

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: \*

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

Accident No.: PLD24FR001

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Interview of: DAMON WILLIAMS, Controller  
Lighthouse Midstream Services

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

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

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I N T E R V I E W

(5:10 p.m.)

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2  
3 DR. JENNER: Okay, so we're on the record. Good afternoon,  
4 today is November 18th, 2023, the time is 5:10 p.m., Central Time.  
5 My name is Stephen Jenner, I'm an investigator with the National  
6 Transportation Safety Board. We are at the Third Coast operations  
7 control center in Houston, Texas. Today we are conducting an  
8 interview regarding the pipeline incident in the Gulf of Mexico on  
9 about November 16th, 2023.

10 But before we get started, we'll go around the room and have  
11 everyone introduce themselves. Again, please state your names,  
12 spelling, your title, who you're with. Again, I'm Stephen Jenner,  
13 S T E P H E N J E N N E R, an investigator with the NTSB.

14 And 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's the Pipeline and  
17 Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

18 MR. EISERT: My name is Joe Eisert, last name is E I S E R T.  
19 I am a lawyer with King and Spalding, LLP, a law firm that is  
20 outside counsel for Third Coast.

21 MR. GRAY: I'm Buddy Gray, B U D D Y G R A Y, and I'm  
22 president of Lighthouse Midstream Services, which runs the control  
23 room.

24 DR. JENNER: Okay.

25 MR. WILLIAMS: Damon Williams, D A M O N W I L L I A M S,

1 controller for Lighthouse.

2 DR. JENNER: And just to clarify, do you have representation  
3 here today?

4 MR. WILLIAMS: As far as -- I have Joe sitting in with me.

5 DR. JENNER: Okay, so Joe, you're representing Damon today?

6 MR. EISERT: Yes, sir.

7 DR. JENNER: Okay, very good. Again, I want to thank you for  
8 being here and talking to us.

9 INTERVIEW OF DAMON WILLIAMS

10 BY DR. JENNER:

11 Q. So, what I'd like to start off with is if you can just tell  
12 us your background, your training and experience in the industry  
13 from day one and however you want to give us details all the way  
14 up to your current position?

15 A. Okay, well for 22 years, I was in the childcare industry. I  
16 started in the oil and gas industry ten years ago November. I was  
17 OQ'd through, at that time, through American Midstream and have  
18 been with them since, which is now Third Coast and Lighthouse.

19 Q. Okay, in what capacity -- I'm sorry, I missed the 22 years in  
20 what capacity?

21 A. Childcare industry.

22 Q. Okay, and ten years ago you entered the oil and gas industry  
23 in what capacity ten years ago?

24 A. Controller.

25 Q. Okay, do you recall the type of training you had at that

1 time?

2 A. Just going through and taking all the written OQ testing and  
3 six months of us sitting behind the board and monitoring and going  
4 through with the trainers and -- yeah. No, that's it.

5 Q. As far as you know -- are you familiar with the training for,  
6 like, new employees, new controllers these days?

7 A. I mean, I'm up to date, but not totally. We do our re-OQ and  
8 don't really know what the new ones go through.

9 Q. Okay, did part of your training -- it sounds like it  
10 included -- a large portion was on the job training?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And how long is that process, do you recall, for you?

13 A. Initially, it started in six months.

14 Q. So, was the entire training six months before you became  
15 qualified?

16 A. Yes, at that time and then I took an OQ test.

17 Q. Okay, so I saw there -- I think we were told there are two  
18 distinct consoles?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. Are you trained on one of them or both of them?

21 A. I'm just OCC One. That's all natural gas. I'm not cross  
22 trained for the other one, liquids and natural.

23 Q. How was -- in your ten years, have there been changes in the  
24 equipment -- the SCADA equipment?

25 A. We've gone through a couple of different systems, SCADA and

1 then what we currently have, Steam, and we're in the process of  
2 implementing another.

3 Q. Have you already been exposed to the newer -- the newest  
4 system that's coming on board?

5 A. Yes, we're using it in certain aspects.

6 Q. What do you think of it?

7 A. I like it.

8 Q. What's good about it?

9 A. What's good about it? The view, it's more interesting,  
10 larger screens, easy to put in your commands, yeah.

11 Q. How were you trained on the new equipment?

12 A. Right now, we kind of went through as -- it's initially  
13 just -- it's not our main source of SCADA, we're just using it,  
14 getting acclimated to it and everything. We still have our  
15 new -- still our Steam. But yeah, it's just hands-on and  
16 questions asked.

