UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
PIPELINE LEAK OFF THE LOUISIANA COAST IN THE GULF OF MEXICO ON NOVEMBER 16, 2023	*	Accident No.: PLD24FR001

Interview of: DAN BARTON, Operations Supervisor
Third Coast Midstream, OCC2

Third Coast Operations Center
Houston, Texas

Saturday,
November 18, 2023

APPEARANCES:

DR. STEPHEN JENNER, Ph.D., Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

KAREN BUTLER, Operations Supervisor
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
(PHMSA)

BUDDY GRAY, President
Lighthouse Midstream Services

JOE EISERT, ESQ.
King & Spalding
(On behalf of MPOG and Mr. Barton)

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

(12:25 p.m.)

DR. JENNER: Okay. Let's go on the record at this time.

Good afternoon. Today is November 18th, 2023. The time is 12:25 Central Time. My name is Stephen Jenner, and I'm an investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board.

We're at the Third Coast Operations Control Center in Houston, Texas.

Today we are conducting an investigation with Mr. Dan Barton, regarding the pipeline incident in the Gulf of Mexico on November 16th, 2023.

So let's first go around the room, and we'll have everyone introduce yourself and if you would please, state your name with the spelling, give us your title and who you work for.

Again, I'm Stephen Jenner, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, J-e-n-n-e-r, and investigator with the NTSB. And I'll go to my right.

MS. BUTLER: Karen Butler, K-a-r-e-n, B-u-t-l-e-r. I'm with PHMSA as an operations supervisor and PHMSA is Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

MR. EISERT: My name is Joe Eisert. Last name is E-i-s-e-r-t. I'm a partner at the law firm of King and Spalding, S-p-a-l-d-i-n-g, LLP, and I'm here as Dan's representative.

DR. JENNER: Thank you.

MR. GRAY: My name is Buddy Gray. That's B-u-d-d-y, G-r-a-y. And I'm president of Lighthouse Midstream Services, which is the

subsidiary that the control room is under Third Coast.

MR. BARTON: And, Dan Barton, D-a-n, B-a-r-t-o-n. I'm an operations supervisor of OCC2 for Third Coast Midstream.

DR. JENNER: Thank you very much. So let's get started.

INTERVIEW OF DAN BARTON

BY DR. JENNER:

Q. Can I call you Dan?

A. Yeah, of course.

Q. Very good. Thank you. If you would, just tell us about your background and how you got started in the industry, if you would, just work your way up to your current position.

A. Okay. Start with oil and gas only?

Q. Sure.

A. Okay. So my first experience started in oil and gas out in North Dakota. I spent 5 years in North Dakota as a supervisor of operations running a liquids midstream operations, where we had over 100 locations. It was a large midstream operations. We were growing pretty fast. We were basic commissioning a new location weekly. So working long hours, working with programmers and the control center and the field, as far as commissioning and point to point from the field side. Did a lot of maintenance. I had 8 direct reports out there in North Dakota that I ran over 100 locations with.

So when year 5 came up, I was kind of over the weather, kind of looking for a change at that time. The company I was with had

an opening in the control center. And since I ran that asset, knew the asset, starting commissions in most of the location on that asset, they asked me if I'd like to become a controller in their control center.

Q. Okay. I'll let you talk without interruption if you could just put in the year when these things happened. So when you first got started, about what year was that?

A. I believe 2011.

Q. Okay. Thank you. I'll let you continue.

A. Okay. And then in around the end of 2015, 2016 timeframe, I moved into the control center running a liquids console where we had crude oil and salt water. I did that for about a year and a half and I had -- an opportunity opened up in Denver for a larger control center.

At that time, I felt like I was young enough that I could make a move to a different company, get some different type of experience because it was a completely different type of controlling. I spent a year at this company where they -- we were operating at flow rates of 15,000 barrels an hour, moving 300 some thousand barrels a day. We were making batch cuts on specific gravity and density. So basically we were batching all different types of product from one pipeline. And, when we would make batch cuts, you'd have to time your valves. If it was a 60 second value, 90 second valve, because when they're flowing at 15,000 barrels an hour, a minute, you could contaminate a tank. So you

had to track your batches to the T throughout that entire line, the product quality and then watch where it was due to your densitometers on the pipeline of what type of product that was, and then where -- which deliveries off that main pipeline when you had to make your batch cut in timing. I spent a year there.

And I kind of wanted to get back to Houston, just because there was more job opportunities. It's for like long term because in Denver, there's a handful of companies, control rooms you can work for, but Houston's the neck of control centers and, you know, networking and trying to find opportunities.

In 2017, I moved back to the Houston area and started with the current company I'm with now. I started out as a senior controller where we were doing mainly just liquids gathering. I had a couple of assets in North Dakota and a couple of gathering assets in West Texas that were operating at the time.

I spent a year as a senior controller here. Then I was promoted to supervisor, and I've been doing that, been a supervisor for almost 5 1/2 years now. And my role here as a supervisor is I work a lot with our customers' commercial departments as far as their needs commercially, where to send product, what time of the month they need this product in by. Depending on their pricing, you know, what their preference is. I lot a lot with engineering as far as getting data, vetting data for our SCADA department for pipeline modeling. I work with our scheduling department as far as nominations and balances, any

outages or maintenance down time, notifying our scheduling department, make sure they're informed and that way they can reach out to their customers.

Also here, I help the controllers monitor the system. I mean I'm not logged in. I'm not the controller on duty, but I do watch the pipeline and make sure everything's operating and the way it should operate. Also when we have a new controller, I'm responsible of overseeing their training, their on-the-job training with whatever controller they're assigned to. And then also when the controller feels they're ready and I feel they're ready, because throughout that process, I'm pulling them off to the side. I'm questioning them. I'm doing if this happens, what would you do here? If this happens, what would you do here? In winter operations, we see more of this here, making sure they're getting the proper training that they need from their controller. And I'll ask them, are you getting this? Are you catching on? Do you need -- and sometimes I might switch them up with another controller because not everybody learns the same or not everybody's a good teacher. They're not -- you know, they know how to run a pipeline but they don't really know how to teach because they're not as verbal or whatnot. So I kind of monitor them throughout the process.

And then when I feel they're ready, the controller feels they're ready, I do an initial OQ. I do an initial OQ where it's kind of like a drive around if you will, and I see where they

stand and if they have any questions, things that they need to work on. If they do, they'll go back and address it and I'll give them more time. And then -- but if they are ready, I'll give them another week or a week or 3, 4 days, whenever they're available and then I'll do the actual OQ portion of their qualification. And when a controller's qualified, I go through line by line as far as the questions and I use kind of more sight specific. I use -- we're in front of our system when I ask these questions. And then at the end of that, I have a 65 questions AOC/EOC test these controllers take. It's a portion of true or false, best answer fill in. It's not multiple choice. You have to write in your answer. And then I go over that, and make sure they pass it. I haven't had a controller fail an AOC/EOC test yet because by the time they're taking that test, they've been on-the-job training for at least 3 to 4 months, and those questions have been far answered before they take the test. So that's part of the training, the operator qualification portion that I do.

Also, every 3 years I do that again to re-OQ the controllers. They take the phase 3. That's our final evaluation over. And then they also take the AOE/EOC test again that they took when they originally OQ'ed. So I do that every 3 years.

I also do -- we have computer-based training through EWN, and that is every 3 years as well. The controllers take that on their own, and then when they are completed, I go back through and evaluate their training with the controller, and then we both sign

off that they completed and understand the training.

Also, if I could go back as far as the OQ process, each line in initial, the controller initials, and we date that document. So we both sign off on that task, that they know that task, and I agree -- they understand that they know the task, and I agree that they do know the task as far as the OQ process.

