

'UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

PIPELINE LEAK OFF THE LOUISIANA *
COAST IN THE GULF OF MEXICO *
ON NOVEMBER 16, 2023 *

Accident No.: PLD24FR001

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Interview of: JAIME DIAZ, Pipeline Controller
Lighthouse Midstream Services

Third Coast Operations Center
Houston, Texas

Sunday,
November 19, 2023

APPEARANCES:

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National Transportation Safety Board

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

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Lighthouse Midstream Services

JOSEPH EISERT, ESQ.
King & Spalding
(On behalf of MPOG and Mr. Diaz)

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:10 a.m.)

1 DR. JENNER: Okay. We are on the record. Good morning.
2
3 Today is November 19th, Sunday, 2023; the time is 9:10 a.m.
4 Central Time. My name is Stephen Jenner and I'm an investigator
5 with the National Transportation Safety Board. We are at the
6 Third Coast Operations Center in Houston, Texas. Today we are
7 conducting an interview regarding a pipeline incident in the Gulf
8 of Mexico that occurred about November 16th, 2023.
9

10 Before we begin, let's go around the room and introduce
11 ourselves by stating our name and spelling, the title, and who
12 you're with. Again, Stephen Jenner, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, J-e-n-n-e-r.
13 I'm an investigator with the NTSB.

14 To my right.

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

18 MR. EISERT: My name is Joe Eisert. Last name is
19 E-i-s-e-r-t. I'm a lawyer at the law firm of King & Spalding,
20 LLP. That's S-p-a-l-d-i-n-g. My last name is E-i-s-e-r-t. And
21 we are counsel for MPOG.

22 MR. GRAY: I'm Buddy Gray, B-u-d-d-y, G-r-a-y. I'm president
23 of Lighthouse Midstream Services, which oversees the control room.

24 MR. DIAZ: Jaime Diaz, J-a-i-m-e, D-i-a-z. I am a pipeline
25 controller for Lighthouse Midstream Services.

1 DR. JENNER: Thank you. Do you have representation here
2 today?

3 MR. DIAZ: I'd be good with Joe (indiscernible)

4 DR. JENNER: Joe, you just identified yourself. Okay.

5 MR. EISERT: Yes.

6 DR. JENNER: Thank you.

7 INTERVIEW OF JAIME DIAZ

8 BY DR. JENNER:

9 Q. First of all, thank you for being here. This interview is
10 being recorded. I just want to make sure we have your permission
11 for that?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. Thank you. And these will be transcribed and, as we
14 discussed, you'll have an opportunity to review it for accuracy.

15 So if you would, just, you know, tell us about your
16 background and how you got -- when you first started in the
17 pipeline industry and how you worked your way up to this point,
18 and if you would just throw in some dates if you've moved around
19 companies.

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. As best as you can recall.

22 A. Yeah. So I've been with Lighthouse now for about 5 years.
23 Before I started here, I was working at an Enterprise plant for
24 about 2 years. That was '17 to '19, I believe, for years. And
25 before that, I was working at National Oilwell Varco assembling

1 oil rigs and showcasing them to customers, and that was around
2 2016 to -- no, from 2014 to 2016. And those are really the, I
3 believe, the two jobs that I had that really put me on the path to
4 be where I'm at now, in relation, you know, to the experience that
5 I had there.

6 Q. That sounds good. So Lighthouse about 5 years. In what
7 capacity -- when you first hired here, what was your job title
8 when you first hired on?

9 A. I was a pipeline controller. It's been the same.

10 Q. Were you a pipeline controller at the previous --

11 A. No. I was a hand down in the refinery, but occasionally I
12 did have access to the SCADA that they used to locally control the
13 plant, but never direct involvement.

14 Q. Okay. Can you just give us just a summary of your training
15 when you first arrived here for pipeline control?

16 A. So I sat in with the current controllers that were already
17 operator qualified. I was on shift with them when I started. So
18 I would work a shift with a controller on the board already and
19 learn from him for about half the time for my training, and then
20 the other half I would switch to another operator qualified
21 controller just for variety and see how -- the differences in the
22 way things can be operated and things like that. But -- yeah.

23 Q. Now I understand like there's a OCC-1 and OCC-2. Are you
24 experienced on both of them or one of them?

25 A. No. Just on OCC-2, my console.

1 Q. So how's it been for pipeline controller? How's your work?

2 A. I like it. I like it. I don't think I could go back to a
3 normal schedule. The schedule seems a little crazy, but after you
4 get used to it, I think -- there's a little flexibility to it
5 and -- I mean, it's a change for sure, but, I mean, I like it.
6 Yeah. It's good.

7 Q. Okay. So what, besides like the schedule itself, in terms of
8 the work or the workload, what are some of the most challenging
9 things about being a controller?

10 A. Balancing it with home, I would say. You know, making sure
11 stress from work doesn't carry to home and, you know, vice versa,
12 home doesn't carry over to work. There's a lot of variety in
13 terms of the workloads. Sometimes it's just me, you know,
14 constant and sometimes it's not really much involvement that
15 requires a lot from my part, per se, just communication with the
16 field. It usually works itself out most of the time.

17 Q. When you communicate to the field are you referencing like
18 field technicians?

19 A. Field technicians.

20 Q. Yeah. How is that line of communication? Is that -- how
21 would you rate that?

22 A. It's good. It's good. All the guys out there -- I don't
23 think we have a single issue with any of the guys that we talk to
24 out there. They're always, you know, stand up, ready to help.
25 There's not much issue with -- as far as communications go.

1 Q. Right. What are some of the common topics when you do
2 communicate with them? Is it generally -- is it for a variety of
3 reasons or is it for one particular reason that's more often than
4 another?

5 A. Well, it depends. Like when starting a shift usually they
6 call in or I'll call in, either one, and that would just be sort
7 of the breakdown, I guess. Before the turnover for a night shift,
8 you give them, you know, the summary of what happened during the
9 day and they sort of can expect what's going to happen that night
10 is for them to prepare for that. And same thing in the morning,
11 they'll call in, we'll talk to them, tell them what happened
12 during the night, and it's another summary, you know, of what they
13 think they need to do and how they communicate amongst themselves
14 depending on issues they need to look at that occurred.

