

Interview of Enrique Salgado – 8/25/00

DOCKET INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Witness: Enrique Henry Salgado, (age 40), *Enrique Salgado 02/14/01*

Time and Date of Interview: 10:00 AM August 25, 2000

Location: Room 121, Dept. of Energy Building, Carlsbad, New Mexico

Investigators: Chuck Koval, Eric Sager
CK ES

Accident: El Paso Natural Gas Company Rupture and Fire Near Carlsbad, New Mexico (August 19, 2000)

Digest:

Mr. Salgado answered questions from Safety Board operations and human performance investigators. Also present were Gabriel Martinez, Human Resources Department, El Paso Natural Gas Company (EPNG), and member of the human performance group; Jason Waller, an officer with the New Mexico State Police; and Patrick Welch, a social worker with the Carlsbad Medical Center (Mr. Salgado's representative for the interview). Mr. Salgado was questioned about his work background with EPNG and his observations and activities at the scene of the fire on August 19.

with a (ES) Mr. Salgado said that he has been employed by EPNG for 20 years and for the past 5 1/2 years has been primarily operating heavy equipment and driving low boy trucks. He described his present work as "blading" or grading roads, maintaining right of ways, hauling water and maintaining valves. Previously he was a plant operator for 14 1/2 years. He currently lives south of Carlsbad and works in the EPNG's Carlsbad District. *operating a Peterbilt truck* (ES) *operating complex.* (ES)

Mr. Salgado described the events leading to his first awareness of the accident situation. He said that on Saturday mprning he got up as he normally does on weekends between 4:30 and 5:00 AM to practice bow and arrow shooting. He recalled having coffee and at about 5:00 or shortly afterward he walked out his front door. He said that he noticed a glow in the south or southeast sky right away. He said that he knew it was either the EPNG line or somebody else's. He went back inside the house to call gas control [the EPNG control center] and got a wrong number. He called the Washington Ranch station to get the correct number (he explained that he knew it was manned 24 hours). He also asked them if the Washington Ranch station had any changes in pressure but he could not remember what they answered. Mr. Salgado said he then called the correct gas control number with the intention of ~~confirming that it was the EPNG line.~~ *informing them* (ES) he saw a glow in the sky.

(ES)

L All times are Mountain Daylight saving time.

pressure at the Pecos River station and they answered that they lost one unit. As they spoke they lost Pecos River station. Mr. Salgado told them, "I believe we've got a rupture, I can see the glow, I can see the fire."

Mr. Salgado said he called Larry Charlet. He remembered that Mrs. Charlet answered. She called her husband to the phone and Mr. Salgado told him, "Larry, we've got a line rupture toward the Pecos River station." Mr. Salgado said he was headed out there and he recalled that Mr. Charlet said he will be out that way too.

Mr. Salgado said he drove to the Pecos River station in a company truck. He indicated that he headed out on route 285, took White Horn Road and turned off to the Pecos River station. He recalled as he drove down the road to the station there was a white city police car ahead of him. He said that he went around the police car before they came to the railroad tracks.

Mr. Salgado saw that the fire was not the Pecos River station and they were going to have to close valves. He saw that Mr. Charlet had already arrived and was closing valves at the pig launcher. He recalled Mr. Charlet telling him to go shut off the valves coming in from South Carlsbad. Together they finished closing valves at the station. Mr. Salgado said that they left the station and drove to the river where they looked across at the fire. They could not see the [involved] line or what was blown out.

ES
on the west side of Sta.

ES
on the west side of Pecos River Sta.

ES
the Pig Launcher Valves.

He said that Mr. Charlet told him to go around the river to the low-water crossing to see what line was blown out. Mr. Salgado said that he took his truck over and saw where the fire was but still could not tell which line was involved. During the drive back to where he left Mr. Charlet, he thought he may have seen vehicles just south of the bridge. He said that he and Mr. Charlet backed their trucks up and went around the river to get to the ~~downside~~ of the fire. Upon arrival he said they immediately started closing valves on the upstream [pipeline] side of the fire. Mr. Salgado recalled that they had to close them manually (due to a loss in pressure). He said that the fire started to subside when they finished closing the valves, and everything started getting quieter.

ES
up stream side.

ES
west side

Mr. Salgado indicated that Mr. Charlet told him to go to the other side of the river and block the road to prevent traffic from entering. Mr. Salgado said he started to go back to the west side of the river and noticed other trucks [in the area of the fire]. He said he parked his truck and called Mr. Charlet to tell him they may have casualties. Mr. Charlet told him that he would call their supervisor [Johnny Cole]. He said that George Barta then pulled behind in his

ES
Ad and saw three vehicles parked on the south side of the concrete bridge.

ES
on west side of concrete bridge.

Salgado, Page 3

truck and asked Mr. Salgado to get in. Mr. Salgado ^{ES}~~declined~~ ^{instead} and went to the river and assisted injured persons. Mr. Salgado remained to work with the EMS volunteers. He left the scene in an ambulance with one of the injured children.

End Interview