Yeah, that's kind of -- it's a bunch of other little things, but high level topics, that's kind of what I do as the supervisor.

Q. Great. I appreciate that summary.

A. And then as far as scheduling as well. So I schedule -- try to keep their hours of service, making sure there's no deviations in our scheduling, making sure the controllers have enough rest time and I schedule PTO as well. So scheduling, PTO, keeping this within the reg as far as their hours of service. During certain times, COVID, the freeze, we did have deviations but I fill out the proper deviation forms. So I do -- so if there is a deviation, I do the CRM deviations as well.

Also, I -- both supervisors are in charge of doing the O&M 192, 195 review with the controllers. We also go over the Serian (ph.) plan review with the controllers, and they'll do a fatigue mitigation review. All those are Serian requirements that we do with the controllers.

Q. Great. Thank you. Thank you for that summary.

A. Okay.

Q. Can you give me an overview of just the training process? Is

there a classroom portion? Is there testing along the way? You mentioned an OJT process. So if you can give me a high level view of all that.

A. Yeah. So it -- most -- a lot of this because they have the phase things. They have phase 1, phase 2 and phase 3 that they have with them that the controller on duty will sign off as they cover that task with the controller. But I'm in the control room a lot. I'll ask questions, just like, hey, you know, just random ask question -- question and answer kind of thing. And then throughout their process, I'll pull them out in my office and go and have them explain to me how the system runs, how it operates, what should your pressures be here? How do you find a MALP? If we have low suction here, what would you do here? Just constant scenarios and questions that I ask.

Q. Can you describe the three different phases?

A. So phase 1 is kind of like the start of it, HR stuff, making sure they have their key badges. They sign into their HR portal if you will, kind of the lay of the control center. Phase 2 is a portion where we start going through this is what scheduling is. This is what commercial is. This is, you know, kind of the terminology. This is how you get into -- you log into your SCADA system because there's a two part verification to that. It's kind of more in depth, and they're still -- at that time, they're still on the console going over the system, just that next step. Phase 3 is how do you start and stop a pipeline? How do you -- what is

a back pressure regulator for? How do you close a valve? How do you trim pressure if you will? How do you find MALP of the line? All different types of questions that are more operationally --

Q. Right.

A. -- to gear them up to be able to be qualified.

Q. It sounds like phase 1 is very quick. It's a 2 week, 2 week thing.

A. Phase 1 is a 1 to 2 week process.

Q. And phase 2?

A. It might be -- off the top of my head, I'd have to look at it. It might be 3 to 5 weeks, weeks 3 to 5, and then it's 6 to 8 weeks or 6 to 9 weeks in the phase 3 training.

Q. And is the phase 3 -- which part of this is considered OJT?

A. I would say starting at phase 2.

Q. Okay.

A. And actually I misspoke. I think phase 3 is weeks 8 to 12, starting kind of backwards because I know it's basically a 3 month training program. And then -- yeah, I'd have to think about it. I'm kind of drawing a blank on that one of the top of my head.

Q. Okay. So phase 2 may actually be 3 to 8? So the first -- the way I was recording it, 1 to 2 weeks for phase 1, and you said 3 to 5 weeks for phase 2. Oh, okay. So that matches. Then you have 8 to 12 weeks. So after the 12th week, if all goes well, could someone become a qualified controller at that point?

A. If they pass the upper qualification test, they pass the AOC

test and, you know, I even kind of talk to the existing operator qualified controller, say how do you feel about it? He's good to go, man. He's good to go. So their tests are passed. They're kind of getting a sign off from the guys they've been training with, and then that's with me doing the initial OQ and the final OQ. And, yes, to answer your question, after 3 months, there are controllers that can be operator qualified.

Q. Okay. From your perspective, what is the most challenging part about the SCADA operator particularly for the newer people?

A. I would say the lifestyle, the rotating shifts. I think your family would have to support, you have to go get enough sleep during the day so you're not fatigued at night. Having the meal prep your food to, you know, have dinner or a snack. And just the hours, the shifts, the rotations. I think to start off, that's probably the biggest adjustment. After while, people have been doing it for 20 years and they loved that shift. But I would say to start off, to answer your question, for a new oncoming controller, the adjustment to a shift if you've never done that before. If you've only worked from 9 to 5, it's a life adjustment.

Q. Yeah, I appreciate that. In terms of operating the SCADA itself, what aspects of that do you think are most challenging?

A. I would say it would be just being on top of everything as far as end balances, watching your pressures throughout the system, you know. If it's a certain location that you need a

certain amount of pressure, and you can only get so much product due to a limitation or a restriction or another location is pulling more than they're supposed to, just balancing the system.
Q. Okay. Great. I appreciate that. So we're -- thank you for that background. So, part of the reason we're here is to understand better the events and circumstances of the incident in the Gulf. Did you play a role in any of that in terms of were you on duty? Were you consulted? Where do you fit into all that?
A. Yes. So I was off of work. I was actually asleep, and I was contacted by the controller.
Q. About what time was that?
A. I would say approximately around 10:25, 10:30-ish.
Q. 10:30 p.m.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. And this --
A. 2230.
Q. Yeah, sure. And this is on Wednesday, November 15?
A. Correct.
Q. Okay. As best you can summarize, what was that conversation?
A. Okay. So, Cesar called me. Of course, the middle of the night, it took me a couple of minutes to even get my wit, you know, waking up from dead asleep. He said, hey, man. The receipts and deliveries are all screwed up. And then I just kind of sat there. He didn’t even give me a chance to even say anything, but he just went on. He goes, I've called 127. Their

flows match out. I've called 915. Their flows match up. Because I've called main pass (ph.) 69, our delivery, and their flows match up. And he goes -- I think he said, Ernie says it's a -- he believes it's a measure issue, and he doesn't want me to shut the system down. And I said, well, what are your pressures doing? He said my pressures are increasing. I said so your flows are matched and your pressures are increasing. He said yes. I said, all right, man. Well, just watch your pressures and keep me updated. And that was the extent of the conversation.

Q. Okay. I just need a little clarification. You mentioned 127, 119. What are those?

A. Those are platforms.

Q. Okay.

A. Sorry.

Q. So I heard 127, 119. Was there a third number in there?

A. 127 and 915.

Q. Oh, not 119 and 915.

A. Correct. It's a second platform.

Q. So there were two platforms that he was referencing?

A. Correct.

Q. Okay. So, the -- there's a measurement issue. The flows were matching. The pressures are increasing.

A. That's what he said.

Q. What does that mean to you based on the information that he said?

A. That everything's fine. On a liquid system, if your flows are matching and your pressure's increasing, that sounds like normal operations to me.
Q. And is that how you ended the call? It sounded normal.
A. Yeah, I mean it didn't sound -- there was nothing further discussed. I went -- I was comfortable enough to go back to bed. You know, I didn't think there was an issue.
Q. Had you seen that type of scenario before either with these platforms or with other --
A. As far as flows being normal and --
Q. Yeah. Flows being normal.
A. Now, on that system, a lot of it depends on downstream. There are pressure fluctuations throughout that system.
Q. Um-hum.
A. So sometimes you can be running at a lower pressure. Sometimes you can run at a higher pressure depending on what your downstream customer is. So you really never know what to kind of expect, even if you do have a lower pressure on the system. That would be normal operations. Even if you have higher pressures, that is normal operations because you're still within your long parameters.
Q. When you talked to Cesar, did he mention presence of any alarms or alerts?
A. No, he didn't say anything about alarms.
Q. Okay. So again, flows matching. Pressure's increasing in

that section of pipeline. Is that scenario common or run common what he was describing to you?