17 Q. Okay, so you've been doing this for ten years, what are some  
18 of the most challenging parts about being a SCADA operator?

19 A. Wow, you know, a hard question to answer. There's 12-hour  
20 shifts, there's just a lot of demand, a lot of calls, a lot  
21 of -- a little bit of everything. I mean, you're constantly  
22 making calls out to the field, monitoring the pipeline,  
23 documenting, notation, I mean, it's just ongoing.

24 Q. Okay, let me ask you about a question that I meant to ask a  
25 previous interviewee, so let me ask you. When you get calls, do

1 you document each call that you get, either incoming or outgoing?

2 A. Depends on the nature of the call. You can't document every  
3 call because of them -- but yes, for the most part. If a field  
4 tech calls in and say they're calibrating a meter or something of  
5 that nature, yes, you document everything that they're doing. We  
6 get a lot of calls sometimes that have nothing to do with our  
7 company. So, you know --

8 Q. So, field technician is a higher priority that you'd manually  
9 document?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. What might your documentation include? What do you -- what  
12 is it that you're documenting, your conversation itself?

13 A. The whole conversation, if we're bringing (indiscernible)  
14 online, we're documenting that, who we talked to, what station or  
15 platform they're at, what compressor station we're bringing  
16 online, if they're out there calibrating or if they're just making  
17 a trip up to the station, they'll give us a call. So, we document  
18 all of that, anything that they call on, we document.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. For the most part.

21 Q. I guess over time, you get to know the field technicians  
22 pretty well?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. How is the working relationship?

25 A. Very good.



1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Are there any times that oh, this is a new person, or this is  
4 a difficult person?

5 A. No, I haven't experienced that yet.

6 Q. Okay, good. Do you know if calls are recorded? Is there  
7 recordings of calls coming in or going out?

8 A. Not to my knowledge.

9 Q. Okay, thanks for all this background there. So, I've come to  
10 learn that you were at an adjoining console?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. On the night of November 15th, Wednesday night?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Can you walk us through your shift when you went on duty that  
15 day and how you came to be working that evening?

16 A. I came in and we do our shift turnover 5:40 to 6:10 p.m. I  
17 came in, relieved the acting controller, went through our rundown,  
18 which is the scenario of the whole day, what might be going on on  
19 the different pipelines. We'll sign off, I'll take over, I'll  
20 sign in and then I'm in control of the console.

21 Q. Okay, so that's a 20, 30-minute process?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay, how was your system running that day? Things pretty  
24 normal?

25 A. From what I can recall, yes. I mean --

1 Q. Okay, in a normal -- in a typical shift, will you have reason  
2 to interact with -- so, you're on OCC One and you're adjoining is  
3 OCC two? Am I getting those names right?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Do you have reason to interact with them during a normal  
6 shift?

7 A. Yes, occasionally. I mean, yeah, we'll talk, you know. But,  
8 I mean, other than that, interactions as far as what?

9 Q. No, like -- no, besides, like, in formal, friendly  
10 conversation, like work related in terms of --

11 A. Not as far as work related. I mean, just social, you know,  
12 and when we're not busy at the time, you know, we'll talk.

13 Q. Sure, I mean is there overlap in your two pipelines that you  
14 need to coordinate things?

15 A. No.

16 Q. No, okay. So, who was at the other pipeline station at the  
17 time that you were?

18 A. Caesar (ph.).

19 Q. Okay, how well do you know each other?

20 A. I've known Caesar for, what, the period he's been here  
21 because I'm pretty much one of the longest survived here. I have  
22 ten years, so I've probably known him for about six.

23 Q. Okay, that's about how long he's been --

24 A. Six years, yeah.

25 Q. Okay, did you -- I guess you see each other when you first

1 sit down?

2 A. Yeah, I mean, we don't have much interaction just because we  
3 work the cross shifts and he was in different positions at  
4 different times. But yeah, I mean, here recently, not very often.