15 Q. Good. Okay. So let me change pace a little. My
16 understanding is that you went on duty a Thursday morning for a 6
17 a.m. shift?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. Was that your normal shift?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. Well, I'll tell you what, I'm just going to throw it
22 your way, and tell me when you came in, if you'd just walk me
23 through your day?

24 A. So that particular day our turnover was a little longer than
25 it usually is because we were discussing how Cesar felt about the

1 issue regarding MPOG. And so he left around 6, 0600 that morning,
2 and Chris Bierly came in at that time when he was leaving. And as
3 soon as he walked in, you know, I was still getting set up, you
4 know, pulling up my systems, and we started discussing what was
5 currently happening, what we thought could be happening. And we
6 talked about it for a couple minutes and decided that due to the
7 uncertainty of it, we were going to shut it in. Between me and
8 him, this is the decision we came to. And then during that,
9 during that conversation we were having, Dan Barton called in
10 around -- one second.

11 Q. And it's front and back if you need to look it over.

12 A. Yeah. 0605. Yeah, so it was right before we shut it in, you
13 know, we put it past him, see what he thought, and he agreed that
14 that would have been the best course of action, and then that's
15 what we did. We notified all the platforms. I notified Ernie
16 that we talked to him, let him know that that's what we were
17 doing. And, I mean, that's how that day started, you know, just
18 jumped right into it.

19 Q. Okay. Thank you. So what time did you arrive here for your
20 shift turnover?

21 A. About 0530.

22 Q. Is that your normal time?

23 A. That's usually about, yeah, when I get here.

24 Q. Okay. So from -- so you arrive 0530. Is that when your
25 shift turnover --

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. -- begins? So if you could talk some details about the
3 concerns that Cesar had? How did he seem to you that morning,
4 first of all?

5 A. Oh, he was very concerned. We -- so what I -- the turnover
6 that I have received from Cesar, and again, I'm going to
7 reference, you know, time just to make sure it's in order. But he
8 told me around 2000 he noticed that his nets were off, which is
9 the receipts and delivery meter that tell us, you know, what's
10 coming in, what's going out. And so he started noticing that that
11 discrepancy was getting larger slowly. And he trimmed it all, all
12 the systems, pressure transmitters, the flows, just to make sure
13 everything's okay, and it appeared so at the time. And he also
14 called the controller at the delivery point for that system at
15 2015, Kevin, that was notified.

16 Q. Kevin is the controller?

17 A. Is a controller at the EverLine, yes, control center. And he
18 confirmed with him that he was still seeing the flow that we were
19 at the time.

20 Q. Kevin confirmed --

21 A. Kevin confirmed what Cesar was seeing, yeah. They both
22 verified that it was still reading correctly.

23 Q. Oh, that it was reading correctly?

24 A. That it was -- yeah, they were still seeing the same numbers.
25 Yeah, there was no discrepancy between what we saw and they saw.

1 Q. Okay. Did that suggest that the system is normal or does --

2 A. For that point, yes. For that point it would be.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And so he said after that, he raised concern to Ernie, which
5 is the field tech that works out there for us, that checks in on
6 the platforms and does the maintenance and all those things.

7 Q. Around what time -- you're referencing --

8 A. I'm referencing --

9 Q. -- Document 1.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Yeah. So can you see what time you're referencing?

12 A. It's 2055.

13 Q. Okay. So he raised concern to Ernie, the tech, the field
14 technician at 2055?

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And so afterwards he notified the biggest producing
18 platforms, which is MC 127 and VK 915, to verify that what SCADA
19 was showing him on the flow rates and pressures that they were
20 also seeing. And they verified that it was, it was the same thing
21 that SCADA was showing him.

22 And after that, Cesar -- so Main Pass 69 has a couple runs
23 that we manipulate based on the volume of flow going through. And
24 he started manipulating the runs on the platform to see if the
25 pipeline would react, how it would -- reducing flow, if it would

1 back up pressure, back up flow, and, you know, vice versa, open
2 more and drop flow, and it did. So at this point he didn't have a
3 reason to think anything was wrong yet.

4 Q. And about what time was that are you --

5 A. This was at 2145.

6 Q. So right now you are referencing a written document in front
7 of you. Is this what you were discussing --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. -- during the shift turnover?

10 A. Yes. And I'm referencing just so I know that I got the
11 times --

12 Q. Oh, sure. No, that --

13 A. -- the times in order. Yeah.

14 Q. That's perfectly fine. I just wanted to make sure that this
15 was a discussion that --

16 A. Yes, it was.

17 Q. -- you and Cesar had.

18 A. Yes. And that's why, I mentioned earlier, that the turnover
19 was longer than it usually is because he was going through all the
20 calls he made, people he talked to, and sort of, you know,
21 informing me as best as he could before he left. But I also, you
22 know, referred to his notes as well after he left and all that.

23 Q. Okay. Appreciate that. Thank you.

24 A. Um-hum. Yes. And so, 2215 it says he notified Dan Barton to
25 inform him that he thinks he's having issues on the pipeline. And

1 at this point I believe he told Ernie that -- Ernie suggested that
2 it could be a transmitter issue that wasn't reading -- that was
3 malfunctioning. And they were in agreement that they would
4 operate just based on that, that it was faulty equipment at this
5 time, at 2215.

6 Q. Can I interrupt for a second? I'm sorry. So everything you
7 are recapping, like 2145 he was checking the -- manipulating
8 pipeline to see how it would react to pressures, and the
9 conclusion was things seemed normal?

10 A. They were normal, right, at the time.

11 Q. So do you have any idea what prompted Cesar to call Barton
12 and say, I think I have -- I may have some problems, when up till
13 now it sounded like things were coming up normal?