A. It would be common to me.

Q. Okay. So what was the next you heard about this event?

A. The next I heard, my work schedule's from 0630 to 1430 every day, Monday through Friday. It was 6 o'clock in the morning, and I was almost about to try to log into my system, getting my coffee ready, whatnot. My shift lead calls me. I was in there getting coffee. So I missed the phone call. I came back into my room, pick up the phone, called him back, under a minute. It could have been 30 seconds. I immediately called him back.

Q. Right. About what time was this call?

A. 0600.

Q. Okay. Beginning of your shift. Go ahead.

A. Yes. And my shift lead said platforms are running. There's no flow to Main Pass 69, and I've verified that with Crimson (ph.), that they see no flow. I said you see no flow. He goes, yes, I see no flow. And I immediately said, shut it in. And he was on the phone, and Jaime was the logged in day controller. I hear Chris tell Jaime, shut in MPOG. And Jaime had started shutting in MPOG, notifying platforms. Then I told Chris, I said, I need you guys to work together, good communication and log everything because I -- we're shutting it down. So that happened. By the time I got off the phone there, I hadn't had my SCADA system up yet. I get my SCADA system up. I verify for myself

what the control center was seeing, because it takes time for these platforms to ramp down. So I verify what the controllers are seeing, and then I notify my director, Gary Martinez, around 6:20 -- 0620, 0630, of what was happening.

Q. Let me just backtrack a second. You mentioned a Chris. You had notified Chris. What's his full name and his title?

A. It's Chris Bierly. He's the shift lead for OCC2. And the controller on duty was Jaime Diaz. He was the oncoming day controller.

Q. Okay. Thank you.

A. So I notified Gary. I was on the phone with Gary. I had the system up. I start to see VK915 slowly starting to ramp down. I then again called Chris Bierly, my shift lead, to confirm that everybody had been contacted, and they know to shut down. And he confirmed to that time that everybody has been notified. I said, all right. Watch the flow. As soon as these platforms go down, shut down the valve. And, that's what they did.

Q. How long's the process to initiate shutdown before you see a response?

A. It could take anywhere from to 35 to 45 minutes to ramp a platform down. I think 127, it took almost 45 minutes for them to shut down. So it is a process. And that's an estimation. I don't know for a fact.

Q. Yeah. Okay. All right. I'll have you continue on.

A. After that, let's see. Who called? Alan Monroe (ph.), the

manager out in the field for Third Coast, and Robert Billeck (ph.), the director for Third Coast, Gary Martinez, my director of OCC, called. I don't remember who called Gary or Gary chimed me in, but it was a quick conference call, and Robert Billeck, the director, wanted to get a better understanding. Robert and Alan did. The field guys, I think this was the first they've heard of it.

Q. I'm sorry to interrupt. Just what time was this call taking place approximately?

A. 0700.

Q. Okay.

A. 0715. It was right before the morning call. So the morning call is 0730. So it had to be between 0715 and 0720. It was quick, just updated what actually was going on from the control center.

Q. Okay. Thank you.

A. And then we do our morning calls, as normal routine. After 8 o'clock, then I think there was a series of calls with the vice president of operations, Brian Nielsen, Robert Billeck, the director of operations for Third Coast. John Ridgway, I believe he's the director of commercial for Third Coast on the MPOG system. Gary and myself, and we were just kind of going -- they had some -- Alan had pulled up some trends, and they were asking me questions as far as the trending of what Alan pulled up and kind of what the process was. They were worried about, and I just

explained to them, at 0600, they saw a major pressure decrease, but I told them that that was because the platforms were shutting off, and you will see a pressure increase when they're not putting product into the pipeline. And they were just kind of explaining the trends and Alan was talking -- Alan was doing more of the talking. That's the only point that I explained to them. That's why you see such a -- after 6 o'clock because the platforms were ramping off.

Q. Okay.

A. And that's pretty much it. From there, it was more of field operations. We still obviously had our screens up, monitoring, I mean the valves were still closed. And then my controllers per instructed, they logged everything and everybody they spoke with throughout the day leading up to the next day, it looks 12:45. Ernie was the last person that my controllers spoke with on the 16th.

Q. Okay. Thank you. In terms of doing everything that you could do from here, in terms of shutting down --

A. Myself or the controllers?

Q. What could be done here, yourself and the controllers, what was the last action that you took or when did you say we're done doing everything we can from the control center?

A. Okay. So just to better understand the question, you're saying what is the last thing that we could have done the following day as a control center?

Q. Yes. And at what time? What's the last thing you could have done and at what time?

MR. GRAY: In relation to the shut in. Sorry. I --

DR. JENNER: No, no. The following morning. Just introduce yourself.

MR. GRAY: Oh, sorry. Buddy Gray. Just making sure, the last thing that could be done in relation to the shutting in of MPOG?

DR. JENNER: Let me just say to addressing the situation.

MR. GRAY: Okay. Okay.

MR. BARTON: I would say when the inlet (ph.) valves shut -- I mean the system shut down. So I believe by 0700 that morning, when all platforms had been notified to shut in, and the inlet valves were closed, there's not much more a control center can do besides watch and monitor the pressure but the pressure was already at zero at that time. So there's not much a control center can do operationally after that point.

BY DR. JENNER:

Q. That's a perfect answer. Thank you.

A. Yeah.

Q. Just for reference, I saw you -- we have a few documents in front of us. You were referencing some times, and I'll just call it the LMS OCC daily log entry 17783.

A. Okay. Yeah. I was just kind of looking right here as far as when the platforms were notified. So Crescent (ph.) is the

delivery point. That's the Main Pass 69. So we notified them at 0636 that we were shutting the inlet valves in. So that's why I said after 7 o'clock, there's nothing more we could have done because everything's shut off, shut in.

Q. Yeah, that's an exact answer to the question I was looking for.

A. Okay.

Q. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Excuse me. We'll call this Document 1.

DR. JENNER: Okay.

BY DR. JENNER:

Q. All right. Anything else you want to add about the scenario? I have some backup questions.

A. Of course. No, I don’t think there's anything to add because -- I mean I'm sure, of course, I'm missing something with all the -- in the fine details, you know. No, I think, I think I'm good on my end.

Q. Okay. Thank you. So, I imagine between that event and the moment we're talking right now, you've had a chance to go back and examine some logs and data and things like that. Is there anything that you can share what you've learned since the event up until this point about -- that would give you more insight about what may have happened and when?

A. No. The only thing I've really done at that point is I've

worked with the engineering group to provide them the data so they can make that decision and determination. I haven't really -- that's all been, as far as calculations and data and stuff, that's the part I played with engineering.

Q. Okay. Now, if you were to reflect back on the call that you received Wednesday night, does that -- does this event change the way you think about that call and the information that you were given?

A. Well, hindsight is always 20/20, but I feel with the facts and information that I was provided, there's not, there's not much more I could have done.

Q. Was there other information that you think was available that would have been insightful for you to have known at that time?

A. With the facts that were given, I wouldn't haven't looked for other information.

Q. Right. Okay. If we were to go back and review the SCADA screens and logs and things like that, do you know if there were other indicators that a SCADA operator could have focused on that were available to him to say that something's going on here?

