.m., Mike Nichol called to give an isolation update.

21 At 5:24 p.m., I spoke with Randy Dean about the event being
22 isolated as far as the segment goes and also the event site, that
23 it had been secured.

24 At 5:29 p.m., Cody Fokes from gas control called, and I
25 confirmed isolation in line 10, as well as 15 and 25, in

1 Owingsville, they literally cleared valve section 1 pipeline
2 segment.

3 At 5:32, I spoke to Billy Grimes -- he's at Owingsville
4 station -- just about the isolation and going ahead and getting
5 the lockout/tagout in place.

6 At 5:39, Mike ~~Greenly~~^{Greenway} called and requested an update on
7 isolation, public safety, secondary fires, and a GPS in the area.
8 Had not good cell phone reception at that time.

9 At 5:40 p.m., I met Bryson Price at the Martins Mill road
10 entrance, which was currently being blocked out by the Hillsboro
11 fire department. They let us by because of our trucks and our
12 badges, and we drove back to the pipeline crossing, which was
13 quite a ways from the actual rupture site.

14 5:49, made our way up the right-of-way some distance from the
15 event site. The temperatures close and the GPS that I can safely
16 capture at that time.

17 5:50 p.m., during that same track up the right-of-way to get
18 the GPS and maintaining a good safe distance from the event site,
19 also tried to see if there were any type of secondary fires, barns
20 or other structures in the area, which I did not see at that time.

21 At 6:10 p.m., Dustin Bailey, who is a pipeliner -- been with
22 us less than 2 years -- arrived through the Martins Mill pipeline
23 crossing with the side-by-side for access, and I instructed him to
24 remain there for site security near that road crossing in Martins
25 Mill.

1 At 6:30 p.m., I called Dwayne Price, the Fleming County EM
2 director, to meet and discuss the situation along with logistics
3 and wasn't able to get in touch with him at that time. At 6:32, I
4 called him back again and he was actually up, already up on top of
5 the hill on the Royse property, up by the pond, which is some
6 distance from this -- from that area.

7 At 6:45 p.m., I arrived at the top of the hill after going
8 through several check points to access from the Tom Ishmael Road.
9 Met up with Dwayne Price, as well as some of the other Hillsboro
10 fire department reps, asked the questions confirming that everyone
11 had been accounted for and that no structural fires were in the
12 area, which they did confirm.

13 Also onsite during that time, Ashley Bowman, who is with the
14 KYD PD; Melissa Holbrook and Chris Bailey, who are with the
15 Kentucky Public of -- the PSC, Public Service Commission; Michael
16 Royse, who's a landowner; Tiffany Jones -- that's his daughter --
17 and Shawn Royse were also up on top of the ridge; as well as the
18 Forestry Department, who had been contacted due to the location of
19 the incident and the wooded areas that were around and affected.
20 We did instruct them that they were not allowed to access the site
21 to battle any secondary fires or to extinguish them until we had
22 granted access and deemed that it was safe to enter. Those
23 personnel were Terry Stanford, Alan Watt, Ed McNeil, Michael
24 Carter, and Matthew Wright, and we had to sign an attendance sheet
25 to keep track everybody that was onsite.

1 At 6:46, spoke to Barry Blevins. He was en route to get a
2 light plant out to site because it was going to be getting dark,
3 because we needed to remain onsite to monitor obviously the
4 residuals.

5 At 6:50, I spoke to Joey Grimes, and he told me that they
6 were ready to blowdown lines 15 and 25. There had been
7 conversations in the background due to not knowing the
8 serviceability at these lines for additional safety measures --
9 these lines being 15 and 25 -- would also have to be reduced. My
10 initial -- the initial instructions were to reduce the pressure to
11 50 PSI in each of those lines, which I told Joey to go ahead and
12 proceed with those blowdowns.

13 At 6:57 p.m., I talk to Ben Bloom. Ben Bloom is a pipeliner
14 from Danville compressor station that had, again, in the
15 background, as others assisted with other aspects of the response,
16 was sent up to assist with the efforts. And when check -- he
17 called, called him, and I wanted to check to see whether if he --
18 that he was and make sure he knew where to go if it wasn't in the
19 Danville area.

20 At 7:06 p.m., I called Barry Blevins just to let him know if
21 he heard some blowing, what was going on, that we were going ahead
22 and depressurize at lines 15 and 25 as instructed by Region to do.

23 At 8:18 p.m., I was handed the phone from Melissa Holbrook to
24 speak with Roger Evans of NTSB about the incident and answer
25 preliminary questions. The call lasted approximately 24 minutes,

1 and due to the location of the ~~van~~ ^{call} and per discussion with Roger,
2 an email was drafted and sent to me prior to reporting it to the
3 NTSB that it was accurate. The call lasted, again, 24 minutes,
4 and it was over at about 8:42 p.m.

5 At -- and I don't recall exactly the time, but Randy Dean, my
6 boss, called to get an exact location of the event and how to
7 properly access up to where we were at that time. And he arrived
8 onsite at roughly sometime around 9 o'clock.

9 At 9:05 p.m., I called Billy Grimes to check on the current
10 pressure on lines 15 and 25 throughout the public safety
11 depressurization of those lines.

12 And 9:16 p.m., Joey Grimes -- I called Joey Grimes to inform
13 him that the decision had been made by Houston to reduce those
14 lines further to zero PSI as a further safety precautionary
15 measure.

16 At 9:20 p.m., I called Joey Grimes to inform him that Ashley
17 Clemens, who is a supervisor of the pipeline in the Nashville
18 office, had emailed the isolation procedure for further review.

19 At 10:03 p.m., I walked to the top of the hill because when
20 the lines, which is Line 10, 15 and 25, were blown down at that
21 time, to check on the status of the residual flames, which were
22 still present at that time.

23 At 10:21 p.m., I called Joey Grimes to go to Flat Creek,
24 which is our mainline valve setting directly south of Owingsville
25 compressor station at Mile Post 491. Just some background on that

1 was that the decision was made to ensure the double block and
2 bleed the line 10 segment that had been affected by the rupture,
3 just to ensure that it was safe.

4 At 10:49 p.m., I called Joey Grimes to check on the status at
5 Flat Creek mainline valve setting, which, again, is at Mile Post
6 491.

7 At 11:12 p.m., called Joey Grimes on Flat Creek, line 10
8 isolation timeframe, which is again at Mile Post 491, directly
9 south of Owingsville compressor station, and he said that they
10 were en route. He was with Daniel Lamb (ph.). Daniel Lamb is a,
11 is a pipeliner from Danville compressor station that was sent up
12 to assist.

13 I don't know the exact time, I think it was around 11:20-ish,
14 conducted a safety discussion with Gary, who had -- from PHMSA had
15 arrived onsite. Also in that discussion was Melissa Holbrook,
16 Chris Bailey and Randy Dean. We had that safety discussion about
17 accessing the event site and that the residual flames -- obviously
18 it was dark at that time, with trips and falls, prior to heading
19 to the top of the hill to view the rupture sited. And again, at
20 that time, residual flames were still present.

21 At 11:48 p.m., I called Joey Grimes to check on the isolation
22 status of Flat Creek. He informed me that the line 10 mainline
23 valve associated power gas valves and crossovers had been isolated
24 at that time.

25 Also around that time I had instructed Barry Blevins and Ben

1 Bloom to secure the northern end of the site for the night and
2 instructed Bryson Price and Dustin Bailey to secure the southern
3 end of the site for the night.

4 So back in our discussion with Dwayne Price, the EM director,
5 I've asked if there were any -- if we could receive assistance
6 from them as far as securing the location, and unfortunately, at
7 that time, they were unable to provide anyone. So due to the
8 remoteness of the location, as well as not working alone, I had
9 two personnel -- two at the top from a Tom ~~Ishmael~~ ^(see errata) entrance
10 location over the pond area and two at the bottom at the Martin
11 Mill pipeline road crossing as well.

12 At midnight on May 5th, I called Billy Grimes (indiscernible)
13 if we were -- I would be en route to assist him in finishing up
14 the lockout/tagout implementation at Owingsville compressor
15 station. I left that site at right around 12:01 a.m. to head to
16 Owingsville to assist him with the lockout/tagout as well for
17 field tag installation.

18 At 12:15 a.m., I discussed and assisted Billy Grimes with the
19 removal of the station bypass valve hydraulic ~~paint floor~~ ^{fluid bottle} plugs
20 (ph.) to eliminate any potential ability to actuate.

21 At about 12:40 a.m., I called Ralph Toy (ph.) to discuss
22 (indiscernible) the Muses Mill mainline valve.

23 At 1:32 a.m., I got confirmation from Ben Bloom, who was
24 onsite at the top of the hill, that the residual flames were out
25 and no longer present, and at 1:40 a.m., I left the station and

1 went home.

2 That's my account of the -- from the event to the flames
3 being out.

4 Q. Well, thank you very much. I know that's a long stretch to
5 talk without stopping, and I appreciate it. Do you need a minute
6 or are you good to keep going?

7 A. I just took a drink of water just to get the windpipe wet
8 again.

9 Q. Yeah. I know, it's a lot. I appreciate it. I know. It
10 really helps to get a good picture of the whole scene though. And
11 thank you very much. I really appreciate it. I know it's a lot
12 of talking.

13 A. Yes, ma'am.

14 Q. Okay. So I want to step back to a couple of specific things,
15 and then I'll go and ask you some kind of general questions.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. So I want to start back at the beginning of the night when
18 Bryson first got the call from the 911 dispatch. So I just kind
19 of want to -- and I'll talk to Bryson a little bit more about this
20 later, but I want to get your impressions on this.