14 A. Well, he was expressing concern because his -- when this was
15 happening, the discrepancy between receipts and deliveries was
16 getting bigger.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And so he was receiving more than we're showing was
19 delivering, but again, at this point they thought it may have been
20 a transmitter on the platform just not calculating correctly
21 because of the normal reaction of the system when he tried to
22 manipulate it to see -- to verify that everything was okay.

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. So at this point, yeah, they assumed that that's what it was.

25 Q. In your experience is transmission issues with a platform, is

1 that an occurrence that happens from time to time?

2 A. Not a -- not so much as issues but they do have transmitters
3 sometimes that need to be replaced pretty frequently, but the
4 field tech is pretty aware on that. It's almost routine for them
5 after a certain period, you know, they go verify and just test and
6 make sure. And so, in that sense, it seemed like he was justified
7 to think that it may have been a transmitter issue just because
8 everyone's aware that it does happen pretty frequently.

9 Q. And do you know how -- and if you don't, that's fine, but do
10 you know how they verify if it's a transmission issue or not? It
11 sounded like Ernie suggested it could be a transmission issue.
12 Did they take action to go and try to verify if that was actually
13 the case?

14 A. They notified the local field tech on the platform to walk
15 the platform, yes. And he actually okayed them -- he told them
16 that he found no issue at all, so -- and that's also why they were
17 so confident in their decision, because the guy that, you know,
18 could see everything told them that it was fine.

19 Q. Do you know who that person was by any chance?

20 A. Let me look. I'm sorry, I don't see it.

21 Q. Okay. That's fine. Okay. Thank you. I didn't mean to
22 interrupt, so --

23 MR. GRAY: And I didn't want to interrupt you. For the
24 record, it's a transmitter. So just when they -- transmission
25 means something else in the context of this. I just --

1 DR. JENNER: Got it.

2 That was Buddy clarifying that.

3 MR. GRAY: Sorry. Yeah, apologies.

4 MR. DIAZ: So 2215, as far as they knew, they were all in
5 agreement and thought that it was equipment issue. And that's why
6 they did -- they decided going forward that's how they were going
7 to operate is just off that basis. And -- let me see. Sorry.
8 Just trying to refresh my memory.

9 Okay. So at midnight, he had also mentioned, yeah, that his
10 flow rate had finally reached zero to Main Pass 69 via delivery
11 point and he noticed his pressure started going up on the
12 pipeline. He called Ernie an hour later, told him about the flow
13 rate, and Ernie just told him that it could be that the
14 differential pressure had equalized and is the reason why there
15 was no flow. So at this time they had no concern, because that's
16 typically what happens if the pressure equalizes, you don't -- you
17 can't get anything else past it. And he told Cesar he could just
18 wait on it, wait for pressure to come back up and delivery would
19 resume.

20 Q. Okay. And that was around 1 a.m.?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. 0102. At 0130, again, they called Kevin at EverLine, the
24 delivery point, and they requested the tech to walk the platform
25 to check the equipment and spot an issue, and that's when they

1 told him that everything was okay. And the field tech's name was
2 Brent that was on the platform. And so by this point, so they've
3 gotten the okay from the guy on the platform that it's fine, he
4 didn't spot any issues.

5 Q. Do you have any sense -- I'm sorry to interrupt you -- what
6 the guy on the platform would be looking at? Is he going and
7 looking at some equipment?

8 A. Yeah. He typically looks at, you know, the runs,
9 transmitters. He walks, you know, the platform as a whole,
10 verifies what he's allowed, you know, to manipulate and all that.
11 He doesn't directly call us usually. He calls his control center
12 because he's not -- he doesn't work for us.

13 Q. Right.

14 A. So he calls his control center and then they check in back
15 with us with what, you know, he found, his findings.

16 And so at 0555, he said he called Crescent to verify the flow
17 again, but at this point they also weren't seeing any flow. And
18 Ernie had requested that he try to close the valves at the
19 platform to see if they could build any pressure that way and
20 start, you know, packing the line because at this point pressure
21 was usually -- unusually low for the system, and he couldn't get a
22 command to go through to close. And this was -- sorry, I should
23 have said this sooner. That note was after I came in already. So
24 I've already taken control of the console.

25 Q. Oh, at 0- --

1 A. And that was 0600. Sorry.

2 Q. So did you like exactly 6 a.m. take control?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Yeah. Yeah, so I've already taken control at this point.

6 This was me and when Chris Bierly started also making the same
7 calls and, you know, trying to see if we had new information. And
8 so Ernie called at that time, he had us try to close valves, but
9 they weren't responding.

10 And we weren't going to close every run. We were going to
11 close majority and leave one open just in case, you know, there
12 was flow and then for whatever reason we had issues and had no way
13 out. So we were planning to leave one run open, but none of them
14 responded to the close commands.

15 And this is the time where me and Chris were discussing that
16 the best course of action would be to shut the pipeline in, just
17 due to so much uncertainty at this point and the customer not
18 receiving any flow when we were still receiving into the pipeline.
19 And this is when Dan called, at 0605, wanting a status update.
20 And we discussed with him that me and Chris felt that that was the
21 best thing that we should do, and we told him why, we explained to
22 him why it would be better to be cautious, and -- just from
23 everything that happened already. And he agreed. He said that
24 that's what we should do, which is shut it down. And so we did.

25 Q. So your decision, you just said, to be cautious, but it

1 sounds like you're -- or everyone's still trying to figure out if
2 there is a problem or where it is but it wasn't identified.

3 A. It wasn't identified, no. But it's --

4 Q. But you --

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. It was strictly precaution just because how everything
8 looked, but we didn't -- we had no idea there was still an issue,
9 you know, as we later found -- as big an issue as that. We still
10 at this point assumed it may be the platform, but we just erred on
11 the side of caution. It's better to shut everything down since we
12 can't confirm -- neither we nor the customer can confirm anything.

13 Q. All right. If you can continue and discuss, you know, the
14 shutdown process and other just, you know, major actions that were
15 taken?

16 A. Okay. So we called Ernie, we told him that that's what we
17 were doing. Me and Chris discussed it, we discussed it with Dan,
18 and we told him that we thought that was the best course and -- we
19 told him we were doing it, right, we weren't discussing with him.
20 We called him to tell him that that's what was happening.