A. I believe -- so if you're asking as far as the controller, I believe he did everything that he thought he was supposed to do. You know, I don't know. I haven't really had much of a chance to talk to him about what he saw and what was going on, but I feel that he's an experienced controller and he took every approach that he was supposed to take that he felt, but I can't speak for

him.
Q. Okay. And he is -- we discussed his name.
A. Cesar Sanchez.
Q. Cesar Sanchez. Were you involved in his training? Are you familiar with his performance and initial training?
A. No, he was -- actually he's been here longer than I have.
Q. Oh.
A. So he was initially OQ'ed by his manager at the time, but I did -- his 3 years were up. So I did -- I just did his re-OQ operator qualifications and AOC/EOC test.
Q. Do you recall how those tests went for him?
A. They went well. He's a good controller. And he was re-operator qualified August 31st, 2023, if that helps.
Q. Okay. So did you get a chance to talk to him after the incident?
A. Yes, sir. Myself, Gary Martinez and Cindy Scarlata (ph.) -- is that how you pronounce her last name? Scarlata. She's with HR, and it was an interview on the events that took place to get Cesar's side of the story.
Q. Okay. What did you learn from that, from Cesar's side of the story?
A. To -- and I quote to Cesar's point, he said, "I should have followed my gut and not listened to Ernie." And he said, he should -- he knew he should have shut the system in.
Q. Do you know what he meant by that, he should have shut the

system in? Is he thinking of a certain time?
A. I think he relied too much on the field tech's experience. Well, this is his words, not mine. He -- Cesar, and I quote, he said, "I relied too much on Ernie's experience." And he also stated in the interview that's all documented through HR, that he's worked with Ernie on multiple other occasions, and Ernie's guided him through a lot of situations on the pipeline before. So he just trusted him.
Q. And you had given me sort of a timeline before, and I apologize. Do you recall when he talked to Ernie?
A. He said he called him -- on our HR interview, he said he talked to Ernie seven to eight times throughout that night. Some of it is logged. It looks like here at 8:55, he talked to Ernie. At -- so at 1 o'clock in the morning, "called Ernie to inform him zero flow through Main Pass 69 delivery." He's got that logged. Only thing how I know is Cesar's words, seven to eight times and whatever's in his log notes.
Q. Sure.
A. That's all I know for a fact.
Q. Sure. And, if you can just refresh me on what Ernie's role and what information he has.
A. He is a field technician for Third Coast Midstream on the MPOG assets.
Q. On the --
A. MPOG assets.

Q. And what information can he provided Cesar?
A. More of how measurement works, and I think that's what Ernie was telling Cesar, it's a measurement issue. He is the tech that lays hands on all the instrumentation valving, and he's kind of the subject matter expert in the field. So we've leaned on Ernie quite a bit to be our eyes on the ground.
Q. Okay. And what does it mean that it's a measurement issue?
A. Just how it's being counted when it crosses the meter.
Q. Okay. So what is the issue?
A. I didn't know what the issue was. Ernie -- Cesar said Ernie was telling him that this is what the issue was, and that's what Cesar went off of. I don't know what the issue actually was.
Q. Okay. When he says it's a measurement issue, what -- if you were the SCADA operator, what would you do with that information if someone said, oh, it's a measurement issue? So how do you respond to that as a SCADA operator?
A. Well, I can't speak on how I would respond. I can only speak on how Cesar responded.
Q. Okay.
A. Because that's what factually actually happened.
Q. Sure.
A. The other question is a hypothetical. So, Cesar did what -- he responded however he felt necessary.
Q. And which was?
A. To leave the system up.

Q. Okay.
A. And as he said in his HR interview, he shouldn't have done that.
Q. Do you know if Cesar was -- would have been okay with leaving the system up? Is that sort of what's being communicated? It's a measurement issue. So what's communicated --
A. Well, I mean the only way I can take it is he obviously didn't shut it down. So he -- I can't speak for him but through his actions, it seemed like he was okay with keeping the system up because he did not shut it down.
Q. Okay. Someone in Ernie's position, would they give an opinion? Oh, we need to shut the system or it's okay it up. Would he give an opinion even?
A. I think -- yeah, the field techs give opinions all the time, but at the end of the day, the controller has to look at his signs and what he's seeing at real time and make the decision off his training and experience to make the decision for himself because he ultimately has the authority to shut the system down.
Q. Right. So I guess, thinking back when you're reporting that Ernie's -- that Cesar says, "I should have listened to my gut," it was him taking all this information but Ernie said in his perspective and Cesar's saying, I should have listened to, you know.
A. Yeah. And that's what he said during the HR interview with Gary, Cindy and myself.

Q. Okay. So if you can share your thoughts about -- if you use this as a training experience, for incoming people in the future, what would you tell them about a better way for someone to respond in this situation starting with the events of, you know, Wednesday evening?

A. It would kind of be more continuous of the training that we do now. If you see anomalies in pressure flow especially on a liquid system, if you see certain signs that we currently are training you on, and obviously I'll use this as an example for training moving forward, because it was a real live event, you have the stop work authority to shut it down. It doesn't matter what the tech says. If you see the signs that we're training you on, you see that in real time, protect the asset. It's safety, environmental, protect it, shut it in. You have the authority and we preach that constantly. You have the authority to shut it in.

Q. Right. And if you could just lay out for me what the signs are that could have been seen.

A. Well, every situation dictates. I mean there's all different kinds of scenarios.

Q. Right. In this scenario, what are the signs? What's the first sign that would be an indication that something was maybe abnormal?

A. That your ins and outs aren't adding up.

Q. And what time was that sign available?

A. After going back and looking at it the next day, it looked

like -- we saw, we saw, again going back hypothetical, me and Gary -- not hypothetical. Me and Gary going back and looking at it the next day, it looked right around 1900 timeframe is when there was a decrease in pressure but there was not a deviation in flow just yet.

Q. Okay. Which -- I think we discussed earlier that in itself is not alarming to you.

A. It's not alarming. It's not alarming.

Q. But, it's not alarming, but it could be something interesting. So how do you, how do you deal with that. That's something that's normally or typically normal but it also may be indicative of something. How do we train SCADA people to address that?

A. Depending on what your downstream pressure is, because if that pressure drops upstream and your downstream's not losing pressure, that's a sign.

Q. So, if I heard you then, there's other things they could have looked at on the system --

A. Correct.

Q. -- to start connecting dots. And in this case, again it would be to look at the downstream pressure.

A. Yes, just to make sure that, you know, if the downstream's pressure is dropping, your -- the pressure on the system will drop because now it's less resistance, least path of resistance into your delivery point now, but if your downstream pressure, your

customer pressure is still high, and your upstream pressure is dropping, then you have a problem on the pipeline.

Q. Got it. Okay. So, that's one indication. What's another indication chronologically do you think?

A. I would say when your platforms are -- I'll just throw a number, 4,000 barrels an hour, combination of your field, your receipts are doing a combination of 4,000 barrels an hour, and you're only receiving 1,000 barrels.

Q. Okay. When was that indication?

A. Oh, I'm just giving you examples.

Q. Oh, oh, okay.

A. I thought you were just asking for examples as far as training.

Q. No, if I can focus on this event.

A. Oh, okay.

Q. Do you know what would be a second indication or another indication?

A. Well, then I guess I would use that for this event because it did -- going back on it, it looks like it did happen throughout the night. So it looks like at midnight, Cesar reported that flow went -- zero flow rate through Main Pass 69. Pressure's going up on MPOG and Main Pass 69. So, his flow went to zero on Main Pass 69.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Maybe for color and clarity, you'll indicate what Main Pass 69 is on this system.

MR. BARTON: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Maybe that will help.

MR. BARTON: So Main Pass 69 is our delivery point, and it's right there. Oh, you've got it.

DR. JENNER: Yep.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So we'll call that one Document 2, the reference to the maps so we have that in the record.

BY DR. JENNER:

Q. Okay. All right. So, by midnight what I'm hearing is now there are little things. In the absence of alarms, there are some things that you can start connecting dots?

A. There are indicators, yes.

Q. Okay. Got it. All right. In our off record discussions, you had mention that Cesar is not employed right here -- any more here. Can you give some insight about what went into making that decision?