5 Q. Okay, that evening did you get a chance to see him or chat  
6 with him?

7 A. Just -- he came in, did his shift turnover, we were at our  
8 desk, and that's about it. I really didn't have much interaction  
9 with him other than -- you know, I could see he was over there  
10 busy.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Constant calls for the first part of the evening.

13 Q. Is that typical for that?

14 A. It depends on, you know, what's going on on your pipeline at  
15 the time. Sometimes, mine will be blowing up, sometimes his will  
16 be.

17 Q. Okay. All right, so you're both engaged in your jobs. Then,  
18 you know, from interviews we learned that interesting things  
19 started happening on his console maybe around 7:00. Were you  
20 aware of anything?

21 A. I just heard him on the phone, I mean, for a long period of  
22 time. I couldn't give you the actual hours. But pretty much it.  
23 I heard him talking to field techs constantly. I don't know any  
24 of the names, but I mean, he was on the phone for hours.

25 Q. Do you know the nature of the conversations?

- 1 A. I really don't.
- 2 Q. Is it pretty unusual to be on the phone for hours with the  
3 techs?
- 4 A. I really can't answer that. Sometimes, I mean, you are on  
5 the phone for hours just depending on what. But for hours on end  
6 like that?
- 7 Q. Yeah.
- 8 A. Yeah, I would say it's kind of unusual.
- 9 Q. Have you had to do -- spend hours on the phone with techs in  
10 your work?
- 11 A. I would say in the past, yes, you know -- yeah.
- 12 Q. Yeah, can you give me an example of why you maybe --
- 13 A. I can't recall any of the specifics.
- 14 Q. Okay, is it usually because of something unusual is going on  
15 or because of --
- 16 A. Or if you have a question about something, you know, and  
17 you're investigating.
- 18 Q. Got it.
- 19 A. I can't give you any specific examples, but yeah.
- 20 Q. Okay, so you're seeing him on the phone and what else can you  
21 tell him about what may have been happening on his console?
- 22 A. I really can't, you know, I said you seem busy over there and  
23 he goes yes, really busy.
- 24 Q. Okay.
- 25 A. You know, he's just monitoring it and I just kind of left him

1 alone, you know, I didn't want to pry.

2 Q. Okay, so your shift goes past midnight and into the early  
3 morning?

4 A. Uh huh.

5 Q. Did anything change that you observed from his actions?

6 A. No, I mean, other than just monitoring the pipeline  
7 continuously.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I mean, that's about it.

10 Q. Okay, now come around let's say -- I just -- I will assume  
11 that the shift turnover process begins around 5:40 a.m.?

12 A. Yeah, roughly right around in that time.

13 Q. Okay, right, did you overhear anything being discussed during  
14 their turnover that gave you concern?

15 A. No, I mean, we're focused on what we're doing on our console.

16 Q. Sure, okay. So, did you -- based on what you're telling me,  
17 you -- that evening, you didn't have any reason to believe that  
18 something abnormal or emergency was going on?

19 A. Not at -- no.

20 Q. Okay, before we went on interview -- before we went on  
21 record, you were starting to tell me about your normal shifts and  
22 some overtime that you worked?

23 A. Uh huh.

24 Q. Can you just walk me through your normal shifts?

25 A. My normal shift, it depends on when I'm coming on. It's a 12

1 hour shifts just like any other. We work a Dupont system so we'll  
2 start out at the beginning of the month at four night shifts,  
3 transition to three days off, then you'll work a three day shift  
4 through a weekend, and then from there continue.

5 Q. Uh huh.

6 A. Day off, three night shifts, then three days off, then four  
7 day shifts, then a week off.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. So, that's just the way. Then, you know, there's vacation  
10 time, so, you know, they have to have coverage, so I picked up  
11 that night.

12 DR. JENNER: Okay, very good. I think that's all the  
13 questions I have right now. So, thank you and we'll pass it on.

14 BY MS. BUTLER:

15 Q. So, when you came in that night -- or during the night, did  
16 you notice anything different about Caesar at all?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Okay, do you feel supported by the field techs?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. What about SCADA or other people?