21 And from this point that's when me and Chris, we both went
22 back to -- or he went back to his desk and we both started getting
23 on the phones, calling all the platforms and telling them that
24 they had to shut in, we think we have an issue, and just told them
25 it's probably a transmitter on the platform, we don't know, but,

1 you know, just as precaution we need all you guys to shut it. And
2 this was for a couple minutes, calling all the platforms, writing
3 down who we spoke to, what time.

4 And Chris Bierly was primarily doing the one -- the logging
5 on the logger. I was writing on a notepad and passing the notes
6 on to him so he could fill it in, in the log. Because I'm also,
7 you know, I'm starting the morning routine, you know, other guys
8 are calling for other systems. And so, I had to also tend to
9 that. So that was the reason I handed him the notepad with
10 whatever I managed to do in that time.

11 And so that -- this was a couple minutes, and at 6:20 Allen
12 Monroe (ph.), the manager out there, he called in. And that's --
13 we also told him that we were in the process of shutting
14 everything down.

15 And after everything was shut, Ernie called back in and he
16 tried to get us to close all the valves again, see if we could
17 have successful commands to it, but we never did. We ended up
18 having control over the ones that line up to the pig trap, and
19 those are the ones that we ended up closing, which still, you
20 know, cuts the flow to the platform but it wasn't the ones we
21 intended to close. That was just the best option that we had that
22 would work. So we ended up shutting those.

23 Sorry. I'm just reading through his notes. It seems like
24 everything after this -- I mean, we've already shut it down at
25 this point and it's just platforms checking in wanting updates

1 when they can resume flowing, but -- and again, we just told them,
2 you know, not yet, we don't have a resolution, we don't know
3 what's happening, you know, hold on for a little while longer.

4 I mean, that's -- I mean, that's the summary of what happened
5 to me, because everything after that it was just trying to figure
6 out, you know, with management and, you know, response teams and
7 all that, that -- we were waiting on updates for them as well and
8 that's really as far as it went. The pipeline's completely shut
9 down by this point. I mean, that's, that's all I -- that's it for
10 that as far as my day went. The system was down the rest of the
11 day after that and I haven't heard anything else since.

12 Q. I appreciate all that. Now, we're all here with the
13 advantage of hindsight. But from your description from, you know,
14 the previous evening until, you know, you took over the shift,
15 is -- you know, for training purposes, is there any area that you
16 think could've been pursued further or differently? What else
17 could have been done to help identify the problem, do you think?

18 A. Well, I mean, he checked all his boxes: called platforms,
19 called customers, called field techs, called the local techs on
20 the platform. I mean, he did everything he could as far as, you
21 know, contacts. Checked in with everyone, checked his numbers.
22 There was no reason to believe it was as big of an issue as it was
23 just based on the trending as well.

24 Q. Do you think -- is there any other type of equipment or
25 information that either was available or not available could have

1 helped diagnose the problem? So I'm thinking can the SCADA system
2 be improved in any way that can help, you know, diagnose what's
3 going on?

4 A. I don't believe so. I'm not sure about the intricacies of
5 how SCADA works and I really wouldn't know anything that they can
6 implement as far as more assist systems.

7 Q. Okay. Appreciate that.

8 DR. JENNER: Yeah, that's what I had for this round. Do you
9 need a break or do you want to continue on?

10 MR. DIAZ: I'm okay.

11 DR. JENNER: Okay. Whenever you need a break, let us know.

12 MR. DIAZ: Okay.

13 DR. JENNER: Okay. I'll pass it on to Karen.

14 BY MS. BUTLER:

15 Q. Thanks for helping us fill in what happened, and if you do
16 need a break, just ask. Okay?

17 A. Sure. Thank you.

18 Q. It should be about making sure you're comfortable.

19 So when you came in it seems like Cesar was really going
20 through in quite a bit of detail the things that he had tried.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Is there any one thing that he kept saying over and over
23 again was concerning? Like was it a pressure drop? Was it an
24 imbalance? Was it both of those?

25 A. The biggest concern to him was the imbalance not adding up

1 and the fact that he had no flow. But again, Ernie assured him
2 that it was probably just equalized and nothing more than that.

3 Q. So when -- did you look at the imbalance with him as part of
4 the shift change?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Do you remember what the number was?

7 A. Not exactly, no.

8 Q. Can you give me a ballpark?

9 A. I just know that it was a lot bigger than it normally is, but
10 I don't know exactly.

11 Q. What would that mean to you, a lot bigger than it normally
12 is? Like greater than 100, greater than -- what would it be? A
13 range. And we're not going to -- we're just trying to get a feel
14 for what you guys know from running the pipeline.

15 A. So -- sorry, I'm trying to think. I don't want to just throw
16 out just a number that's completely off. I'm just trying to
17 remember what it could have been that morning.

18 Q. Did he say anything about a number? Maybe that helps you
19 remember, something he said.

20 A. Honestly, I don't remember.

21 Q. That's okay.

22 A. I don't want to throw out just a number out there and --

23 Q. Okay. That's fair enough. Do you remember anything in
24 training that would be something they told you, if it's greater
25 than 10 percent or if it's a difference by 20 percent, you're

1 supposed to take a certain action?

2 A. Well -- I'm sorry, I'm just trying to think.

3 Q. We can move on.

4 A. Okay.

5 Q. We'll get the record.

6 A. Okay.

7 Q. Okay. We're not trying to trap. And I know that I'm sure
8 working with Cesar you have a relationship, so I'm sure that it's
9 difficult. Just know I appreciate that.

10 A. Okay.

11 Q. When we ask you questions about the SCADA system or
12 improvements or areas, just remember, too, that we want to make
13 sure that the controllers are put in a position to be successful
14 as well as the field techs. So that's the overall goal when we're
15 asking questions about recommendations.