A. I would have to leave that to HR and the higher ups for that. I wasn't -- that's their decision.

Q. Okay. Appreciate that. So, your -- when you came in the next day, you already described phone calls that are coming into you. Around that time, around 6 in the morning, now Thursday morning, there was a shift change for a new SCADA operator, and who was the new SCADA operator?

A. Jaime Diaz.

Q. Can you spell his name for here?

A. J-a-i-m-e, D-i-a-z.
Q. And his title?
A. His is controller.
Q. Right. And we'll talk to him in the future.
A. Sure.
Q. But it sounds like he may have -- I'll ask you. He had some role in mitigating this situation?
A. He did, yes, sir. At 6 o'clock, when he came on shift, him and Chris came on at the same time, he was the first one to start shutting the systems down, calling the platforms. The controllers are trained to shut down the two highest producing platforms first. So I'd have to see which -- it would either be 915 or 2 -- yeah, 915 was the first shut down, and then MC127 was the second shut down. And that's what the controllers are trained to do. And then after those are shut down, they notify the platforms that are not running to not turn on and to remain shut in.
Q. Right. From your perspective, and I know you're doing your own thing, did things go according to play with how Mr. Diaz --
A. Yes.
Q. -- handled things?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. According to procedure --
A. Yes.
Q. -- as far as you know?
A. Yes.

Q. Okay.
A. Chris and Jaime, they both did what they were supposed to do.
Q. Okay. So, after -- we had talked about after you've done everything you can here, but now you're in the monitoring phase, are people talking to the field, people here talking to those out in the field?
A. Yes. Through Jaime's notes, you can tell they were communicating with Ernie because at that time, I believe he was at Main Pass 69, the delivery point. And, they were working and speaking with Ernie --
Q. Okay.
A. -- the field tech.
Q. Right. Were you privy to any of his conversations?
A. No, I did not speak with -- after Alan Monroe -- only the managers, the directors and the VPs at that point. I did not speak with any Third Coast field tech employees or anybody that was involved with this incident.
Q. Okay. So what were your activities for the rest of your shift just in general?
A. Oh, yeah, just working with our engineering, providing data, answering any questions. Excuse me. Some of it's just a little bit of a blur because ever since it happened, it's been really busy.
Q. I get it.
A. So just throughout my process, doing stuff like that, talking

to Gary, and I still had a system to run. So I still had managers calling me. I wanted to make up gas in different assets. So I still had other -- my normal operations going on as well.

Q. Okay. Did your normal operations go okay?

A. Oh, yeah, yeah. Everything was good. Normal ops. Normal operations.

Q. Okay. That is the first batch of questions I have.

A. Okay.

Q. I'm sure there are follow-up questions? Do you want to --

DR. JENNER: Does anyone want to take a break at this time or we can push through a little longer?

MR. BARTON: I can push through.

DR. JENNER: Okay. Are you good to go?

MS. BUTLER: I am.

DR. JENNER: Okay. So you'll just have to introduce yourself and fire away.

MS. BUTLER: So Karen Butler from PHMSA.

BY MS. BUTLER:

Q. Good afternoon, Dan.

A. Good afternoon.

Q. So I'm just going to ask some points about the system so I can better understand the operation --

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. -- if possible. So I'm just going to clarify in our record that what we would affectionately call Panther (ph.) at PHMSA,

we're referring to in this controller as Main Pass Oil Gathering System.

A. Okay.

Q. And whether or not it's a portion of Panther assets, we'll flush that out now. So when I'm asking questions, I think this is everything involved.

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. I'm showing document 1 for the record.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Two.

BY MS. BUTLER:

Q. Or 2.

A. 2.

Q. Document 2. Thank you. Document 2, and we'll be talking to Document 1 --

A. Okay.

Q. -- for the record once I understand this map. Is any of this flow directional bidirectional?

A. No, ma'am.

Q. So it all goes one direction?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. It's all coming from the platforms going into the main line like what appears to be 18 inch, right?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. Yes. And then it's flowing into MP69?

A. Correct.

Q. And then from MP69, does it go anywhere or does it just sit there?
A. Well, custody transfers take place. So it's no longer -- it's run by Crescent.
Q. Okay.
A. And then I believe downstream, Shell has an operation that we don't see or --
Q. So no bi-direction.
A. No, ma'am.
Q. And at that point, you're done --
A. Yes, ma'am. After passing Main Pass 69.
Q. -- at MP69?
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Okay. Thank you. Okay. So with that, there's several things in the Document 1, now that I've confirmed I'm looking at mainly offshore platform pipeline going into a common point. If I can just ask you to give me a little more understanding of or what might be typical. So I'll clarify that as we go.
A. Okay.
Q. So when we've got something happened at 1900, I think you said in the record that you had reviewed upon hindsight --
A. Yes. Yes, ma'am.
Q. -- that at 1900 something happened.
A. Gary and myself did, yes, ma'am.
Q. Was that flow meter numbers that you were looking at or was

that a trend?
A. It was a trend.
Q. Okay. And what did you notice in the trend?
A. Just a fast, more than normal trajectory of the pressure dropping at every location, at every platform and like on the pipeline. So the system, the overall system dropped.
Q. And for it to be recognized by you as something odd or something different, an anomaly, is there an amount that you would typically look for, for that to drop or you'd say, ah, something's not right with all of these dropping? And this is based on your prior experience, nothing more.
A. Yes, ma'am. I think the amount that we saw, there's not a certain number that I'm looking for per se, but just the amount of pressure that dropped within an hour was substantial.
Q. Okay. Do you remember approximately how much?
A. I believe it was almost 350, 400 pounds.
Q. Okay.
A. Again, that's a guess.
Q. From your best memory.
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. And you were pulling that off of trends in the SCADA system?
A. Yes, ma'am. That was SCADA data.
Q. Okay. Is there meter data that you can't see that exists out there for somebody like Ernie?
A. Not that I know of, but again, you know, if it's not on our

SCADA.
Q. Okay. So as far as you know, when somebody makes a call out to Ernie and you're talking, you're looking at similar data?
A. We're seeing the same thing. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Okay. All right. And, normally, when you're training people, if they see an anomaly, are they supposed to call the technician?
A. Yes, ma'am. On our instant reporting, the technician is the first phone call to make.
Q. Okay.
A. Because again, those technicians, they're the subject matter expert. They know --
Q. Okay.
A. -- those assets. They're on there every day.
Q. All right. And then is there direction in the procedures after that as to what's to happen? Like if the field tech does say we think this is a meter issue.
A. It all depends on if the information they get from the field techs suffices. If they are okay with what the field tech, then that's all they needed. They took the first step to contact the field tech.
Q. Okay.
A. And it's up to the controller to feel if they need to take it higher.
Q. Okay. So, when you're doing training for new controllers, do

you teach them to look at the trends on all the points or --
A. Most of them. Trending is one of the most important things that a controller can do.
Q. Okay. And because it's been a while, and I just want to make sure I have this right, is there any type of formal leak detection system on this?
A. No, ma'am.
Q. So there's no CPM?
A. No, ma'am.
Q. And so the controller is supposed to look at what from your perspective?
A. Your ins and outs.
Q. Okay.
A. And I have my controllers log that every 4 hours. So every 4 hours, it's either positive, negative or staying flat. During those, during those 3 logs in their 12 hour shift, it will actually -- since there is no formal leak detection, it'll give you some indicator of what direction your line's heading in.
Q. Okay.
A. And sometimes, as you know, sometimes it can be positive, negative, positive, negative. As long as it comes back to being flat. It's not just constantly negative, negative, negative, negative, negative.
Q. Is there anything alarmed on that difference?
A. There is no alarming on the over shorts because it fluctuates