21 So he got a call from dispatch, and is that something that --
22 do you guys have like a regular relationship with dispatch where
23 they call you if there's something they suspect to be pipeline
24 related? Or, you know, was it he happened to be the on-call
25 person, or was this a buddy who knows that he works for Texas

1 Eastern and called him kind of thing?

2 A. Okay. So what I would say to that is that part of our
3 emergency response also goes back to our public awareness and
4 relations that we have --

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. -- in the communities that we operate in as far as getting --
7 you know, visiting them and having -- making time to act with
8 them. We also have -- obviously we have the paradigm core
9 meetings and whatnot that emergency responders and dispatchers and
10 whatnot, they attend with us. But yes, I think that relationship
11 that we have with the -- in the areas that we operate in, that
12 obviously helps, along with Bryson knew the person that was
13 dispatcher at that time that was on duty for them.

14 Q. Okay. Okay. So going to the -- kind of the next thing is
15 Bryson calls you and says, hey, boss, I'm -- I got call from my
16 buddy over at dispatch, and he says that he thinks there might be
17 a pipeline rupture. They're getting calls from the public or
18 wherever. And, you know, you call, you say, yeah, go ahead and
19 head out there.

20 You call gas control, and gas control says, no, we're not
21 seeing anything. But then you continue to call folks, which, in
22 retrospect, is definitely the right decision. What made you make
23 that decision? You know, with gas control seeing no pressure --

24 A. Right.

25 Q. With gas control seeing no pressure drop, you know, I can see

1 a supervisor saying, oh, well, that's just a false alarm; that's
2 just a fire in the woods. You know, in retrospect, that was
3 definitely the right decision, you know.

4 A. Right. Right.

5 Q. I'm just curious your thought process.

6 A. Yeah. So, you know, if you don't -- if we don't know for
7 sure, then we have to treat it like it actually is. I mean, we
8 have to have absolutely, 100 percent confidence and confirmation
9 that it is not -- that whatever event, whether it's a fire,
10 whether it's a leak, whatever the case may be, that it would not
11 be it.

12 If we go out there and it's not, then great, but we were at
13 least headed out there to make sure that our assets -- the public
14 is safe, that our assets are safe, and the environment's not being
15 impacted. That's our responsibility.

16 And if that means that somebody's evening is, you know, shot
17 because we went out there and it was false alarm, then so be it.
18 But we're going to make sure to respond as we've all been trained
19 to do. That's part of the job.

20 Q. Okay. So just kind of a basic due diligence, like that's
21 kind of second nature for you?

22 A. Yes, ma'am. It's -- yeah, we're always going to err on the
23 side of caution with that.

24 Q. Okay. And I'm guessing that -- I don't know how often kind
25 of dispatch would call your guys to say, hey, we've got a caller

1 or an issue or something that we think might be pipeline related.
2 Is it normal for them to call you and then, you know, to kind of
3 ask permission? Or how does that process work?

4 A. So if gas control were to call one of our guys, we receive
5 calls -- just as, you know, some examples, receive calls where
6 some landowners may have called and said, we smell gas. Even
7 though it may not be in our area, we're still going to be
8 dispatching personnel out there with leak surveyors and be able to
9 go out and perform those types of surveys and ensure -- because we
10 want landowners and we want the public to assist us as far --
11 because we're not out there 24/7.

12 We want them to call us and let us know if they see something
13 that's not right: if they hear hissing noises; if they smell
14 something; if they see people they don't know, excavators or
15 whatever out on the road up there; there's some disturbed dirt. I
16 mean, we want them to call and help us. They're part of the
17 solution as well, as far as keeping them safe and our assets safe
18 as well.

19 Q. Okay. I think what I'm trying to get to there, and I
20 apologize, is if -- is it normal for them to call you first to
21 say, hey, boss, what should I do? Or do they know, I should head
22 straight to the site and fill in Bart, or do they know what their
23 actions are supposed to be, I guess?

24 A. I got you.

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. I -- okay, I understand your questions now. Yes.

2 Q. Yeah. Sorry, I wasn't clear.

3 A. That's okay.

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. No, no. No, that's fine. That's fine. Yeah. So it's -- I
6 mean, if they get the phone call and understand that there's a
7 situation, we all know that we cannot handle it alone. There's
8 way -- it's a multi-faceted approach as far as handling any type
9 of event site, especially one, you know, that ended up happening
10 May 4th there.

11 So yes, that's -- he is to inform me so that he is out
12 handling the situation and not trying to make all the phone calls.
13 Right? He's out assisting and handling the situation, and I am to
14 talk to dispatch personnel to where they need to go to get the
15 event isolated.

16 Q. Okay. So he --

17 A. So yes, they would always call me to let me know.

18 Q. Okay. I see. So, essentially, he's calling you so that he
19 knows where you want him to go? He knows that you're going to
20 send him somewhere to do something. The question is --

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. -- just a matter of which site, which of the two -- you know,
23 which -- what resources you want and where. But he knows what
24 activities he's going to be doing, it's just more of --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- he needs to alert you so the other balls can get up in the
2 air?

3 A. Right. Yes. That's correct.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Right. And if I -- while he's going and handling that
6 aspect, while I'm trying to help deploy personnel to assist with
7 those efforts.

8 Q. Okay. And how are you -- I mean, it sounds like you
9 dispatched quite a few personnel. Is that pretty much your whole
10 team out there, or how are you deciding --

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. -- who --

13 A. It's that -- it is the -- yes, ma'am, it is the entire
14 Owingsville station team that reports to this location.

15 Q. Okay. That's what I was going to ask, was how you kind of
16 decided who to send --

17 A. Right.

18 Q. -- who to dispatch and who not.

19 A. So as far as this -- who I decide to dispatch where, as far
20 as Bryson Price has given me, when he first called me, Bryson was
21 the utility pipeliner. Bryson does a lot of the public awareness
22 ~~contracts~~ ^{contacts} in the Owingsville area as far as meeting with emergency
23 responders. And, being from the area, he's on several farming
24 boards and whatnot along the area as well, and that's -- he knows
25 the right-of-way from right-of-way, from assisting with anomaly

1 investigations and things of that nature. So I knew that he knew
2 where to go, and in the event that there were onlookers and
3 blocked accesses, he would know a different way to get there. So
4 that's why I sent Bryson where he went.

5 Barry Blevins is the veteran with us. He's been all up and
6 down the system. He's done anything, you know, those other --
7 with the meetings, he knows the right-of-way from right-of-way,
8 knowing -- he knows all the landowners. He's just one of those,
9 you know, handy as a shirt pocket guys ~~that~~ ^{that's} done it, done it all.
10 And he's responded previously, so I knew he would know where to go
11 and understand what to do.

12 As far as dispatching, calling Joey Grimes, he's the station
13 operator. He knows the station as well as anybody, so he would
14 understand what needed to be done to isolate the event.

15 Called Billy Grimes with that same knowledge, as well as need
16 to dispatch him through Owingsville compressor station from a
17 controls perspective to be able to also assist in locking and
18 tagging out the station and associated breakers with some of the
19 electrical valves that we have.

20 I dispatched Scott Trusty because also, previously, he was a
21 utility pipeliner in this area and knew the area as well as Bryson
22 did as far as where to go and knew as -- for part of his job
23 duties he has while here in the station yard that he's responsible
24 for the annual maintenance on. So he understands valve operations
25 and bridging valves and assisting with that as well.

1 So that's why I dispatched those personnel specifically to
2 where I dispatched them to. And, as far as Dustin Bailey goes,
3 being a newer employee, I did not want him -- you know, as far as
4 overwhelming him, as far as being the immediate responder to the
5 site. So that's why I had him come and meet me and talk through
6 it and then just to keep him posted, as far as security goes, at
7 the southern part of the incident area.

8 Q. And that makes perfect sense. It seems like you know your
9 stuff very well. You know their skills and what they're good at.
10 Do you -- are you very involved in kind of their training and
11 development?

12 A. Right. So yes. I mean, that's part of my job duties is to
13 make sure that we, that we do training and develop our personnel,
14 not only in their roles, but also in an emergency response. I
15 mean, we do conduct tabletop type simulation as well as simulation
16 to actually go physically out to a hypothetical event location and
17 kind of train on that and come back, do a hotwash as far as, hey,
18 what did we do good, what do we need to work on, all those types
19 of things. So, you know, the old practice makes perfect type
20 scenario. And I get like you're saying, I mean, they're like --
21 everybody performed well.

22 Q. Yeah. So I want to talk about your interactions with gas
23 control during the event. So at the initial -- at the beginning
24 of the event, it sounds like they really weren't -- they weren't
25 seeing anything. They weren't seeing any alarms; they weren't

1 seeing any pressure drop. At what point during the event did that
2 change?

3 A. Well, I just, I do want to point out that, that's from my
4 interactions with them. There's not --

5 Q. Understood.

6 A. Yeah. I'm not sure what other phone calls, who else was
7 talking to who, you know, what of -- you know, as far as when they
8 were receiving any types of alarms and whatnot.

9 Q. Understood. Understood.

10 A. You know, but again -- okay.

11 Q. Yeah. Understood. But at what point did you -- so at what
12 point do you -- did they -- I mean, it sounds like they were still
13 very much in the loop and all of that, but at what point did they
14 start seeing changes on their end? What kind of communications
15 did you have with them?

16 A. Right.

17 Q. How did, how did that whole communication process work?
18 Because I think I've got a very good picture of how you and your
19 team worked together, but that part, I feel like I'm missing a
20 little bit.

21 A. Okay. So, I mean, I know, obviously, that they knew that it
22 occurred because the horsepower that was running when I had left
23 earlier that day to go to head home, the units that were running
24 were not running, you know, as I'm getting back, or the guys
25 coming back to the location. Those had been shut off. So I know,

1 I know that they knew.

2 I just -- I was -- my focus was on getting my guys more
3 dispatched to the scene. You know, I -- the pipeline segments
4 isolated and ensuring that we had site security. But, I mean,
5 Cody Fokes, talking to him at 4:53, I mean, he -- you know, they
6 knew what was going on during that time.

7 It's just I wasn't having those exact conversations with them
8 where my role was to ensure that we were getting the event site
9 isolated and -- as far as from a pipeline perspective as well as
10 securing the scene to protect the public, so -- and I feel like
11 they knew what was going on, maybe with other conversations with
12 other personnel, but again, my main focus was on ensuring the
13 safety of the public and isolating that valve setting.