16 So as we go back to the field tech, can you explain to me
17 just one thing that's not clear, and forgive me for being dense on
18 this. Are there different techs for you to call based upon who's
19 on call? Like is there -- do they change up with you on shift,
20 like for day shift it's one person and night shift it's somebody
21 else? Or --

22 A. It's usually Ernie that we contact. It's him and Bryant that
23 work out there. But Ernie's typically the first contact for
24 anything at any time.

25 Q. Do you know if there were any other issues that night for

1 Ernie that he would've been working on associated with maybe more
2 than one platform?

3 A. I don't think so.

4 Q. So when you came on and Cesar's giving you the rundown, and
5 obviously he's spending time on this system, were there other
6 systems with issues that he was communicating those to you?

7 A. We discussed every system that morning, but the only one that
8 really had issues was MPOG.

9 Q. Okay. So everybody else seemed to be stable or --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. -- running all right?

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. Okay. And then when you talked about the tech platforms, or
14 the techs on the platforms -- let me get that right -- are they
15 actually employees of then who owns the platform or are they --

16 A. I'm not sure. I know that the employee on Main Pass 69 works
17 for EverLine.

18 Q. And then is Crescent behind that?

19 A. They are the ones who receive from Main Pass 69.

20 Q. And so is there a chance that that tech works for Crescent
21 and not EverLine?

22 A. I think they're the same entity.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. I think Crescent was the previous name and they go by
25 EverLine now.

1 Q. Thank you for that. Okay. All right. So because imbalance
2 is a big piece of this, and I know you gave us a little bit of a
3 rundown previously before we started, but can you re-explain what
4 it is you do manually to check for imbalance? And when you do
5 that, can you be specific about whether you're entering numbers on
6 the two monitors that are the IT, more or less, and SCADA? Can
7 you clarify that for us?

8 A. So the imbalances, we have a page on our logger that we use
9 to note the imbalances every 4 hours. So we will check the
10 imbalances -- or we would log the imbalances every 3 hours. One
11 one shift it would be at 0630, 2230, and 0230. And that's just
12 sort of a way to show that they are being monitored. It's just
13 something that we thought that that was necessary, I supposed, to
14 have. But, yeah, it's a separate tab on the logger that we use.

15 Q. And when you say on the logger is that on the IT system or on
16 the SCADA system?

17 A. It's on our corporate computer, yes, the IT.

18 Q. So it is through the corporate. Okay. And to do that are
19 you entering data for every point like in -- coming in on the
20 platform and going out at 69, or --

21 A. It's the total receipts from every platform and then it's the
22 delivered at Main Pass 69.

23 Q. And so you're only entering how many values?

24 A. It's three values total.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Everythnig is calculated for us on the system summary.

2 Q. Okay. And so to get those totals you're looking at a display
3 on the SCADA screen?

4 A. On the main overview, yes, on the SCADA.

5 Q. Okay. So it is the main overview display. Have I got
6 that right?

7 A. For MPOG, yeah, the main overview screen.

8 Q. Okay. All right. Thank you so much for working us through
9 that.

10 A. Sure.

11 Q. And you said there's -- it's a tab on your logger. What are
12 your other tabs?

13 A. We have that and then we just have the digital log that we
14 use to take all our notes.

15 Q. Okay. And so it's mainly just those two, imbalance and --

16 A. Yeah, it's mainly those two that we use. Yes.

17 Q. So when all the calls were being generated out to the
18 platforms and all the details of who you talked to, was that on
19 the log tab that Chris was helping you enter?

20 A. It was on the logger, yes. Yeah. Yeah, so I was just
21 passing on my notes, like I said, to Chris, and he was going back
22 editing the times and making sure everything, you know, was
23 chronological in the logger.

24 Q. When you came in and you're trying to make decisions about
25 what's going on MPOG, are you looking at trends?

1 A. I'm sorry. Can you say that again?

2 Q. When you came in and you're trying to figure out what you've
3 been told, assess it, were you looking at trends?

4 A. Yes. Yeah, both me and Chris were running trends. We were
5 overlaying them just to make sure that everything -- to verify
6 what Cesar said and see what we could make of it.

7 Q. And do you remember, were you looking at a flow trend and the
8 pressure or --

9 A. Yes, both. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. And from the platforms and 69?

11 A. The platforms and 69, yes.

12 Q. Did you check all the platforms or just a couple? Do you
13 remember?

14 A. The ones that were running at the time.

15 Q. And --

16 A. It was 915, 127, I know those for sure; 281 typically runs as
17 well. But we also trended just the general receipts tab on the
18 overs as well, because again, that's the entire summary of
19 everything.

20 Q. Okay. All right. And from the trend, do you remember seeing
21 a sharp drop or a sharp change in anything?

22 A. The only sharp drop was when we shut down the pipeline that I
23 remember. Because everything before that, Cesar was able to
24 manipulate and get responses that seemed like it was normal.

25 Q. What about a sharp rise? I said drop and I shouldn't have

1 characterized it that way.

2 A. Well, he didn't see sharp rises, but he did see a rise in
3 pressure when he was manipulating valves pretty early on in the
4 night.

5 Q. Okay. At 69, as part of your training, do you remember
6 anybody talking about any automated controls for a valve at 69 to
7 open or close?

8 A. The only automated controls that I know of at 69 is if flow
9 gets below about 100 barrels an hour, the valves will shut. And
10 that's just for the -- sorry, I can't think of the word.

11 Q. Are you trying to hold pack on the line by shutting it if it
12 drops so low or --

13 A. That's typically the issue, because when they shut in the
14 system is equalized and there's no flow that can be delivered at
15 that point. But it's for -- I'm sorry, I can't think of the word.

16 Q. That's okay. Is it controlling any pumps automatically?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Okay. All right. And so that basically at 100 barrels, if
19 you drop below that, that something at 69's going to automatically
20 shut?

21 A. The runs, yes.

22 Q. Do you know if there is any communication that Cesar would
23 have relayed to you about the platform tech saying the valve was
24 shut?