so much, depending on if the system's packing or draining on a liquid system.
Q. Okay. So we really are up to the controller to determine a range on either pressures or flows that have gone out, to look at the difference between coming in and going out. Have I got it right so far?
A. The only thing is, is there is alarming on pressure.
Q. Okay.
A. So there is a range.
Q. Is there alarming on pressure on low and high?
A. Yes, ma'am, there is on low.
Q. What about flow?
A. We don't have any rate of change or flow alarms. The only thing at Main Pass 69, it is programmed to shut down on low flow.
Q. So to make sure I get that, at the end of the system, at 69 which we also know as Crescent --
A. Crescent, yes, ma'am.
Q. -- you are set up such that if it hits a certain --
A. Flow rate.
Q. -- flow value, it will automatically close off?
A. Fail shut, yes, ma'am.
Q. Okay.
A. And that's local logic in the PLC.
Q. Okay.
A. And we have nothing to do with that as far as the control

center. That's all local.
Q. And do you know what value that goes?
A. Not off the top of my head, no, ma'am.
Q. Do we teach that in curriculum to the controllers?
A. Yes, ma'am. I could probably pull it up and look. I want to say it's 200 barrels an hour for --
Q. We'll ask and we'll get that number that way.
A. Okay.
Q. Okay. All right. So if I understand correctly so far, what we've learned is that when we at least went to zero flow rate at midnight, am I getting that right --
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. -- from this Document 1?
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. We would have been shutting officially on the end --
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. -- of 69?
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Okay. All right. Coming off the platforms in general, what do you typically see? What type of instrumentation is there?
A. What we see from the platforms from, over your screen you see flow rate. You see a run status that the platform's running or down. And you see a pressure. So you have pressure, flow. We also see temperature. And then there's some accumulations and stuff from the OMNI (ph.) that we also see, but as far as

controlling, we really just operate off pressure, temperature, flow and run status.

Q. If you lose communications, do you get an alarm indicator?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. Are you aware of anything that was out of comm?

A. No, ma'am. Not to my knowledge.

Q. All right. Okay. I think for my first round for right now, you've explained what you're looking. You've explained the type of system. Just for the record, when we talk to SCADA, can you tell me which SCADA? What type of SCADA you have vendor-wise?

A. It's the Steam (ph.) SCADA. Is that --

Q. What?

A. Steam.

Q. Steam, yes. That's what I was looking for.

A. Okay. Yes, ma'am.

Q. And communications to the platform is -- do you know if it's by satellite or --

A. I think it is Viasat. I think they have backup there as well.

Q. Okay. All right. How often does MP69 have a zero flow rate? Is that common?

A. It's very uncommon.

Q. Can you give me some idea? If like I've never seen it, I've seen it a couple of times a year?

A. I've never seen it when platforms are running.

Q. Okay.
A. If that answers your question.
Q. Um-hum. Do you know which platforms were running on this event day and night?
A. For a fact, I know 915, BK915, MC127. They run 24/7/365. So they were running. But some of these other platforms are low producers. They come and off throughout the night. So can't speak what was running at the time.
Q. Okay. And, when you mentioned that you have the controllers log their ins and outs every 3 hours, what do they log that on?
A. Our logger, the controller logger.
Q. And that would be separate from what we're looking at in a shift change and the daily log entry?
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Okay. And I should call that they controller logger?
A. I would probably say receipts/deliveries.
Q. Okay.
A. Ins and outs.
Q. Okay. Have you had a chance to look back at that?
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. And was it approximately at 1900 or nearest, closest --
A. There was one log entry at 1833.
Q. Okay.
A. And at that time, the system was negative 1 barrel. So it was off by 1 barrel at 1833.

Q. Okay. Is there anywhere for a given period of time associated with that imbalance that they indicate which platforms are up?
A. No, ma'am. That's just the total accumulation from the system.
Q. Okay.
A. The ins and outs.
Q. And they don't log anything in addition to here on the shift change which is Document 3 now.
MS. BUTLER: Okay. I'm sorry.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Which --
MS. BUTLER: This one. I'm going to start with 1115. Can we use that as Document 3?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, we can.
MS. BUTLER: And then use Document 4 for the other one.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.
BY MS. BUTLER:
Q. So, as far as platforms that are up and running, do they record that on something else?
A. No, ma'am.
Q. Okay. So there's really no log of that. Is there a schedule that logs that or --
A. SCADA could pull data as far as run times because we don't really keep up with run times of a location.
Q. Okay. So talk to me a little bit about how SCADA logs run

time? Do you know anything about that?
A. Yes, ma'am. They would just have to pull whatever type data you're requesting as far as hourly data, daily averages.
Q. Is there anything the controller sees?
A. No, that's a request from the SCADA department, the SCADA data request. Now, the controller can go to a pump, for example, and trend the run time on that, how long it's been running, but that's not part of normal operations unless it's requested.
Q. Okay. So they really do just look at pressure flow. Is there a couple valves they can open and close on things? I think from --
A. On the MPOG system, we can control the flow, the flow valves --
Q. Okay.
A. -- that controls the flow in the system. We control two valves on the pig trap, and then we also control the inlet valve at Main Pass 69. So there's six meters out there that we control and three MOVs.
Q. Okay. And is the inlet valve at 69 then also automatically controlled by the logic in the PLC if flow drops or --
A. I believe it's just --
Q. -- is that a different valve?
A. No, ma'am. I believe it's just the flow control valves on the meters because the meter is what sees it.
Q. Okay.

A. I haven't seen it in a long time. So I believe it's the meters.
Q. You're explaining what we know.
A. Okay.
Q. Okay. And the two valves at the pig trap, I'm sorry to be dense -- are those at two different locations?
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. And where are they located?
A. One would be upstream of the pig valve, and the other one would be downstream of the pig valve.
Q. So can you like -- are you talking about we put a pig in down at BK915, we run it all the way to 69?
A. Yes. It's a receiver. It's a pig receiver I guess so more specifically.
Q. Okay. And so you're only controlling two valves at 69 --
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. -- associated with the pig receiver?
A. Yes, ma'am. They're only controlled when field techs are local.
Q. Okay.
A. It's not our normal operation to open and close the pig valves.
Q. Okay. And we had no pigs in the line?
A. No, ma'am.
Q. Is that correct?

A. Not to my knowledge.
Q. None that we thought were supposed to be.
A. Correct.
Q. Okay. All right. And the inlet valve you were talking about is separate from the flow valves and these two pig traps?
A. Correct. Yes, ma'am.
Q. And that's at 69 also?
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Okay. All right. I think for now, the beginning part, I understand at least up to midnight. Okay.
DR. JENNER: Great. Anything else at this time?
MS. BUTLER: No. I think we'll get the rest later on when I have a look at this. Can I take it and mark it Document 5?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.
MR. BARTON: Can I have some water?
DR. JENNER: Oh, absolutely.
MS. BUTLER: Yes. It may be an excellent time to take a break.
(Off the record.)
(On the record at 1:53 p.m.)
DR. JENNER: We are back on the record. It is 1:53 p.m. We'll continue with Karen.
BY MS. BUTLER:
Q. Okay. Thank you again for your prior information. If I could get -- just have you help me pull together some remaining

pieces.
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. And it may be associated with the controller that was on, okay. First of all, can you tell me -- I know you've told us informally, but can you tell me formally what shift pattern he was and what day it was or night it was so that we can get that clear?
A. Yes, ma'am. I believe he was on his second night of his three night. So he was on his 3-1-3, where he worked Tuesday night, Wednesday night, and then did not complete the third night.
Q. And normally can you just briefly run through when a controller starts a work week, what they typically do, and then how many days off or --
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Just walk me through that.
A. So it's a 4 week rotation. It starts on a Friday night. So you'll work 4 nights, off 3 days. You work your 3-1-3.
Q. And that means?
A. Three days, one day off, three nights. You're off 3 days, and then you work Monday through Thursday days, and then you're off a week. It's called the Dupont schedule.
Q. Thank you. Do you remember whether Cesar had any unusual rotation of schedules or any holdovers prior to --
A. Not off the top of my head, no, ma'am. By holdover, you mean longer shifts?
Q. Yes.