14 Q. Okay. That makes sense. That makes perfect sense. So
15 something I noticed, so the MAOP of this line is 936 PSI, which is
16 pretty normal, right, for a pipe of that age and size and all of
17 that good stuff, but at the day of the event, it was running at
18 657, which is pretty low.

19 In my experience, you don't run a pipe that low unless you've
20 got a good reason. And you had mentioned that Skip Holly was out
21 there doing some anomaly work. Is that why the pressure was low?
22 Do you know, I mean, do you know why they were running low in that
23 area? Is that --

24 A. Well --

25 Q. Is that a question for gas control or is it a question for

1 you guys? Or --

2 A. I mean, I can -- as far as the -- are you referring to the
3 pressure at the time of the incident?

4 Q. Yes, yes.

5 A. Okay, so -- well, now, instead of the traditional flow from
6 south to north, now the flow is from north to south, so that was
7 actually on the suction side of Owingsville, that compressor
8 station.

9 Q. Yep.

10 A. So that's why that pressure was lower in that area. As far
11 as the anomaly investigation that was going on, it was on line 15,
12 which is already an isolated segment per the ~~(indiscernible)~~ **safe excavation pressure**
13 answer that.

14 Q. Okay. So that 657, you're normally seeing it that low on the
15 suction side?

16 A. It really depends on -- you know, like you were referring to
17 gas control and the nominations that are kind of what they're
18 seeing as far as when they model flow rates and deliveries, what
19 that needs to be. I really don't have a lot to do with that part
20 of it.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I just -- that's not mine. That's not my ~~realm~~ **role** there.

23 Q. Understood. I'll pick their brain. It's just interesting
24 for me because we -- when I worked for Kinder, I worked on El Paso
25 Natural Gas, EPNG, and we -- even on the suction side, we never

1 ran that low below MAOP unless we had a -- unless it was like a
2 dead spot or something. So I was kind of curious if this was kind
3 of a dead area or if like -- and then, when you had mentioned the
4 anomaly, the guys out there for anomaly work, I just, I was just
5 curious, so -- but if that's a question for somebody else, that's
6 a question for somebody else.

7 Okay. You had mentioned that you had to -- you sent four of
8 your guys out to secure the site overnight. You mentioned that
9 you requested assistance from someone to secure the site and I,
10 and I didn't quite catch who that was. Who was that?

11 A. Sorry.

12 Q. No, that's okay.

13 A. It was -- that was Dwayne Price, and he's the EM director for
14 Fleming County.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. He -- I was just ~~assessing~~ asking if they had any off-duty officer
17 or anybody that would be able to assist until we were able to get
18 our security personnel in place.

19 Q. So is that not typical for them, I mean, to stay at a site
20 until the fire is fully out, or I don't know what --

21 A. So, well, the remoteness of the location would have made it
22 extremely difficult actually to even -- as far as fire trucks,
23 things like that. But, again, the Forestry Department was onsite,
24 and because it was isolated and just lower residual flames, they
25 had put out what secondary fires were occurring at the time before

1 ~~the dead lift~~ they left. So I'm not -- that's -- that would be my only
2 thought on them not staying around.

3 Q. Okay. Okay. Now, were you guys -- so you guys are familiar
4 with the area. Did you know ahead of time that were no residences
5 or even buildings in the area just from experience or --

6 A. We knew where the -- when the confirmation was given about
7 fire, that it was on Martin Mill Hill, we knew there was nothing
8 in the area.

9 Q. Okay. And that's just from your experience of the area?

10 A. Just from knowledge and being able to -- right, just by
11 knowing the areas and whatnot, right.

12 Q. Okay. How long did it take the guys to just physically get
13 to the different -- to the two different sites? So to the valves
14 and then to Owingsville station -- or to Muses Mill, sorry. I
15 should be way more specific.

16 A. Right. That's no problem. I'm just looking through my list
17 here. So I called Billy Grimes at 4:46 p.m., and as far as -- are
18 you talking about shutting all the valves or just the line 10?

19 Q. No, I'm just talking about driving time to get there. So I'm
20 thinking, you know --

21 A. Oh, okay. I got you.

22 Q. Yeah. Yeah.

23 A. Okay. So Billy Grimes, so 4:46, and Billy Grimes arrived at
24 the station at 5:01.

25 Q. Okay. So about 15 minutes.

1 A. As far as Barry Blevins goes, he actually arrived at the
2 valve -- let's see, I called him at 4:44, and he actually arrived
3 at the site at right about 5:15. So right at, what, 29 minutes.

4 Q. And I'm not at all familiar with the area, so I'm guessing
5 just that's a little bit more off road and difficult to get to?

6 A. It is a -- yes, it's a remote location as far as where to get
7 to. You know, from Owingsville on into the area, it's called
8 Plumbers Mill Landing, you know, Plumbers Landing area is where
9 the Muses Mill Mile Post 517 valve setting is located.

10 Q. Okay. And how long is that segment between Muses Mill and
11 Owingsville?

12 A. About -- let's see, 502.11 to -- 14.71 miles.

13 Q. Okay. Would you say that's a pretty standard valve
14 separation distance for you guys out there?

15 A. Yes, I would. It's somewhere between, you know, the 15- to
16 17- to 19-mile range, somewhere in that area. I mean -- and I can
17 only speak for what, you know, obviously for (indiscernible) --

18 Q. Right.

19 A. -- valve settings were.

20 Q. Right. So somewhere in that area.

21 A. But it's somewhat typically right around that 15-mile range
22 average.

23 Q. Okay. Okay. That makes sense. Did the guys have any
24 difficulty with the valves, operating them?

25 A. No, they did not. They did not have any trouble with the,

1 with the actual valves. But you've probably heard that the -- at
2 the end of the conversation that I had as far as assisting Billy,
3 we just wanted to, as far as the bypass valves go, just to 100
4 percent make sure that no actuation could occur. So that's why we
5 took a ~~full~~^{bull} plug there toward the end of the end of the night.
6 But no, there were no trouble actuating any valves.

7 Q. Yeah. No, that makes sense to do a full lock outside on
8 that.

9 A. Yes, ma'am.

10 Q. Yeah. And accidental actuation is the last thing you need on
11 something like that.

12 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Well, I don't have any more questions
13 right now. I'm going to pass it on to PHMSA.

14 So introduce yourself please, Alvaro, and then you can go
15 ahead and ask questions.

16 Unless, Bart, do you need a break or are you ready to keep
17 going?

18 MR. JOHNSON: I'm just keeping drinking water, so no.

19 MS. COLLETTI: Okay, thank you. Yeah. Feel free, like I
20 said, interrupt at any time. I'm sorry, I can -- sorry to ask so
21 often. I just, I hate that I can't read body language right now,
22 so --

23 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks for asking.

24 MS. COLLETTI: Yeah.

25 Alvaro, you're up.

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Alex.

2 BY MR. RODRIGUEZ:

3 Q. This is Alvaro Rodriguez. I am an accident investigator with
4 Accident Investigation Division of PHMSA, and I am helping with
5 the interviews. And first, thank you for providing a very
6 detailed timeline of the event.

7 My first question is about the cause of the incident. I know
8 it's maybe too soon to tell, but do you have any maybe idea of why
9 this event happened?

10 A. Yeah. So I'm not a subject matter expert or a geo hazard,
11 you know, engineer or any type of -- you know, that's not my realm
12 as far as that goes, so I don't want to speculate.

13 Q. No problem. Yeah. Thank you. And besides that, was
14 anything different that you thought you could have done after
15 going through the event?

16 A. I believe there's always, you know, room for improvement no
17 matter what you're doing in life, but, I mean, I do -- will stand
18 by the things I think that the guys -- that we responded, that we
19 kept the public safe, and we secured the area, and we were able to
20 isolate. And, again, I'm going above and beyond. Not knowing the
21 condition or the serviceability of the other lines, I took the
22 additional safety precautionary measures to evacuate the gas in
23 those to ensure -- further ensure that safety.

24 Q. Thank you. And something else that comes to mind is, in
25 terms of the response time and -- you know, it looks like

1 everything worked out pretty well for being -- have you had any
2 other incidents in that area that you recall, and you can base --
3 that you were talking about drills and everything that you're
4 doing in order to be prepared. Anything else that have happened
5 before?

6 A. As far as in this particular area, not while I've been up
7 here has there been an incident of this magnitude. No, sir, not
8 while I've been up here.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Thank you very much. Besides, I don't
10 have any other questions. I feel that you were very thorough with
11 your description of the timeline of the events, and I thank you
12 for that.

13 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, sir. Thank you.

14 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Great.

15 Tom, do you have any questions? And, if you do, please
16 introduce yourself.

17 MR. WOODEN: Tom Wooden. Alex, I do not have any additional
18 questions for Bart. The only thing I would point out, Alex, we
19 did send you a timeline for the various interviews that we're
20 going to have today, and we can forward that onto others that need
21 it.

22 MS. COLLETTI: Yes, sir. I have read through it, and Alvaro
23 has a copy as well, so he -- for his reference, so --

24 MR. WOODEN: Thank you.

25 MS. COLLETTI: Yeah. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

1 It is very well written. Thank you for that, Bart and Tom. So --

2 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am.

3 MS. COLLETTI: It's very well written, and it was really
4 great to have the context from your description of it. There's
5 just a lot more detail when you're walking through it. I know it
6 seems like a lot to walk through such a long document, but it
7 really helps explain it in so much more detail just knowing who
8 the people are involved that are being talked about and what their
9 roles are and all of that. It really kind of brings the timeline
10 to life, so to speak.

11 I don't have any further questions, so I'm not going to ask a
12 second round.

13 Alvaro, do you have any second-round questions?

14 BY MR. RODRIGUEZ:

15 Q. Well, something else that I was thinking was about the -- if
16 based on patrolling or any survey of the area, was any way to
17 notice anything different than they have given a reason for a
18 double check?

19 A. As far as I can tell you, from something that was actually
20 discussed the previous week that, due to all of the rainfall
21 events that we had, the heavy rains and whatnot of recent. We
22 actually -- the area patrol plane actually flew earlier that day,
23 Monday, flew the area and flew over on some of the other pipelines
24 and -- but, I mean, as far as patrolling and whatnot goes, I mean,
25 I'm not exactly sure what else you may be getting at. I mean, I

1 know (indiscernible) that additional flight occurred.

2 Q. Okay. And did you guys receive any response, maybe any
3 digging or recognition of the pipeline, something that you are
4 notified and maybe something that you've take into account for
5 maintenance? I don't know if you take (indiscernible) into
6 consideration?

7 A. As far as digging, things like that, I mean, we do -- you
8 know, there are tools that are run through the line segments, but
9 those results and the analysis and things like that are not
10 handled out here in the field. They're handled by those subject
11 matter experts in -- down in Houston and other areas.

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Perfect. Well, thank you very much.
13 Those are all the questions that I have.

14 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Tom, do you have anything further?

15 MR. WOODEN: No additional questions. Thank you, Alex.

16 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Well, then, Bart -- oh, and this is
17 Alex again. I'm the worst of breaking my rule of introducing
18 myself.

19 Then, Bart, I want to thank you very much for your time.
20 This has been extremely helpful. I really appreciate the level of
21 detail you went into. I want to thank you for the work you did
22 the night of the accident and just thank you for coming in today,
23 for taking the time and for talking so much. I hope you don't
24 have to talk much more today. Hopefully, you won't have too many
25 calls today, have a nice quiet afternoon.

1 But I will most likely have a transcript for you in about a
2 month or so, so just look for an email on that, like I said. And
3 it will come with just a little errata sheet. If there aren't any
4 errors, you just check the box and send it back to me. If there
5 are errors, you can just send me an email that says, this is wrong
6 on this line on this page, or you can even write it on the
7 document itself. However you like to do it is fine by me.

8 But if you think of something later that you forgot here,
9 feel free to call me or email me anytime. I believe I have your
10 contact information somewhere. If not, I will get it because I'll
11 need your email address regardless to get you the errata sheet and
12 your transcript. But like I said, feel free to call me or email
13 me anytime if something else comes to you. That's pretty normal.

14 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Okay.

15 MS. COLLETTI: But thank you so much for your time. I really
16 appreciate it.

17 MR. JOHNSON: No problem. I just wanted to ensure I guess
18 the schedule timeline to make sure, because I know everybody's
19 time is precious. The next scheduled is 10:30, is that correct,
20 with Barry Blevins?

21 MS. COLLETTI: Yeah, yes, sir. Unfortunately, I -- here, I'm
22 going to take us off the record really quick. So this concludes
23 the interview of Mr. Bart Johnson, and it is 9:26 a.m. Stop
24 recording.

25 (Whereupon, at 9:26 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

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 Bart Johnson

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.



Romona Phillips
Transcriber



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: BART JOHNSON

Department: US OPERATIONS GTM

Title: AREA SUPERVISOR (AT THE TIME)

Date of Interview: 5-11-2020

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 *
IN HILLSBORO, KENTUCKY, *
ON MAY 4, 2020 *
*

Accident No.: PLD20LR001

* * * * *

Interview of: BART JOHNSON, Area Supervisor
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

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Bart Johnson:

By Ms. Colletti

6

By Mr. Rodriguez

36

I N T E R V I E W

(8:13 a.m.)

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

MS. COLLETTI: We're on the record for the Bart Johnson interview. Good morning. Today is May 11th, 2020. It is now 8:13 a.m. Eastern time. My name is Alex Colletti, 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. This 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 add or elaborate on 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 member, or nobody at all.

Bart, 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 this interview.

3 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, my name is Bart, B-a-r-t, Johnson,
4 J-o-h-n-s-o-n. My position is area supervisor at the Owingsville
5 compressor station, and my representative is Dane Jaques.

6 MS. COLLETTI: Perfect. Okay. Great. Normally we'd be
7 going around the room, but since we're doing this recording style,
8 we're going to do this, we're going to start with introductions.
9 We'll start with PHMSA and then we'll go to Enbridge and then
10 we'll go to representatives. Please spell your name, your title,
11 and who you're representing.

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: My name is Alvaro Rodriguez, A-l-v-a-r-o,
13 Rodriguez, R-o-d-r-u-g-u-e-z. I am an accident investigator with
14 the Accident Investigation Division of PHMSA.

15 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Tom, you're up next.

16 MR. WOODEN: Sorry about that.

17 MS. COLLETTI: No, that's okay.

18 MR. WOODEN: My name is Thomas Wooden, T-h-o-m-a-s,
19 W-o-o-d-e-n. I'm the Vice President of Engineering and Asset
20 Management for Enbridge and the party coordinator for this
21 incident.

22 MR. JAQUES: My name is Dane Jaques, spelled D-a-n-e,
23 J-a-q-u-e-s. I'm a partner with Steptoe and Johnson, and I'm here
24 on behalf of Bart Johnson.

25 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Perfect.

1 Well, Bart, thank you for agreeing to interview with us
2 today. I really appreciate your time. It's an important task we
3 have to collect any information we can from your memory of that
4 day. I'm going to ask you to provide a lot of details for me, as
5 much as you can remember.

6 I don't want you to speculate; just provide me with what you
7 can remember. If I ask a question and you don't remember, you can
8 say that you don't know. That's just fine. However, the more
9 information you can give me, the better.

10 INTERVIEW OF BART JOHNSON

11 BY MS. COLLETTI:

12 Q. Before we get going on the day of the accident, though, can
13 you let me know a little bit about your background, you know,
14 where all you've worked? Did you start with Enbridge originally
15 or with TechCo or, you know, what are your qualifications?

16 A. Right. Okay, sure. So I was lucky enough, out of college,
17 to be chosen as an entry-level pipeliner at the Danville
18 compression station. I was in the position for several years.

19 Also at the Danville compressor station, an opportunity for a
20 station operator became available. I applied and also received
21 that promotion, was in that position for several years as well,
22 and then another opportunity became available. That was a
23 corrosion technician in the -- one of the two in the Stanford
24 area. I was in that position also for several years.

25 And then the opportunity for area supervisor here at the

1 Owingsville compressor station, that opening occurred, and applied
2 and also was lucky enough to get this position as well, so -- and
3 I've been up here in this position for going on 6 years now, so
4 that's my background.

5 Q. Okay. So I'm just going to --

6 A. And it's all been with Texas Eastern.

7 Q. It's all been with Texas Eastern. So I'm just going to
8 summarize that really quick. You've been working there a while
9 and you know what you're doing. That's great. That's really
10 great. It's nice to talk to someone that's experienced and that's
11 worked in several different areas of it.

12 So you've worked out in the field, you've -- well, you're
13 still working in the field, obviously, but you've worked in
14 corrosion, you've worked at station operator, the whole deal,
15 pipeliner, all that. So that's great. I'm sure your guys
16 appreciate that you've done all of their roles as well.

17 Well, I want to backup to the day of the event, and take a
18 moment if you need to, but think through where you were at the
19 time that you first received notification of the accident and, you
20 know, what was going through your mind, anything that you can
21 think of at all, and then walk me through from that moment up
22 until the moment that the fire was out, any calls you received,
23 any actions you took, anything that the guys did out in the field.

24 So this is the long portion of talking for you. So like I
25 said, if you need a break, take it, so -- but this is the talking

1 bit.

2 A. Understood. I'll get my drink of water here.

3 Q. Yeah. Yeah. I'm sorry, I'd offer you water normally, but I
4 feel -- so, you know, I'm normally a better host, but --

5 A. No, no. Believe me, I understand it so -- I understand all
6 the precautions. We're trying to continue to take those into
7 account out here as well.

8 Q. It's a weird time, yeah.

9 A. So I will try to get started here. As far as when I first
10 heard about the incident, so it was right at 4:41 p.m. I was
11 actually sitting in front of my house; I had just got home, stayed
12 a little late prepping for the next day work activities.

13 So I was actually sitting in front of my house and received a
14 phone call from Bryson Price, who stated that he had actually
15 received a phone call from the Owingsville dispatch, who is
16 actually a friend of his, stating that they received several phone
17 calls up in the Hillsboro area of a potential pipeline rupture,
18 and asked me if I wanted him to go check that out. I stated, yes,
19 that I did, and we needed to be working -- locating the area and
20 working and making sure that we're getting emergency response out
21 in that area. I left immediately after that. About 4:42 is when
22 I left, and I was headed to the event site.

23 In transit, went ahead and called our out (indiscernible) ~~Gas~~ ^{AGS}
24 control in Houston to see if they were having any phone calls
25 about anything or seeing any pressure drops or anything like that.

1 They said that they were, they were looking into it, and that they
2 were noticing a drop in pressure. But I went ahead without having
3 that exact, you know, mileage and went ahead and decided to
4 dispatch personnel.

5 At 4:44, I called Barry Blevins, who works for me, the light
6 equipment operator and also works as a daily pipeliner as well, as
7 far as some of the job duties, and I dispatched him to the south ~~section~~ ^{North}
8 section because I knew he was in the Hillsboro area via the ~~AS~~
9 earlier phone call. Dispatched him to the valve setting
10 immediately north of that, which would have been at Mile Post 517,
11 which we call Muses Mill valve, mainline valve setting, and told
12 him that if we needed to -- because we didn't have verification,
13 but also previous learnings, we need to go ahead and shut all
14 three of our lines, being (indiscernible) line and 15 and 25
15 isolate.

16 The next phone call I made was to Joey Grimes. Joey Grimes
17 is our station operator here at Owingsville station. Explained
18 the situation to him and also dispatched him, but I dispatched him
19 because of his knowledge of the station being the station
20 operator. I dispatched him back to Owingsville compressor
21 station. He was actually picking up some materials for his house
22 in Morehead at the time but quickly said he would get back to the
23 house, get -- and get down here.

24 A minute after that, at 4:46, I called Billy Grimes, who is
25 our electrical controls technician here at Owingsville compressor

1 station and also qualified as the station operator as well here at
2 Owingsville, and I dispatched Billy to the station to help with
3 isolation of the incident here at the station, which is at Mile
4 Post 502.

5 So immediately after that, I contacted Scott Trusty at 4:47.
6 Scott Trusty is our station mechanic but was previously a utility
7 pipeliner, so his knowledge of the right-of-way and the location
8 both inside the station and out on the right-of-way. I dispatched
9 Scott to assist Barry Blevins at the Mile Post 517, Muses Mill
10 valve setting, to assist with getting all three lines isolated.

11 So after that, right at 4:48, I called Randy Dean, who is my
12 area -- who is my boss, the area manager for the Stanford area, to
13 inform him of the incident and discuss, you know, kind of the
14 current situation, kind of where we were, the fact that we had
15 personnel en route to isolate the situation. And he said he would
16 assist as well getting help as well.

17 So I called Bryson Price back, who was the person who
18 initially called me to ensure, you know, site security, that we
19 had gotten a hold of emergency management, the services, and
20 stated that there were personnel that were in the Tom Ishmael
21 area, as far as emergency management personnel.

22 At 4:52, I called gas control back to see if they could
23 identify which line, they could tell if there was a pressure drop
24 on that line and see if they were able to tell which one it was.
25 Cody Fokes (ph.) called me. He is a gas control specialist in

1 Houston. And then I updated him on the situation at that time.
2 So, again, we had personnel dispatched both to the station as well
3 to the immediate valve setting north of Owingsville to isolate all
4 three lines.

5 At 4:55, I contacted Billy Grimes back who, was our EC PIC
6 that I had dispatched to Owingsville station, to ensure that he
7 was able to reach the site, that there weren't any barricades or
8 any type, you know, traffic public that he wasn't able to navigate
9 through, and I just wanted to ensure that he was clear up on as
10 far as isolating the station and getting this on all three lines.
11 So I just wanted to make sure that all that was clear.

12 I also called Barry Blevins back at 4:56 to ensure he, too,
13 did not have any issues as he was navigating and driving to the
14 event site -- or I'm sorry, as he was driving to the mainline
15 valve site at Mile Post 517, that he wasn't experiencing any site
16 or onlookers that he wasn't able to navigate through and also to
17 ensure clarity as well, that we wanted all three lines shut.

18 At 4:56 -- yes, 4:56 is when Mike ~~Nichol~~ ^{Nichols}, who was also works
19 within gas control, called and I updated him on the situation to
20 ensure he also knew that people were dispatched to the site and
21 that all three lines were being shut and EMS was assisting with
22 traffic control and public safety.

23 At 4:57 p.m., I called Randy Dean back, who's my boss, just
24 to update him on the current status of what we were doing.

25 5 o'clock p.m., I called Bryson Price back to get an update

1 to see if -- as far as the site security, if there'd been any
2 initial reports of any missing persons, any initial reports of any
3 evacuated homes, any burning structures that may have been in the
4 vicinity, any of those. We knew down at -- as far as where
5 that -- in that Hillsboro area was, depending on where it was, as
6 far as even somewhat remote, but we didn't have that information
7 at that time.

8 At 5 o'clock p.m., I called Scott Trusty back just to also
9 check on his status, seeing if he was able to -- if he was having
10 trouble navigating to the site because of onlookers and also just
11 to see when he thought he may be able to get onsite.

12 At 5 o'clock p.m., Mike ~~Greenly~~ ^{GREENWAY ASA} (ph.) called. Mike ~~Greenly~~ ^{GREENWAY} ~~ASA~~
13 is our MPO out of the central region office, and I spoke with him
14 concerning emergency response effort as well as the isolation
15 status and where we were in that process. And he asked kind of
16 specific location questions. We told him it was -- that it was in
17 the Hillsboro area. Did not have an exact location at that time,
18 but had an idea. You could see, you know, you could see the --
19 any rupture, seeing the flames obviously, so Bryson was still
20 working his way through there.

21 At 5:05 p.m., Bryson Price called about the event. He
22 confirmed that it was over the top of Martin Mill Hill location
23 and that it was a remote location based on the -- based on his
24 knowledge of the area, meaning that there no neighborhoods, no
25 homes right in that immediate location.

1 At 5:07, I spoke with Jason York (ph.) -- Jason York is Bath
2 County's EM director -- about the situation. Bath County is -- he
3 notified that yes, Bath County is helping assist with traffic
4 control, public safety, blocking access to the event site and
5 coordinating with the Fleming County EMS/EM, with their director,
6 Dwayne Price (ph.), who I talked to at a later time.

7 Let's see. At 5:08 p.m., I spoke with Mike Greenly again
8 concerning an updated status and information he was requesting as
9 far as there was an approximate location and event, if there was
10 any type of secondary fires or structures, and there being any
11 reports of any damaged structures or evacuate, anything like that.

12 At 5:09, p.m., Bryson called back about all the entry points
13 that's being secured as far as the perimeters go for access into
14 near the event site.

15 At 5:09 p.m., Skip Holly (ph.) -- Skip Holly is the Otis
16 Construction (ph.) superintendent who was -- who had been in the
17 area performing anomaly investigations. He called just to let
18 know that the personnel that were around the area that he had were
19 -- everybody that they thought had deployed were safe. There was
20 no issues with anybody, and everybody was accounted for.

21 At 5:14 p.m., contacted Barry Blevins to get his ETA, and he
22 said he was battling traffic and onlookers trying to get to the
23 Mile Post 517, Muses Mill location but was, but was making his
24 way.

25 At 5:15 p.m., Cody Fokes -- again, works in gas control --

1 called requesting to also shut line 15 bypass even though it was
2 already isolated from the station, which I went ahead and
3 contacted Billy Grimes and also instructed him to do that at
4 5:16 p.m. He stated that he was at line 15 bypass valve and would
5 shut it immediately.

6 At 5:17 p.m., spoke to Bryson Price again about site security
7 just to ensure that it was, it was in place still, hadn't been
8 breached and that the -- and about the Otis employees and their,
9 and their safety.

10 At 5:20, I spoke to Joey Grimes, and he confirmed that line
11 10 was the line that ruptured, due to he noticed the pressures in
12 the station.

13 At 5:21 p.m., I spoke to gas control about confirmation of
14 line 10 rupture identification; they said the pressure dropped,
15 that was seen.

16 At 5:22 p.m., I had confirmation from Barry Blevins that line
17 10 mainline valve into (~~indiscernible~~ ^{MSL} 10 - 367 was closed; line 15,
18 mainline valve 15-522 was closed; and line 25-7 -- I'm sorry, line
19 25, 25-735 was also closed.

20 At 5:23 p.m., Mike Nichol called to give an isolation update.

21 At 5:24 p.m., I spoke with Randy Dean about the event being
22 isolated as far as the segment goes and also the event site, that
23 it had been secured.

24 At 5:29 p.m., Cody Fokes from gas control called, and I
25 confirmed isolation in line 10, as well as 15 and 25, in

1 Owingsville, they literally cleared valve section 1 pipeline
2 segment.

3 At 5:32, I spoke to Billy Grimes -- he's at Owingsville
4 station -- just about the isolation and going ahead and getting
5 the lockout/tagout in place.

6 At 5:39, ~~Mike Greenly~~ ^{ASA Greenly} called and requested an update on
7 isolation, public safety, secondary fires, and a GPS in the area.
8 Had not good cell phone reception at that time.

9 At 5:40 p.m., I met Bryson Price at the Martins Mill road
10 entrance, which was currently being blocked out by the Hillsboro
11 fire department. They let us by because of our trucks and our
12 badges, and we drove back to the pipeline crossing, which was
13 quite a ways from the actual rupture site.

14 5:49, made our way up the right-of-way some distance from the
15 event site. The temperatures close and the GPS that I can safely
16 capture at that time.

17 5:50 p.m., during that same track up the right-of-way to get
18 the GPS and maintaining a good safe distance from the event site,
19 also tried to see if there were any type of secondary fires, barns
20 or other structures in the area, which I did not see at that time.

21 At 6:10 p.m., Dustin Bailey, who is a pipeliner -- been with
22 us less than 2 years -- arrived through the Martins Mill pipeline
23 crossing with the side-by-side for access, and I instructed him to
24 remain there for site security near that road crossing in Martins
25 Mill.

1 At 6:30 p.m., I called Dwayne Price, the Fleming County EM
2 director, to meet and discuss the situation along with logistics
3 and wasn't able to get in touch with him at that time. At 6:32, I
4 called him back again and he was actually up, already up on top of
5 the hill on the Royse property, up by the pond, which is some
6 distance from this -- from that area.

7 At 6:45 p.m., I arrived at the top of the hill after going
8 through several check points to access from the Tom Ishmael Road.
9 Met up with Dwayne Price, as well as some of the other Hillsboro
10 fire department reps, asked the questions confirming that everyone
11 had been accounted for and that no structural fires were in the
12 area, which they did confirm.

13 Also onsite during that time, Ashley Bowman, who is with the
14 KYD PD; Melissa Holbrook and Chris Bailey, who are with the
15 Kentucky Public of -- the PSC, Public Service Commission; Michael
16 Royse, who's a landowner; Tiffany Jones -- that's his daughter --
17 and Shawn Royse were also up on top of the ridge; as well as the
18 Forestry Department, who had been contacted due to the location of
19 the incident and the wooded areas that were around and affected.
20 We did instruct them that they were not allowed to access the site
21 to battle any secondary fires or to extinguish them until we had
22 granted access and deemed that it was safe to enter. Those
23 personnel were Terry Stanford, Alan Watt, Ed McNeil, Michael
24 Carter, and Matthew Wright, and we had to sign an attendance sheet
25 to keep track everybody that was onsite.