25 A. Sorry. Can you please repeat that? Sorry.

1 Q. Okay. So when -- we would've talked to EverLine to call out
2 the tech on 69, if I understood this correctly --

3 A. Um-hum.

4 Q. -- and he was to walk the area and provide feedback. He
5 provides it back to EverLine, their controller, and then the
6 control room calls you. Or calls Cesar.

7 A. Um-hum.

8 Q. It was my understanding there was information exchanged, but
9 what I don't know is if he told Cesar that the valve was shut at
10 69.

11 A. Well, the valves were open. He couldn't close them. That
12 was his issue. We -- me and Chris were the ones that shut the
13 valves at 0605. So no, so as far as the tech see, he was still
14 lined up to deliver. And that's why they came to the conclusion
15 that the line was equalized and that's why they weren't getting
16 any flow.

17 Q. Okay. So is it -- I don't want to misstate this, correct
18 what's wrong. So even though we know we had zero flow being
19 registered around midnight, we still had valves in the open
20 position?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. We had tried to close them from the control center, Cesar,
23 and that didn't work. The tech did not relay that they had not
24 closed at 100 valves either -- or at 100 barrels.

25 A. Well, they did close for Cesar. Cesar didn't have issues

1 closing it. It was me in the morning that they wouldn't respond
2 for.

3 Q. Okay. Thank you for that.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Thank you so much.

6 A. Yeah. Because that's how Cesar was able to see that pressure
7 would rise, because he was able to hold -- close meter runs.

8 Q. Okay. Great. So do we know from anything Cesar told you
9 that the valves at 69 had closed at no flow?

10 A. Cesar didn't know that at the time, that I couldn't close it
11 afterwards.

12 Q. Okay. The valve at 69, is there a number for that? Do you
13 remember?

14 A. Not those specific ones, because there were three of them
15 open. I don't want to mislabel them.

16 Q. That's okay.

17 A. But yeah, there was three valves open. We -- it was run 1,
18 3, and 5 that were open.

19 Q. Okay. Is there any other valves that you have control over
20 besides those meter run valves?

21 A. The ones that line up to the pig launcher.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Which I believe those are labeled A1, 2, and 3.

24 Q. Okay. So A2 is one of the pig launcher valves?

25 A. A2, yes, A1 and A3, yes.

1 Q. Thank you.

2 A. Which were the ones that I ended up closing due to the run
3 valves not responding.

4 Q. Gotcha. So as part of your training, when the flow drops
5 below 100 barrels, do you know what valves it closes
6 automatically?

7 A. The run valves are the ones that close.

8 Q. All right. And because this helps us understand the log, I'm
9 going to ask you to explain the reset function associated with the
10 pressure high-high indication or switch. Is that ringing a bell
11 to you?

12 A. We do have the ability to do that, but he didn't have any
13 alarm tripped that would -- that he felt the need would require
14 the pressure safety to be reset.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And again, he was told that they couldn't see any issue and
17 he never had pressure high enough where that was a concern either.

18 Q. Okay. Is there -- is it part of your procedures if the
19 valves won't open as commanded to try that reset function anyway,
20 even if you haven't had an alarm or an indication?

21 A. I'm not sure, because those -- we usually just call the
22 platforms and tell them that there's issues and notify Ernie.
23 Then Ernie would call the tech on the platform and he would be the
24 one to manually open and control them for us.

25 Q. Is there ever a time when somebody has pushed that reset

1 function in the field and you could see it in the control room?

2 A. Not that I know of.

3 MS. BUTLER: Okay. I think that did me for now. Thank you.

4 DR. JENNER: Okay. I'm just going to ask one question before
5 we go on to Buddy.

6 BY DR. JENNER:

7 Q. Under normal situations you talked about checking the
8 imbalance every 3 hours or 4 hours.

9 A. It's 4 hours.

10 Q. Every 4 hours? How long does that process take?

11 A. Just a couple seconds. You mean as far as logging it --

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. -- looking at it or --

14 Q. Yeah, from beginning to end. Like, oh, it's 4 hours; it's
15 time for me to do this.

16 A. Maybe a minute, you know, because the -- we all typically
17 operate with the main overview screens and there's no other screen
18 or any direction that we have to take. They're visible to us, and
19 so it's just at a glance that we can do it and fill it in.

20 Q. Okay. Great. Thank you.

21 A. Um-hum.

22 DR. JENNER: Buddy, do you have questions?

23 BY MR. GRAY:

24 Q. I just want to reference Document 1 here real quick. So
25 again, on the day, you come in. When you actually -- what is the

1 time on the 16th that you have taken over the console?

2 A. It's about 6:05.

3 Q. 6:05?

4 A. Yeah. About 6:05, yeah.

5 Q. Okay. And then what is the time on the 16th that you decide
6 to close the system?

7 A. It was about 6:05, 6:10. It was -- excuse me -- it was right
8 when I arrived. Because Chris arrived at the same time Cesar was
9 leaving. I was still logging in. And we both immediately decided
10 that we should be cautious and it happened immediately as soon as
11 I was taking control.

12 Q. Okay. And I should have asked this one first in more proper
13 order, but you arrived at the control center when?

14 A. About 5:30 that morning, about 5:30.

15 Q. Okay. So 5:30, and then 6:05 you take over control?

16 A. Right.

17 Q. And then at 6:05 you close MPOG?

18 A. Yeah, just about. Yeah, because that half hour in between,
19 that's the time we were doing turnover. Like I said, the turnover
20 was pretty lengthy because we were discussing MPOG. He was giving
21 me as much detail as he could remember in that period other than
22 what he had written. And that's why there's about half an hour,
23 40 minutes of time between that. It was the turnover --

24 Q. Gotcha.

25 A. -- we were going through.

1 MR. GRAY: Okay. That's the only questions I had right now.
2 I just wanted to clarify that.

3 DR. JENNER: Okay. Thank you.

4 We may have just a few follow-up, but I also was going to ask
5 you about your overall health and work-rest schedule. Do you want
6 a break before that?

7 MR. DIAZ: Sure.

8 DR. JENNER: Okay.

9 MR. DIAZ: I could take a break, yes.

10 DR. JENNER: It's 10 o'clock. We'll take a break.

11 (Off the record at 10:00 a.m.)