A. No, ma'am. No, ma'am.
Q. Thank you for asking me for the clarification. I apologize for that.
A. Yeah.
Q. So with that, there's just a couple other little things. So now, we kind of know what he was working, what pattern he was in. We've talked about things we thought we saw, how we've determined in looking back some issues may have occurred on his shift. Can we go back to Document 1 for just a second? And, I just want to make sure I understand some other things. It shows at 1 o'clock which we think to be Central Time, that the daily logger stopped working. What actually is that function?
A. What you're seeing here are the controller's log or log notes, and that's where they store the AOCs as well. And that's also where the ins and outs is located that we previously spoke about.
Q. So when we have an entry here like 102, would that mean that they've recreated this from handwritten notes?
A. Yes, ma'am. Yes.
Q. Okay. All right. Okay. And then -- so from at least on -- 1 o'clock on, they've recreated. When we talk to EverLine, can you tell me where that is? Is that a platform?
A. That's the Crescent Control Center.
Q. Okay.
A. EverLine's the company.

Q. Okay.
A. So Crescent and EverLine is the same thing.
Q. And let me just look at that for a moment. So at 1:30 or at least we think this, then Cesar would have called Kevin at EverLine and requested a field tech to walk through 69. So, does this mean that when we need somebody at 69, Platform 69, that we've got to go through EverLine?
A. Yes, ma'am, unless we schedule our Third Coast field tech to go out.
Q. Okay. All right. And then when that happens, do we record any information about when they contact us back? Does EverLine contact you back or does the --
A. Yes, ma'am. 0155, Kevin from EverLine, and so his tech walked through, checked equipment and didn't find any problems.
Q. Okay. Did you happen to look at your imbalance difference numbers for approximately 1:55?
A. The previous day or --
Q. For this 1:55.
A. I can't recall if I did the previous for this specific time.
Q. Okay. So while controllers record at every 4, that is a number that's in the SCADA system --
A. Correct.
Q. -- that we could pull off?
A. Correct.
Q. Does the difference -- and we can ask SCADA if you think this

is not appropriate, but does the difference in those two display almost constantly as --

A. Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

Q. So it is on the controller's screen?

A. Yes, ma'am. And that is driven by SCADA.

Q. And then -- all right. Thank you so much for that. We move on down, and we've talked about shutting in, and about people were getting higher attention to things, and we eventually get down to shutting some valves.

A. What timeframe?

Q. Let's see. I'm looking like 0620.

A. Okay.

Q. I flipped on the back side.

A. So the way this log note reads to me is Ernie is onsite, MOV valve 303, commands did not work. So it sounds like the controller was sending commands remotely.

Q. Um-hum. Is that typical where you don't have commands activate the valves on the platforms?

A. No, it's not typical. Normal operations is that it would be controlled remotely of those valves.

Q. Did anybody check into why that you know of?

A. No, ma'am, not to my knowledge.

Q. Okay. And then would that be similar for other valves on this list?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. All right. Okay.

MS. BUTLER: All right. I think that was my wrap up.

DR. JENNER: Great. Thank you. We'll move on. Buddy, if you have any questions, fire away.

BY MR. GRAY:

Q. All right. Dan, specifically on this system for MPOG, you talked over and short. And is there a calculation, is there a calculation you all do to check over and shorts with the frequency on this system?

A. Yes, it's on the daily logger. It's the receipts/deliveries, the ins and outs that's on the daily logger that the controller does every 4 hours.

Q. Okay. So per how you all operate this system, that should be done every 4?

A. Correct.

Q. Okay. Do you know whether or not that was done for this system --

A. It was not.

Q. -- during this time period?

A. It was not. There was only one log note or one log entry on ins and outs at 1833, and this system was only short one barrel. So that's basically flat. It's almost one for one.

Q. Okay. Did you bring that up with Cesar at all?

A. It was brought up during the HR interview.

Q. Okay. And what did he say?

A. Cesar said that the 10:30 log entry, he was too making busy making phone calls, and I can't recall his exact words for the 2:30, why he didn't do it, but Cindy did bring it up and he gave her answers.
Q. Okay. And we'll get that.
A. Yeah.
Q. Would that have assisted him in terms of all these other data points that we're talking about, running that log and understanding what was happening with this system?
A. Yes, it would. If his flows were off, putting more product in than going out, that would have told you what the difference is of the receipts and the delivery. That's why -- that's what we use for line balance.
MR. GRAY: Okay. All right. I think that's my questions.
DR. JENNER: Okay. Thank you.
BY DR. JENNER:
Q. We'll go around a second time. It's going to be quicker.
A. Okay. Cool.
Q. Great. Just to follow up on Buddy's questions. You expect every 4 hours a -- tell me again the term.
A. Over and shorts, ins and outs. Ins and outs, probably the most industry used remark, what's coming in's going out.
Q. Okay. Is it -- how common is it for someone not to be able to do it because they're engaged in other tasks?
A. Even if you're engaged in another task, the controller

should. Even if it 4 hours and 15 minutes, 4 hours and 2 minutes, it needs to be looked at every 4 hours on the shift and notated.
Q. Okay. Are there -- when you heard the dispatcher say that he was too busy, so would your response be, you try to get it done even if it's a little late?
A. Yes, sir, that's what my response is.
Q. That's your expectation?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. And I just heard you say there was significance in this not being done.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. Let me change directions just a little bit. Since you told us about your background and history. So you worked on other SCADA systems before.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Could you just give a high level compare and contrast in terms of sophistication, in terms of --
A. I would say they're all very similar. I've actually worked on this same SCADA system with another company or a previous company I should say. I would say that they're all similar as far as API 1165, the gray/white color standard. The alarming is usually the same as far as the red and orange, you know. So it's all pretty similar. Whatever color your alarms are aren't going to be anywhere else on your screen basically.
Q. All right. Now, you mentioned earlier that this system that

you're on does not have a CPN leak detection system. Did the other SCADAs you worked on have leak detection systems?
A. Yes, sir. When I was at that bigger oil company, they had a CPN leak detection system. It -- they basically just put it in the corner. They could never quite figure it out. So it's -- it wasn't a function leak detection system but they had it.
Q. Have you worked with a functioning --
A. Yes, it was a part of a previous company. There was a functioning leak detection system that actually spotted the leak. It was when I was in the field on another supervisor's assets. He had a water leak and that system detected it.
Q. Right.
A. So it did work. And then if the system was shut down, the detection system would see the low pressures and of the no flow going into the -- it wasn't an incident. We were just shutting the down and, of course, leak detection would go off --
Q. Right.
A. -- obviously as it was supposed to. So, yes, sir, I have work with leak detection before.
Q. Do you have a sense about would a leak detection system have been a value if one were here and up and running?
A. For this system in particular, I would say not as -- no, because it's such a packed system. There's no slack. Since we have two platforms that run 24/7, it's -- there is no slack in the line. So when you have a liquid system that stays that packed,

your ins and outs are basically one on one. I mean it's what's coming in is what's going out because you're packed. So if you put one barrel in, one barrel's going out because it's got nowhere else to go. Well, that's to the delivery. So, it's pretty packed.