1 At 6:46, spoke to Barry Blevins. He was en route to get a
2 light plant out to site because it was going to be getting dark,
3 because we needed to remain onsite to monitor obviously the
4 residuals.

5 At 6:50, I spoke to Joey Grimes, and he told me that they
6 were ready to blowdown lines 15 and 25. There had been
7 conversations in the background due to not knowing the
8 serviceability at these lines for additional safety measures --
9 these lines being 15 and 25 -- would also have to be reduced. My
10 initial -- the initial instructions were to reduce the pressure to
11 50 PSI in each of those lines, which I told Joey to go ahead and
12 proceed with those blowdowns.

13 At 6:57 p.m., I talk to Ben Bloom. Ben Bloom is a pipeliner
14 from Danville compressor station that had, again, in the
15 background, as others assisted with other aspects of the response,
16 was sent up to assist with the efforts. And when check -- he
17 called, called him, and I wanted to check to see whether if he --
18 that he was and make sure he knew where to go if it wasn't in the
19 Danville area.

20 At 7:06 p.m., I called Barry Blevins just to let him know if
21 he heard some blowing, what was going on, that we were going ahead
22 and depressurize at lines 15 and 25 as instructed by Region to do.

23 At 8:18 p.m., I was handed the phone from Melissa Holbrook to
24 speak with Roger Evans of NTSB about the incident and answer
25 preliminary questions. The call lasted approximately 24 minutes,

~~Hot~~ call
1 and due to the location of the van and per discussion with Roger,
2 an email was drafted and sent to me prior to reporting it to the
3 NTSB that it was accurate. The call lasted, again, 24 minutes,
4 and it was over at about 8:42 p.m.

5 At -- and I don't recall exactly the time, but Randy Dean, my
6 boss, called to get an exact location of the event and how to
7 properly access up to where we were at that time. And he arrived
8 onsite at roughly sometime around 9 o'clock.

9 At 9:05 p.m., I called Billy Grimes to check on the current
10 pressure on lines 15 and 25 throughout the public safety
11 depressurization of those lines.

12 And 9:16 p.m., Joey Grimes -- I called Joey Grimes to inform
13 him that the decision had been made by Houston to reduce those
14 lines further to zero PSI as a further safety precautionary
15 measure.

16 At 9:20 p.m., I called Joey Grimes to inform him that Ashley
17 Clemens, who is a supervisor of the pipeline in the Nashville
18 office, had emailed the isolation procedure for further review.

19 At 10:03 p.m., I walked to the top of the hill because when
20 the lines, which is Line 10, 15 and 25, were blown down at that
21 time, to check on the status of the residual flames, which were
22 still present at that time.

23 At 10:21 p.m., I called Joey Grimes to go to Flat Creek,
24 which is our mainline valve setting directly south of Owingsville
25 compressor station at Mile Post 491. Just some background on that

1 was that the decision was made to ensure the double block and
2 bleed the line 10 segment that had been affected by the rupture,
3 just to ensure that it was safe.

4 At 10:49 p.m., I called Joey Grimes to check on the status at
5 Flat Creek mainline valve setting, which, again, is at Mile Post
6 491.

7 At 11:12 p.m., called Joey Grimes on Flat Creek, line 10
8 isolation timeframe, which is again at Mile Post 491, directly
9 south of Owingsville compressor station, and he said that they
10 were en route. He was with Daniel Lamb (ph.). Daniel Lamb is a,
11 is a pipeliner from Danville compressor station that was sent up
12 to assist.

13 I don't know the exact time, I think it was around 11:20-ish,
14 conducted a safety discussion with Gary, who had -- from PHMSA had
15 arrived onsite. Also in that discussion was Melissa Holbrook,
16 Chris Bailey and Randy Dean. We had that safety discussion about
17 accessing the event site and that the residual flames -- obviously
18 it was dark at that time, with trips and falls, prior to heading
19 to the top of the hill to view the rupture sited. And again, at
20 that time, residual flames were still present.

21 At 11:48 p.m., I called Joey Grimes to check on the isolation
22 status of Flat Creek. He informed me that the line 10 mainline
23 valve associated power gas valves and crossovers had been isolated
24 at that time.

25 Also around that time I had instructed Barry Blevins and Ben

1 Bloom to secure the northern end of the site for the night and
2 instructed Bryson Price and Dustin Bailey to secure the southern
3 end of the site for the night.

4 So back in our discussion with Dwayne Price, the EM director,
5 I've asked if there were any -- if we could receive assistance
6 from them as far as securing the location, and unfortunately, at
7 that time, they were unable to provide anyone. So due to the
8 remoteness of the location, as well as not working alone, I had
9 two personnel -- two at the top from a ~~Tom Ishmael~~ ^{Tom Ishmael} entrance
10 location over the pond area and two at the bottom at the Martin
11 Mill pipeline road crossing as well.

12 At midnight on May 5th, I called Billy Grimes (indiscernible)
13 if we were -- I would be en route to assist him in finishing up
14 the lockout/tagout implementation at Owingsville compressor
15 station. I left that site at right around 12:01 a.m. to head to
16 Owingsville to assist him with the lockout/tagout as well for
17 field tag installation.

18 At 12:15 a.m., I discussed and assisted Billy Grimes with the
19 removal of the station bypass valve hydraulic ~~paint~~ ^{FLUOR BOTTLE} floor plugs
20 (ph.) to eliminate any potential ability to actuate.

21 At about 12:40 a.m., I called Ralph Toy (ph.) to discuss
22 (indiscernible) the Muses Mill mainline valve.

23 At 1:32 a.m., I got confirmation from Ben Bloom, who was
24 onsite at the top of the hill, that the residual flames were out
25 and no longer present, and at 1:40 a.m., I left the station and

1 went home.

2 That's my account of the -- from the event to the flames
3 being out.

4 Q. Well, thank you very much. I know that's a long stretch to
5 talk without stopping, and I appreciate it. Do you need a minute
6 or are you good to keep going?

7 A. I just took a drink of water just to get the windpipe wet
8 again.

9 Q. Yeah. I know, it's a lot. I appreciate it. I know. It
10 really helps to get a good picture of the whole scene though. And
11 thank you very much. I really appreciate it. I know it's a lot
12 of talking.

13 A. Yes, ma'am.

14 Q. Okay. So I want to step back to a couple of specific things,
15 and then I'll go and ask you some kind of general questions.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. So I want to start back at the beginning of the night when
18 Bryson first got the call from the 911 dispatch. So I just kind
19 of want to -- and I'll talk to Bryson a little bit more about this
20 later, but I want to get your impressions on this.

21 So he got a call from dispatch, and is that something that --
22 do you guys have like a regular relationship with dispatch where
23 they call you if there's something they suspect to be pipeline
24 related? Or, you know, was it he happened to be the on-call
25 person, or was this a buddy who knows that he works for Texas

1 Eastern and called him kind of thing?

2 A. Okay. So what I would say to that is that part of our
3 emergency response also goes back to our public awareness and
4 relations that we have --

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. -- in the communities that we operate in as far as getting --
7 you know, visiting them and having -- making time to act with
8 them. We also have -- obviously we have the paradigm core
9 meetings and whatnot that emergency responders and dispatchers and
10 whatnot, they attend with us. But yes, I think that relationship
11 that we have with the -- in the areas that we operate in, that
12 obviously helps, along with Bryson knew the person that was
13 dispatcher at that time that was on duty for them.

14 Q. Okay. Okay. So going to the -- kind of the next thing is
15 Bryson calls you and says, hey, boss, I'm -- I got call from my
16 buddy over at dispatch, and he says that he thinks there might be
17 a pipeline rupture. They're getting calls from the public or
18 wherever. And, you know, you call, you say, yeah, go ahead and
19 head out there.

20 You call gas control, and gas control says, no, we're not
21 seeing anything. But then you continue to call folks, which, in
22 retrospect, is definitely the right decision. What made you make
23 that decision? You know, with gas control seeing no pressure --

24 A. Right.

25 Q. With gas control seeing no pressure drop, you know, I can see

1 a supervisor saying, oh, well, that's just a false alarm; that's
2 just a fire in the woods. You know, in retrospect, that was
3 definitely the right decision, you know.

4 A. Right. Right.

5 Q. I'm just curious your thought process.

6 A. Yeah. So, you know, if you don't -- if we don't know for
7 sure, then we have to treat it like it actually is. I mean, we
8 have to have absolutely, 100 percent confidence and confirmation
9 that it is not -- that whatever event, whether it's a fire,
10 whether it's a leak, whatever the case may be, that it would not
11 be it.

12 If we go out there and it's not, then great, but we were at
13 least headed out there to make sure that our assets -- the public
14 is safe, that our assets are safe, and the environment's not being
15 impacted. That's our responsibility.

16 And if that means that somebody's evening is, you know, shot
17 because we went out there and it was false alarm, then so be it.
18 But we're going to make sure to respond as we've all been trained
19 to do. That's part of the job.

20 Q. Okay. So just kind of a basic due diligence, like that's
21 kind of second nature for you?

22 A. Yes, ma'am. It's -- yeah, we're always going to err on the
23 side of caution with that.

24 Q. Okay. And I'm guessing that -- I don't know how often kind
25 of dispatch would call your guys to say, hey, we've got a caller

1 or an issue or something that we think might be pipeline related.
2 Is it normal for them to call you and then, you know, to kind of
3 ask permission? Or how does that process work?

4 A. So if gas control were to call one of our guys, we receive
5 calls -- just as, you know, some examples, receive calls where
6 some landowners may have called and said, we smell gas. Even
7 though it may not be in our area, we're still going to be
8 dispatching personnel out there with leak surveyors and be able to
9 go out and perform those types of surveys and ensure -- because we
10 want landowners and we want the public to assist us as far --
11 because we're not out there 24/7.

12 We want them to call us and let us know if they see something
13 that's not right: if they hear hissing noises; if they smell
14 something; if they see people they don't know, excavators or
15 whatever out on the road up there; there's some disturbed dirt. I
16 mean, we want them to call and help us. They're part of the
17 solution as well, as far as keeping them safe and our assets safe
18 as well.

19 Q. Okay. I think what I'm trying to get to there, and I
20 apologize, is if -- is it normal for them to call you first to
21 say, hey, boss, what should I do? Or do they know, I should head
22 straight to the site and fill in Bart, or do they know what their
23 actions are supposed to be, I guess?

24 A. I got you.

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. I -- okay, I understand your questions now. Yes.

2 Q. Yeah. Sorry, I wasn't clear.

3 A. That's okay.

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. No, no. No, that's fine. That's fine. Yeah. So it's -- I
6 mean, if they get the phone call and understand that there's a
7 situation, we all know that we cannot handle it alone. There's
8 way -- it's a multi-faceted approach as far as handling any type
9 of event site, especially one, you know, that ended up happening
10 May 4th there.

11 So yes, that's -- he is to inform me so that he is out
12 handling the situation and not trying to make all the phone calls.
13 Right? He's out assisting and handling the situation, and I am to
14 talk to dispatch personnel to where they need to go to get the
15 event isolated.

16 Q. Okay. So he --

17 A. So yes, they would always call me to let me know.

18 Q. Okay. I see. So, essentially, he's calling you so that he
19 knows where you want him to go? He knows that you're going to
20 send him somewhere to do something. The question is --

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. -- just a matter of which site, which of the two -- you know,
23 which -- what resources you want and where. But he knows what
24 activities he's going to be doing, it's just more of --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- he needs to alert you so the other balls can get up in the
2 air?

3 A. Right. Yes. That's correct.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Right. And if I -- while he's going and handling that
6 aspect, while I'm trying to help deploy personnel to assist with
7 those efforts.

8 Q. Okay. And how are you -- I mean, it sounds like you
9 dispatched quite a few personnel. Is that pretty much your whole
10 team out there, or how are you deciding --

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. -- who --

13 A. It's that -- it is the -- yes, ma'am, it is the entire
14 Owingsville station team that reports to this location.

15 Q. Okay. That's what I was going to ask, was how you kind of
16 decided who to send --

17 A. Right.

18 Q. -- who to dispatch and who not.

19 A. So as far as this -- who I decide to dispatch where, as far
20 as Bryson Price has given me, when he first called me, Bryson was
21 the utility pipeliner. Bryson does a lot of the public awareness
22 ~~contracts~~ **CONTACTS** in the Owingsville area as far as meeting with emergency
23 responders. And, being from the area, he's on several farming
24 boards and whatnot along the area as well, and that's -- he knows
25 the right-of-way from right-of-way, from assisting with anomaly

1 investigations and things of that nature. So I knew that he knew
2 where to go, and in the event that there were onlookers and
3 blocked accesses, he would know a different way to get there. So
4 that's why I sent Bryson where he went.

5 Barry Blevins is the veteran with us. He's been all up and
6 down the system. He's done anything, you know, those other --
7 with the meetings, he knows the right-of-way from right-of-way,
8 knowing -- he knows all the landowners. He's just one of those,
9 you know, handy as a shirt pocket guys ^{and} that's done it, done it all.
10 And he's responded previously, so I knew he would know where to go
11 and understand what to do.

12 As far as dispatching, calling Joey Grimes, he's the station
13 operator. He knows the station as well as anybody, so he would
14 understand what needed to be done to isolate the event.

15 Called Billy Grimes with that same knowledge, as well as need
16 to dispatch him through Owingsville compressor station from a
17 controls perspective to be able to also assist in locking and
18 tagging out the station and associated breakers with some of the
19 electrical valves that we have.

20 I dispatched Scott Trusty because also, previously, he was a
21 utility pipeliner in this area and knew the area as well as Bryson
22 did as far as where to go and knew as -- for part of his job
23 duties he has while here in the station yard that he's responsible
24 for the annual maintenance on. So he understands valve operations
25 and bridging valves and assisting with that as well.

1 So that's why I dispatched those personnel specifically to
2 where I dispatched them to. And, as far as Dustin Bailey goes,
3 being a newer employee, I did not want him -- you know, as far as
4 overwhelming him, as far as being the immediate responder to the
5 site. So that's why I had him come and meet me and talk through
6 it and then just to keep him posted, as far as security goes, at
7 the southern part of the incident area.

8 Q. And that makes perfect sense. It seems like you know your
9 stuff very well. You know their skills and what they're good at.
10 Do you -- are you very involved in kind of their training and
11 development?

12 A. Right. So yes. I mean, that's part of my job duties is to
13 make sure that we, that we do training and develop our personnel,
14 not only in their roles, but also in an emergency response. I
15 mean, we do conduct tabletop type simulation as well as simulation
16 to actually go physically out to a hypothetical event location and
17 kind of train on that and come back, do a hotwash as far as, hey,
18 what did we do good, what do we need to work on, all those types
19 of things. So, you know, the old practice makes perfect type
20 scenario. And I get like you're saying, I mean, they're like --
21 everybody performed well.

22 Q. Yeah. So I want to talk about your interactions with gas
23 control during the event. So at the initial -- at the beginning
24 of the event, it sounds like they really weren't -- they weren't
25 seeing anything. They weren't seeing any alarms; they weren't

1 seeing any pressure drop. At what point during the event did that
2 change?

3 A. Well, I just, I do want to point out that, that's from my
4 interactions with them. There's not --

5 Q. Understood.

6 A. Yeah. I'm not sure what other phone calls, who else was
7 talking to who, you know, what of -- you know, as far as when they
8 were receiving any types of alarms and whatnot.

9 Q. Understood. Understood.

10 A. You know, but again -- okay.

11 Q. Yeah. Understood. But at what point did you -- so at what
12 point do you -- did they -- I mean, it sounds like they were still
13 very much in the loop and all of that, but at what point did they
14 start seeing changes on their end? What kind of communications
15 did you have with them?

16 A. Right.

17 Q. How did, how did that whole communication process work?
18 Because I think I've got a very good picture of how you and your
19 team worked together, but that part, I feel like I'm missing a
20 little bit.

21 A. Okay. So, I mean, I know, obviously, that they knew that it
22 occurred because the horsepower that was running when I had left
23 earlier that day to go to head home, the units that were running
24 were not running, you know, as I'm getting back, or the guys
25 coming back to the location. Those had been shut off. So I know,

1 I know that they knew.

2 I just -- I was -- my focus was on getting my guys more
3 dispatched to the scene. You know, I -- the pipeline segments
4 isolated and ensuring that we had site security. But, I mean,
5 Cody Fokes, talking to him at 4:53, I mean, he -- you know, they
6 knew what was going on during that time.

7 It's just I wasn't having those exact conversations with them
8 where my role was to ensure that we were getting the event site
9 isolated and -- as far as from a pipeline perspective as well as
10 securing the scene to protect the public, so -- and I feel like
11 they knew what was going on, maybe with other conversations with
12 other personnel, but again, my main focus was on ensuring the
13 safety of the public and isolating that valve setting.

14 Q. Okay. That makes sense. That makes perfect sense. So
15 something I noticed, so the MAOP of this line is 936 PSI, which is
16 pretty normal, right, for a pipe of that age and size and all of
17 that good stuff, but at the day of the event, it was running at
18 657, which is pretty low.

19 In my experience, you don't run a pipe that low unless you've
20 got a good reason. And you had mentioned that Skip Holly was out
21 there doing some anomaly work. Is that why the pressure was low?
22 Do you know, I mean, do you know why they were running low in that
23 area? Is that --

24 A. Well --

25 Q. Is that a question for gas control or is it a question for

1 you guys? Or --

2 A. I mean, I can -- as far as the -- are you referring to the
3 pressure at the time of the incident?

4 Q. Yes, yes.

5 A. Okay, so -- well, now, instead of the traditional flow from
6 south to north, now the flow is from north to south, so that was
7 actually on the suction side of Owingsville, that compressor
8 station.

9 Q. Yep.

10 A. So that's why that pressure was lower in that area. As far
11 as the anomaly investigation that was going on, it was on line 15,
12 which is already an isolated segment per the ~~(indiscernible)~~ *SAFE EXCAVATION PRESSURE*
13 answer that. *AA*

14 Q. Okay. So that 657, you're normally seeing it that low on the
15 suction side?

16 A. It really depends on -- you know, like you were referring to
17 gas control and the nominations that are kind of what they're
18 seeing as far as when they model flow rates and deliveries, what
19 that needs to be. I really don't have a lot to do with that part
20 of it.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I just -- that's not mine. That's not my realm there. *ROLE AA*

23 Q. Understood. I'll pick their brain. It's just interesting
24 for me because we -- when I worked for Kinder, I worked on El Paso
25 Natural Gas, EPNG, and we -- even on the suction side, we never

1 ran that low below MAOP unless we had a -- unless it was like a
2 dead spot or something. So I was kind of curious if this was kind
3 of a dead area or if like -- and then, when you had mentioned the
4 anomaly, the guys out there for anomaly work, I just, I was just
5 curious, so -- but if that's a question for somebody else, that's
6 a question for somebody else.

7 Okay. You had mentioned that you had to -- you sent four of
8 your guys out to secure the site overnight. You mentioned that
9 you requested assistance from someone to secure the site and I,
10 and I didn't quite catch who that was. Who was that?

11 A. Sorry.

12 Q. No, that's okay.

13 A. It was -- that was Dwayne Price, and he's the EM director for
14 Fleming County.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. He -- I was just ~~assessing~~ ^{ASKING} if they had any off-duty officer
17 or anybody that would be able to assist until we were able to get
18 our security personnel in place.

19 Q. So is that not typical for them, I mean, to stay at a site
20 until the fire is fully out, or I don't know what --

21 A. So, well, the remoteness of the location would have made it
22 extremely difficult actually to even -- as far as fire trucks,
23 things like that. But, again, the Forestry Department was onsite,
24 and because it was isolated and just lower residual flames, they
25 had put out what secondary fires were occurring at the time before

~~THEY LEFT.~~

1 ~~the dead lift.~~ So I'm not -- that's -- that would be my only
2 thought on them not staying around.

3 Q. Okay. Okay. Now, were you guys -- so you guys are familiar
4 with the area. Did you know ahead of time that there were no residences
5 or even buildings in the area just from experience or --

6 A. We knew where the -- when the confirmation was given about
7 fire, that it was on Martin Mill Hill, we knew there was nothing
8 in the area.

9 Q. Okay. And that's just from your experience of the area?

10 A. Just from knowledge and being able to -- right, just by
11 knowing the areas and whatnot, right.

12 Q. Okay. How long did it take the guys to just physically get
13 to the different -- to the two different sites? So to the valves
14 and then to Owingsville station -- or to Muses Mill, sorry. I
15 should be way more specific.

16 A. Right. That's no problem. I'm just looking through my list
17 here. So I called Billy Grimes at 4:46 p.m., and as far as -- are
18 you talking about shutting all the valves or just the line 10?

19 Q. No, I'm just talking about driving time to get there. So I'm
20 thinking, you know --

21 A. Oh, okay. I got you.

22 Q. Yeah. Yeah.

23 A. Okay. So Billy Grimes, so 4:46, and Billy Grimes arrived at
24 the station at 5:01.

25 Q. Okay. So about 15 minutes.

1 A. As far as Barry Blevins goes, he actually arrived at the
2 valve -- let's see, I called him at 4:44, and he actually arrived
3 at the site at right about 5:15. So right at, what, 29 minutes.

4 Q. And I'm not at all familiar with the area, so I'm guessing
5 just that's a little bit more off road and difficult to get to?

6 A. It is a -- yes, it's a remote location as far as where to get
7 to. You know, from Owingsville on into the area, it's called
8 Plumbers Mill Landing, you know, Plumbers Landing area is where
9 the Muses Mill Mile Post 517 valve setting is located.

10 Q. Okay. And how long is that segment between Muses Mill and
11 Owingsville?

12 A. About -- let's see, 502.11 to -- 14.71 miles.

13 Q. Okay. Would you say that's a pretty standard valve
14 separation distance for you guys out there?

15 A. Yes, I would. It's somewhere between, you know, the 15- to
16 17- to 19-mile range, somewhere in that area. I mean -- and I can
17 only speak for what, you know, obviously for (indiscernible) --

18 Q. Right.

19 A. -- valve settings were.

20 Q. Right. So somewhere in that area.

21 A. But it's somewhat typically right around that 15-mile range
22 average.

23 Q. Okay. Okay. That makes sense. Did the guys have any
24 difficulty with the valves, operating them?

25 A. No, they did not. They did not have any trouble with the,

1 with the actual valves. But you've probably heard that the -- at
2 the end of the conversation that I had as far as assisting Billy,
3 we just wanted to, as far as the bypass valves go, just to 100
4 percent make sure that no actuation could occur. So that's why we
5 took a ~~full~~ ^{MA 13-46} plug there toward the end of the end of the night.
6 But no, there were no trouble actuating any valves.

7 Q. Yeah. No, that makes sense to do a full lock outside on
8 that.

9 A. Yes, ma'am.

10 Q. Yeah. And accidental actuation is the last thing you need on
11 something like that.

12 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Well, I don't have any more questions
13 right now. I'm going to pass it on to PHMSA.

14 So introduce yourself please, Alvaro, and then you can go
15 ahead and ask questions.

16 Unless, Bart, do you need a break or are you ready to keep
17 going?

18 MR. JOHNSON: I'm just keeping drinking water, so no.

19 MS. COLLETTI: Okay, thank you. Yeah. Feel free, like I
20 said, interrupt at any time. I'm sorry, I can -- sorry to ask so
21 often. I just, I hate that I can't read body language right now,
22 so --

23 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks for asking.

24 MS. COLLETTI: Yeah.

25 Alvaro, you're up.

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Alex.

2 BY MR. RODRIGUEZ:

3 Q. This is Alvaro Rodriguez. I am an accident investigator with
4 Accident Investigation Division of PHMSA, and I am helping with
5 the interviews. And first, thank you for providing a very
6 detailed timeline of the event.

7 My first question is about the cause of the incident. I know
8 it's maybe too soon to tell, but do you have any maybe idea of why
9 this event happened?

10 A. Yeah. So I'm not a subject matter expert or a geo hazard,
11 you know, engineer or any type of -- you know, that's not my realm
12 as far as that goes, so I don't want to speculate.

13 Q. No problem. Yeah. Thank you. And besides that, was
14 anything different that you thought you could have done after
15 going through the event?

16 A. I believe there's always, you know, room for improvement no
17 matter what you're doing in life, but, I mean, I do -- will stand
18 by the things I think that the guys -- that we responded, that we
19 kept the public safe, and we secured the area, and we were able to
20 isolate. And, again, I'm going above and beyond. Not knowing the
21 condition or the serviceability of the other lines, I took the
22 additional safety precautionary measures to evacuate the gas in
23 those to ensure -- further ensure that safety.

24 Q. Thank you. And something else that comes to mind is, in
25 terms of the response time and -- you know, it looks like

1 everything worked out pretty well for being -- have you had any
2 other incidents in that area that you recall, and you can base --
3 that you were talking about drills and everything that you're
4 doing in order to be prepared. Anything else that have happened
5 before?

6 A. As far as in this particular area, not while I've been up
7 here has there been an incident of this magnitude. No, sir, not
8 while I've been up here.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Thank you very much. Besides, I don't
10 have any other questions. I feel that you were very thorough with
11 your description of the timeline of the events, and I thank you
12 for that.

13 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, sir. Thank you.

14 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Great.

15 Tom, do you have any questions? And, if you do, please
16 introduce yourself.

17 MR. WOODEN: Tom Wooden. Alex, I do not have any additional
18 questions for Bart. The only thing I would point out, Alex, we
19 did send you a timeline for the various interviews that we're
20 going to have today, and we can forward that onto others that need
21 it.

22 MS. COLLETTI: Yes, sir. I have read through it, and Alvaro
23 has a copy as well, so he -- for his reference, so --

24 MR. WOODEN: Thank you.

25 MS. COLLETTI: Yeah. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

1 It is very well written. Thank you for that, Bart and Tom. So --

2 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am.

3 MS. COLLETTI: It's very well written, and it was really
4 great to have the context from your description of it. There's
5 just a lot more detail when you're walking through it. I know it
6 seems like a lot to walk through such a long document, but it
7 really helps explain it in so much more detail just knowing who
8 the people are involved that are being talked about and what their
9 roles are and all of that. It really kind of brings the timeline
10 to life, so to speak.

11 I don't have any further questions, so I'm not going to ask a
12 second round.

13 Alvaro, do you have any second-round questions?

14 BY MR. RODRIGUEZ:

15 Q. Well, something else that I was thinking was about the -- if
16 based on patrolling or any survey of the area, was any way to
17 notice anything different than they have given a reason for a
18 double check?

19 A. As far as I can tell you, from something that was actually
20 discussed the previous week that, due to all of the rainfall
21 events that we had, the heavy rains and whatnot of recent. We
22 actually -- the area patrol plane actually flew earlier that day,
23 Monday, flew the area and flew over on some of the other pipelines
24 and -- but, I mean, as far as patrolling and whatnot goes, I mean,
25 I'm not exactly sure what else you may be getting at. I mean, I

1 know (indiscernible) that additional flight occurred.

2 Q. Okay. And did you guys receive any response, maybe any
3 digging or recognition of the pipeline, something that you are
4 notified and maybe something that you've take into account for
5 maintenance? I don't know if you take (indiscernible) into
6 consideration?

7 A. As far as digging, things like that, I mean, we do -- you
8 know, there are tools that are run through the line segments, but
9 those results and the analysis and things like that are not
10 handled out here in the field. They're handled by those subject
11 matter experts in -- down in Houston and other areas.

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Perfect. Well, thank you very much.
13 Those are all the questions that I have.

14 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Tom, do you have anything further?

15 MR. WOODEN: No additional questions. Thank you, Alex.

16 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Well, then, Bart -- oh, and this is
17 Alex again. I'm the worst of breaking my rule of introducing
18 myself.

19 Then, Bart, I want to thank you very much for your time.
20 This has been extremely helpful. I really appreciate the level of
21 detail you went into. I want to thank you for the work you did
22 the night of the accident and just thank you for coming in today,
23 for taking the time and for talking so much. I hope you don't
24 have to talk much more today. Hopefully, you won't have too many
25 calls today, have a nice quiet afternoon.

1 But I will most likely have a transcript for you in about a
2 month or so, so just look for an email on that, like I said. And
3 it will come with just a little errata sheet. If there aren't any
4 errors, you just check the box and send it back to me. If there
5 are errors, you can just send me an email that says, this is wrong
6 on this line on this page, or you can even write it on the
7 document itself. However you like to do it is fine by me.

8 But if you think of something later that you forgot here,
9 feel free to call me or email me anytime. I believe I have your
10 contact information somewhere. If not, I will get it because I'll
11 need your email address regardless to get you the errata sheet and
12 your transcript. But like I said, feel free to call me or email
13 me anytime if something else comes to you. That's pretty normal.

14 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Okay.

15 MS. COLLETTI: But thank you so much for your time. I really
16 appreciate it.

17 MR. JOHNSON: No problem. I just wanted to ensure I guess
18 the schedule timeline to make sure, because I know everybody's
19 time is precious. The next scheduled is 10:30, is that correct,
20 with Barry Blevins?

21 MS. COLLETTI: Yeah, yes, sir. Unfortunately, I -- here, I'm
22 going to take us off the record really quick. So this concludes
23 the interview of Mr. Bart Johnson, and it is 9:26 a.m. Stop
24 recording.

25 (Whereupon, at 9:26 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

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 Bart Johnson

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.


Romona Phillips
Transcriber