21 A. Yes, but you've got to look on our console, we have different  
22 techs than what they have.

23 Q. Yes, right. Okay, and other than it being busy, is there any  
24 one thing that would stand out that you -- looking in hindsight,  
25 that you might think oh, I -- you know, I didn't even realize that

1 was happening?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Okay, any hint when you left that there had been an accident?

4 A. No.

5 Q. So, when did you find out?

6 A. Not until -- I really can't recall. The evening of, day  
7 after, I don't know. I can't recall.

8 Q. Did somebody call you or was it just when you came back into  
9 work?

10 A. I think it was when I came back in. I'm not -- like I  
11 said --

12 Q. Okay, do you have any valve malfunctions on your console  
13 where you have to command it more than once to take a position?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay, and have you ever been in a different control room  
16 since you've been with -- ten years, you were probably in the  
17 other location maybe for a third of those?

18 A. I was at downtown, I was off City West, but it was for the  
19 same company.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. We had switched around. But pretty much been controlling the  
22 same pipeline.

23 Q. All that time?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Did it have a leak detection system on it?

1 A. Leak detection are your pressures, so you just monitor your  
2 pressures.

3 Q. Was it the same in the other control room as it is now?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. All right, and are you aware of any recent changes in  
6 the control room, like on maybe even in console two -- besides the  
7 Geo SCADA upgrade, which is going to be positive, are you aware of  
8 any changes in the SCADA control room?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Different systems getting added, new pipelines coming in?

11 A. Well, pipelines have come in.

12 Q. Several or a couple?

13 A. A couple.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. That's just a guess though.

16 Q. Is it mainly on the other console?

17 A. Yes, it's usually.

18 Q. Okay, all right. Okay, is it fair to say those have come in,  
19 like, within the last couple months or has been more like a year?

20 A. It's a hard question to answer. I mean, I would say a year.

21 Q. What just stands out? You don't have to be right on the  
22 money?

23 A. A year.

24 Q. Okay. All right, and just any change to support systems in  
25 the control room? Like any change to -- if you fill out a work



1 order, any change to your documentation that's happened?

2 A. No.

3 MS. BUTLER: Okay, so we know Geo SCADA is coming. Okay.

4 DR. JENNER: Okay, Buddy, you have any questions?

5 BY MR. GRAY:

6 Q. Thank you for staying and I know we're taking up your  
7 evening. So, how often -- and I just want to reiterate this, how  
8 aware are you of what is happening on the other console from a  
9 business standpoint? From the operational standpoint?

10 A. I do hear their conversations as far as what they're actually  
11 doing at their console because I'd have to be cross trained, I  
12 really don't involve myself in that part of it.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. You know, if they need help answering a call or something,  
15 I'm more than willing, but as far as making any judgement calls or  
16 giving any input, no.

17 Q. Okay, so would you say it's a proximately -- just as close as  
18 you all are sitting, you will naturally just hear what is going  
19 on?

20 A. Yes, that's pretty much it.

21 Q. And is it safe to say your focus is on your console?

22 A. That is it, yes.

23 MR. GRAY: Okay.

24 DR. JENNER: Anything else?

25 MS. BUTLER: I'm thinking.

1 DR. JENNER: Joe, any point of clarification?

2 MR. EISERT: No, nothing that I saw.

3 BY DR. JENNER:

4 Q. Very good. I don't have any more questions, so I'll just end  
5 by asking do you think -- because you've worked with SCADA for a  
6 long time, do you think they're -- we're trying to make the  
7 industry safer, so do you think there are any improvements in the  
8 industry starting with the SCADA and technology, or starting with  
9 training or procedures, or anything out that you think could help  
10 us make it a little safer?

11 A. Not that I can think of right off the top of my head. You  
12 know, I'm happy with the training I get, I'm happy with the SCADA  
13 system we have, and looking forward to the Geo.

14 DR. JENNER: All right, appreciate that. So, again, thank  
15 you very much for your time. It's 5:33 and we're finished up.

16 (Whereupon, at 5:33 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

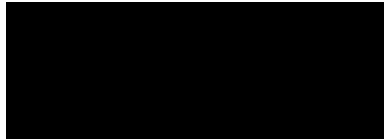
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ACCIDENT NO.: PLD24FR001

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.



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Carolyn Hanna  
Transcriber