12 (On the record at 10:12 a.m.)

13 DR. JENNER: It is 10:12 Central Time, and we are back on the
14 record.

15 BY DR. JENNER:

16 Q. So thank you for all your, you know, responses so far. I'm
17 going to change direction a little and put on my human factors
18 hat, and just to get a little bit about your work and rest routine
19 and your health. So I'll just ask, how's your overall health?

20 A. Oh, it's good. It's good. I don't have really any issues.
21 I have young kids so usually, you know, I spend a lot of time with
22 them out at parks, you know, playgrounds, things like that. So, I
23 mean, I do get out. You know, if not with them, I do take time to
24 do some exercise. I spend plenty of time with family. I stay
25 pretty busy even outside of work but nothing exhausting, you know,

1 just the usual, just a lot of family time. I like to work on my
2 car, that's a hobby. You know, that takes some time, too. So I
3 try to, I try to, you know, do what I can to have myself be in a
4 good state.

5 Q. Right. Great. Do you right now have any acute ailments,
6 colds, allergies, or anything?

7 A. Yeah, I have allergies --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- during the season, yeah, but --

10 Q. Yeah, what do you do for that?

11 A. I have a -- I use a -- it's called neti pot, I believe, for
12 my sinuses, and just some Claritin every once in a while. It's
13 not typically too terrible that it bothers me so much, but it's
14 more of an annoyance. I mean, other than that, it's just
15 allergies.

16 Q. Okay. Does that affect you, do you think?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Make you sleepy or --

19 A. No.

20 Q. -- anything like that?

21 A. Uh-uh.

22 Q. Okay. Any long-term conditions, high blood pressure or, you
23 know, chronic conditions?

24 A. No. Not that I know of.

25 Q. Okay. Good. If you can tell me about your work schedule a

1 few days before you went on duty on Thursday? So what shifts did
2 you work, let's say, Tuesday and Wednesday?

3 A. I was doing Monday through Thursday day shifts.

4 Q. And that's 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. So you were on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday -- Thursday was
7 your fourth in a row --

8 A. Thursday was my last day, yeah, that I was going to work.
9 Yeah.

10 Q. So then you do a little flipping --

11 A. Yeah. So now I'm off for a week. I won't be back until
12 Friday night.

13 Q. Okay. So by -- by design?

14 A. By schedule, yeah. By design, yeah.

15 Q. Okay. So you wake up at 6. So, let's say the night before,
16 you know, Wednesday night and Thursday. So I'm just going back
17 Wednesday. You get off duty at 6. Can you just walk us through
18 what you do when you get home?

19 A. Well, I spend a little time with my kids. I know they're
20 always happy to see me come home. I play with them for a minute,
21 do some homework with them, and then after that I typically go to
22 be around 8, 8 p.m.

23 Q. Okay. When do you fall asleep?

24 A. About 8:40, 9 o'clock, somewhere around there.

25 Q. Okay. And you sleep till what time?

1 A. I wake up at 4:40.

2 Q. How do you -- how did you feel when you woke up like Thursday
3 morning?

4 A. Good.

5 Q. Okay. Do you have dinner here or do you have dinner at home?

6 A. So sometimes I do make breakfast here when I get to work.
7 I'll have my lunch, and then I typically don't eat after lunch
8 here, at home, I don't eat again.

9 Q. Oh. Okay. Okay, so pretty much a normal day waking up
10 Thursday morning and going to work --

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. Okay. Very good. All right. Appreciate that.

13 A. Yeah. No problem.

14 DR. JENNER: You had some questions or I can --

15 MS. BUTLER: Okay. It doesn't matter.

16 BY DR. JENNER:

17 Q. Yeah, let me ask you -- now change back directions. I should
18 have asked you earlier. During a shift change is -- was Chris
19 part, was he included in the shift change?

20 A. No. He gets here after, after we do shift change. So on a
21 normal shift change the guys are usually out of here 5:30,
22 5:40ish, and so Chris doesn't arrive until 6. But just because
23 that one was much longer than they usually are, he had arrived
24 just after completing shift change.

25 Q. Okay. When he came in, did he have any sense about what was

1 going on the previous shift?

2 A. Chris?

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. Yeah, because he met with Cesar in the garage as Cesar was
5 leaving and Cesar told him that he didn't feel comfortable with
6 the way he left MPOG and we should look into it and -- and again,
7 immediately after Chris walked in, that's what we were doing, we
8 started discussing it.

9 Q. Oh, so just -- so he just learned things just a few moments
10 before?

11 A. Just before a few minutes before he walked in, yeah.

12 Q. But not during the night, he wasn't called at any point
13 during the night?

14 A. No. Not Chris, no.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. No.

17 Q. And is it -- so based on their arrival time, they're not
18 usually part of a shift change.

19 A. No.

20 Q. It's just between the controllers?

21 A. It's just because it was a little longer than it usually is.

22 Q. Right.

23 A. It's usually controller-controller, no one else is present.

24 Q. Right. What time did Cesar depart that day?

25 A. About 6 a.m.

- 1 Q. Okay.
- 2 A. Yeah. Maybe --
- 3 Q. Everybody's just coming in a close period of time?
- 4 A. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Maybe a little before 6.
- 5 Q. All right. Do you have any thoughts about -- so sometimes
- 6 you're working the day shift and there's a supervisor there and
- 7 sometimes you're working the evening, the night shift and there
- 8 may not be a supervisor there. Does that affect the way you do
- 9 your work or make decisions?
- 10 A. No. I would say not. Typically it's things that are well,
- 11 you know, within our control to resolve. And if not, the field
- 12 usually helps us resolve the issues. And then that just gets
- 13 passed on, you know, to supervision in the morning of what
- 14 happened, any potential issues, anything like that.
- 15 Q. Okay. So let's say you are -- say it's a day shift, just
- 16 hypothetical, and you had to deal with what may have been an
- 17 abnormal situation. Would you be talking to the shift supervisor
- 18 at that time or would you just be sticking to your normal
- 19 communications with technicians?
- 20 A. Well, I would handle the communications with technicians
- 21 first and I would involve supervision shortly after that, just so
- 22 they're in the same loop, you know, that I am at that time.
- 23 Q. Right.
- 24 A. Yeah, during the day. Um-hum.
- 25 Q. Have you in your past, in your 5 years here, have you had a

1 situation that you had to resolve that may have been abnormal and
2 you needed to consult with others who were either on duty with you
3 or off duty you would call?

4 A. Not that I can remember. The last one I can remember
5 actually related to MPOG as well, but it was a mistake on
6 EverLine's part. They accidentally pulled our permissive and I had
7 to shut platforms in, you know, because of it. But that's really
8 the only one I can remember. And not really abnormal, it was more
9 a mistake, but --

10 Q. Right.

11 A. But, yeah, supervision was present when that happened. They
12 were actually next to me when that happened.

13 Q. Oh, okay.

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Were they a resource to you at that time about --

16 A. Yeah. Yeah, I would say so.

17 Q. How so?

18 A. Just handling the calls and sort of, you know, as it's
19 happening sort of more guidance to make sure that I know what I'm
20 doing.

21 Q. Okay. Now the person -- let's say it's the evening and it's
22 you and the other pipeline controller next to you and you're going
23 through a busy situation trying to figure things out. Are they an
24 available resource to you?

25 A. So they would help us take calls. And that does happen quite

1 often. If they're available that they don't have anything going
2 on or anything tying them up, they will answer calls and note them
3 for us. And, you know, hey, you know, X person called at this
4 time, this is what he wanted, this is what he said.

5 Q. Okay. Is that sort of -- when you're trained or OJT or
6 something, are you advised about how you could use the adjoining
7 controller in certain situations?

8 A. Well, that's just -- I mean, that's usually how we just go
9 about it if we're available. Because either console can get
10 really busy, and so that's just how we handle it. I mean, you
11 just want to help someone if he needs it and you can do it, you
12 know.

13 Q. Did Cesar mention to you like during his shift that he relied
14 on the person next to him to help with calls and things like that?

15 A. No, I don't believe so. No.

16 DR. JENNER: Okay. All right. Thank you for that aspect,
17 and I'll just move it on.

18 MS. BUTLER: Yeah.

19 BY MS. BUTLER:

20 Q. So when he mentioned supervision, I want to make sure that I
21 have it right. So is the shift lead considered in your mind
22 supervision?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. I would say that, yeah, because they --

1 Q. So Chris would be considered that?

2 A. Yeah. Because even if we don't directly involve Dan during
3 day shifts, like, you know, like Thursday, Chris usually helps
4 with the workload as far like he'll communicate with Dan and --
5 however he can.

6 Q. And so when you were working through this in the morning, and
7 before Chris started to help you log information about contacting
8 the platforms and getting everything moving regarding the
9 shutdown, is there any one thing that you remember discussing with
10 him about why we should shut it down?

11 A. Because we couldn't have confirmation of where the flow was
12 going, neither from our equipment or the delivery point.

13 Q. Do you remember in your training did they address the use of
14 trends?

15 A. Yes. Yes, they did.

16 Q. And do you remember on that particular morning if it was you
17 that jumped to trends or if Chris was jumping to trends, and
18 you -- you're --

19 A. It was both of us. It was both of us immediately, yeah.

20 Q. Gotcha.

21 A. We both started overlaying the trends.

22 Q. Gotcha. All right. I think the only other question I had
23 for you is, when you shut the platforms in or when you're actually
24 shutting the system down, does that happen very often?

25 A. No, not very frequently.

1 Q. Can you give me some idea like from your experience? Is it
2 once a year, hardly ever? How would you characterize that? Only
3 from your experience.

4 A. What I've seen that's happened to me, I'd say maybe I've had
5 incidents maybe two times in a year. But like I said, one of them
6 was just a mistake on the deliveries' point -- delivery point.
7 But as far as it being, you know, issues, I mean, usually it
8 doesn't happen.

9 Q. And that permissive was at 69?

10 A. I'm sorry. The permissive?

11 Q. The permissive that he thought --

12 A. That's where they pulled it, yeah.

13 Q. Okay. Okay. All right.

14 MS. BUTLER: I think that's it from my perspective.

15 DR. JENNER: Thank you.

16 Buddy, do you have any questions?

17 MR. GRAY: Nothing else.

18 DR. JENNER: Very good.

19 Joe, anything to clarify?

20 MR. EISERT: No. No. Thank you.

21 DR. JENNER: Okay.

22 BY DR. JENNER:

23 Q. Thank you for everything. I'm going to ask you one more
24 question that we ask people. You've had -- maybe taken some time
25 to reflect on this. And I'm just going to throw it out there, if

1 there's anything that you think that could be changed, either
2 through procedures or rules or policies or technology, anything,
3 to make the system safer?

4 A. I'm not sure what could be really implemented. That's kind
5 of a -- maybe some sort of additional transmitters somewhere,
6 pressure transmitters. But, I mean, I'm not exactly sure what
7 could be done as far as improvement.

8 Q. Yeah. Appreciate that.

9 DR. JENNER: If you don't have any questions for us, then
10 we'll finish up the interview.

11 MR. DIAZ: Okay.

12 DR. JENNER: And it is 12:25, we will go off the record.

13 (Whereupon, at 12:25 p.m., the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
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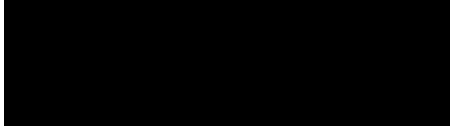
IN THE MATTER OF: PIPELINE LEAK OFF THE LOUISIANA
COAST IN THE GULF OF MEXICO
ON NOVEMBER 16, 2023
Interview of Jaime Diaz

ACCIDENT NO.: PLD24FR001

PLACE: Houston, Texas

DATE: November 19, 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.



Kay Maurer
Transcriber