Q. Okay. So for this event, you don't -- what you're telling me is you didn't see any --

A. Our ins and outs, what we've currently been using has been effective, and it has been working for us.

Q. Okay.

A. If that better answers your question.

Q. It does. Have you been -- since you've been here, have there been any incidents, perhaps less nature, you know, incidents, events -- leak events that you're aware of that you've been a part of?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Can you discuss how that was handled?

MR. BARTON: Am I allowed to speak about that?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

MR. BARTON: Okay. Again, I don't know. This is my first time.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I believe that's fair.

MR. BARTON: Okay. It was last year MPOG, when they were expanding, doing an expansion event. There was some maintenance out on a line. There was a rupture. It was about 1 o'clock in

the morning. My controller was on duty. He saw the pressure drop and immediately shut the system down. I believe the system was down within 8 minutes, as far as notifications being made, platforms starting to ramp down. The controller called me at 1 o'clock in the morning, notified me that he shut the system down due to increase -- or excuse me, decrease in pressure. And then I got up, made sure he had made all the proper notifications, that he had the incident level report ready. He had EHS&R's phone numbers ready. I had confirmed that he called every single platform to shut them in. And then I instructed him to wait until he stopped the flow in Main Pass 69 and then shut the valves because if you're receiving product, that's your least path of resistance, and you're actually pulling away from the leak at that point. So you don't want to shut the valve and send product backwards to the leak. So he waited until the flow slowed down enough that he could shut the valve without causing any more of an issue.

BY DR. JENNER:

Q. So to summarize, were you -- did that, did that event and the response, was that according to procedures?

A. Yes.

Q. Did things go well as expected?

A. Yes. He followed procedures to the T, shut it down fast. He was very observant. He didn't hesitate and, yes, it went according to his training.

Q. Okay. Were you, were you on duty at the time?
A. No, sir. I was at home. It was 1 o'clock in the morning. So.
Q. Right. Okay. All right. I'm going to change pace again, and something I mentioned before we went on record. One part that I'll ask other operators is just a little bit about their health and rest routine. So if you could just say how your overall health is.
A. I would say good. I do annual blood work as far as even liver enzymes, kidneys, cholesterol. I have no issues, health issues. I try to walk at least every other day. Me and my girlfriend go to the park. There's a 4 mile trail which I do weekends if weather allows. She does a little more running. I do a little more walking. I eat right. I don't eat a lot of fast food. We'll prep. We prep our food weekly. So that way we have chicken and rice, and then some sort of vegetables, eat salmon every Monday, like grilled salmon. I would say I'm relatively healthy.
Q. Great. No, nothing acute, colds or allergies or anything?
A. No, I don't get sick a lot.
Q. All right. Nothing chronic?
A. No.
Q. Okay. Let me ask you about your work and rest routine. You had mentioned that you keep a consistent work schedule.
A. Yes.

Q. If you could just repeat the days you work?
A. So it's Monday through Friday, 0630 to 1430.
Q. And after 1430, what's your typical routine?
A. I'll either go for a walk, work out, but a lot of times I still keep my system up. I mean I'm not being on a conference call per se or working, but I'm still -- it's still up. That way if a controller has an issue, question or somebody emails me at 5, I can -- and I see it on my phone, I can still respond. But, you know, go to the grocery store, normal stuff. Normal stuff that anybody would do I'd say.
Q. Sure. And what time do you go to bed and what time do you fall to sleep?
A. It's pretty consistent. I'm in bed every night by 9 o'clock. My girlfriend gets up at 4:30 every morning and works out. So she goes to bed early. So I can't watch TV, you know. So I -- my routine is pretty normal.
Q. Right. So you're in bed at 9, and what time do you fall asleep do you think?
A. 9:15, 9:30. Sometimes I go to bed at 8:30, fall asleep at 9. So I'm asleep by 8:30, 9:30 every night.
Q. Okay. And you wake up -- do you wake up at 4:30?
A. Oh, yeah, about 4:30 every morning.
Q. Okay. How do you feel when you wake up?
A. Fine. Get up, have my coffee, turn on a sports show, get my day started.

Q. Great. And the day before this event, did you feel similar?
A. Yep, normal routine.
Q. Good. Appreciate that. And those are questions we ask.
A. Yeah, I understand.
DR. JENNER: I'm going to wrap up my questions, but we'll go around for Karen.
BY MS. BUTLER:
Q. Okay. Just a couple wrap ups. As far as you know, when 69 shuts down and closes off automatically --
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. -- on low pressure or low flow. It was low flow?
A. Yes. Are you talking about the local logic?
Q. Yes.
A. The safety device.
Q. Yeah.
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Does it have any corresponding automatic logic that's worked into the end of the system such as 915 or --
A. No, ma'am.
Q. -- 127?
A. No, ma'am.
Q. So that's totally dependent upon you guys calling --
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. -- and saying we need to do this?
A. Shut -- yes, ma'am.

Q. Okay. All right. You mentioned that the controllers would check the imbalance and record that number. You saw a number, but then you were missing a reading or at least one or more --
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. -- readings, and those had not occurred. And I think you said that was in the daily log or daily logger?
A. It's in the daily logger. It's called our ins and outs. So it's separate from the daily logger.
Q. Okay. But it is not the same as say Document 3 or --
A. None of the documents are the same, no, ma'am.
Q. -- this Document 1?
A. Correct.
Q. Okay. So that's a separate document entirely.
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Okay. Gotcha. And that logger system, is that connected to the SCADA system? Is it pulling data from it?
A. No, ma'am. No, ma'am. It's not connected to it. It's manual entries.
Q. So they manually enter the numbers.
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. All right. Thank you for that. Does it have any indication colorwise as to if something goes too far negative or too far positive?
A. The only indication would be the positive or negative --
Q. Okay.

A. -- of your net.
Q. Okay. And then I think we asked about flows and pressures. We asked about imbalance alarming. You noted rate of change. We talked about loss of communication. Is there any other alarm function that could have helped the controller on this event that you're aware of even if it's not in our list?
A. No, ma'am, I don't believe so.
Q. And you mentioned the prior incident where things went really well.
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Called you and it was shut down.
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Who was the controller then? Do they still work here?
A. Yes, ma'am. His name is Max Erlich (ph.).
MS. BUTLER: Okay. I think mine is more SCADA driven I think.
DR. JENNER: Okay. For another witness.
MS. BUTLER: Yes.
DR. JENNER: Okay. Thank you, Karen. Buddy, you have any more questions?
MR. GRAY: No other questions from me.
DR. JENNER: Okay. I'll ask your representative. Is there anything you think we need clarification at this point?
MR. EISERT: No, I don't think so, be we reserve the right to clarify something later if we can.

DR. JENNER: Okay.

MR. EISERT: Thanks.

DR. JENNER: Very good.

BY DR. JENNER:

Q. I want to ask you one final question. First of all, thank you very much for spending time with us. We are here to try to understand the events and circumstances to prevent it from happening again. Is there anything that you think that we should know that you can share you would think could improve the industry either, you know, the company itself or the industry in general?

A. No, not at this time. I don't really have anything.

Q. Okay. I appreciate that.

DR. JENNER: If there are no other questions, then again I thank you very much --

MR. BARTON: Thank you.

DR. JENNER: And we'll finish up the interview.

MR. BARTON: All right. Thanks.

DR. JENNER: The time is 2:17 p.m.

(Whereupon, at 2:17 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	PIPELINE LEAK OFF THE LOUISIANA COAST IN THE GULF OF MEXICO ON NOVEMBER 16, 2023 Interview of Dan Barton
ACCIDENT NO.:	PLD24FR001
PLACE:	Houston, Texas
DATE:	November 18, 2023

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.

Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber