

## **ADDENDUM III**

**CC FORBES INTERVIEW**

**BILL RALSTON**

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

\* \* \* \* \*

IN THE MATTER OF:	* VIOLATIONS OF THE OIL
C.C. FORBES, LLC.,	* AND GAS ACT, CLEAN
LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP,	* STREAMS LAW, AIR
CLEARFIELD COUNTY	* POLLUTION CONTROL ACT,
	* AND SOLID WASTE
	* MANAGEMENT ACT

\* \* \* \* \*

STATEMENT UNDER OATH

OF

BILL RALSTON

taken pursuant to Notice by Jackie L. Hazlett, a Court Reporter and Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, at the offices of DEP, 186 Enterprise Drive, Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, on Saturday, June 12, 2010, beginning at 10:06 a.m.

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## A P P E A R A N C E S

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1 A P P E A R A N C E S (cont.)

2

3 BRUCE JANKURA

4 Oil and Gas Inspector

5 DEP

6 186 Enterprise Drive

7 Philipsburg, PA 16866

8

9 Also present:

10 GIANCARLO NISIMBLAT, ESQUIRE

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## I N D E X

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## OPENING STATEMENT

By Attorney Ayers

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WITNESS: BILL RALSTON

## EXAMINATION

By Mr. Vittitow

8 - 24

## DISCUSSION AMONG PARTIES

24 - 26

## EXAMINATION

By Mr. Jankura

26 - 27

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EXHIBIT PAGE

PAGE

NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

IDENTIFIED

NONE OFFERED

## P R O C E E D I N G S

BILL RALSTON, HAVING FIRST BEEN DULY SWORN, TESTIFIED  
AS FOLLOWS:

ATTORNEY AYERS:

Just as an opening remark to make it  
clear that we are here today pursuant to the  
Department's Order of June 9, 2010 to investigate the  
circumstances that arose out at the Punxsutawney  
Hunting Club 36H well. And the Department's expert,  
Mr. John Vittitow, is here to inquire of three  
witnesses regarding these events. So with that, I'll  
turn it over to you, John.

MR. VITTITOW:

Okay. Well, first of all, let me just  
say that just so you'll understand what we're doing  
here, all we're trying to do is obtain the facts that  
led up to the incident and what happened during the  
incident. This is not a witch hunt. We're not trying  
to go after anybody. All we're trying to do is just  
find out what happened. You may have some knowledge  
that we need or you may not. I know that you were not  
on the location, but we just want to ask a few  
questions.

1 EXAMINATION

2 BY MR. VITTITOW:

3 Q. Can you give me --- what's your title with C.C.  
4 Forbes?

5 A. Manager.

6 Q. And that is manager of the Indiana, Pennsylvania  
7 yard?

8 A. Pennsylvania yard.

9 Q. Yes?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. You were contacted by EOG to provide a work OA rig  
12 about what day, do you remember? My records show that  
13 the rig moved in on June 1st, so somewhere in that  
14 neighborhood; is that correct?

15 A. Correct.

16 ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

17 You're asking when the rig actually  
18 moved, not when he was contacted.

19 MR. VITTITOW:

20 Well, I was asking when he was contacted  
21 and then about what he was contacted. I'm just trying  
22 to get some background for myself.

23 A. Sure

24 BY MR. VITTITOW:

25 Q. So the rig moved on what day?



1 A. I believe the 1st.

2 Q. This rig, has this rig been working steadily? Has  
3 it been staffed? Is it up and down or has it been  
4 working pretty steadily?

5 A. Fairly steadily.

6 Q. Your crews are all local, from the Pennsylvania  
7 area?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. C.C. Forbes has been in Pennsylvania for  
10 approximately how long? I mean, they've had rigs up  
11 here working.

12 A. I'm going to say about a year.

13 Q. A lot of this is background material, so we're  
14 just getting it on the record. Are you responsible  
15 for recruiting the operators and the crews or do you  
16 have someone else do that?

17 A. I am.

18 Q. Tell us how the crews --- how the rigs are  
19 staffed. I mean, how many people you have, what  
20 positions there are and that kind of ---.

21 A. They're staffed with four.

22 Q. That's an operator and three floor hands.

23 A. An operator, a derrick hand and two floor hands.

24 Q. So on the 1st of June, the rig moved in. Do you  
25 know what their activities were? Or are you familiar

1 with the activities leading up to the incident?

2 ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

3 Let me just clarify one thing. You're  
4 asking basically what he was told about this. He  
5 wasn't there.

6 MR. VITTITOW:

7 Yes.

8 BY MR. VITTITOW:

9 Q. I'm asking what you had been told, not what  
10 happened, not the incident, but what activities they  
11 did from the time they rigged up until the incident.  
12 Did you pick up ---?

13 A. They tried to kill the well.

14 Q. Now, when you say they, give me a feel for what  
15 you mean by --- they your people, or they ---?

16 A. EOG tried to kill the well with 220 barrels of  
17 brine, I believe.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And it was unsuccessful. So what they did, they  
20 had Titan Wire Line Service ---.

21 Q. Who's they?

22 A. EOG had Titan Wire Line Service come in and set a  
23 kill plug on top of everything so that the well would  
24 --- they could bleed the gas off and the well would be  
25 dead, so we could go in the hole with the string of

1 pipe.

2 Q. For the record, explain what a kill plug is.

3 A. What a kill plug is, when the wire line --- Titan  
4 Wire Line went in and set a plug on top of all the  
5 zones, so there would be no zones open above that  
6 plug.

7 Q. Okay. And the plan as you know it was they set  
8 this plug and you were going to go in and you were  
9 going to pick up tubing and go in the hole?

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. How were they going to get the plug out, do you  
12 know?

13 A. They were going to drill it out.

14 Q. They were going to drill it. So they set a  
15 drillable plug, you were going to go down with your  
16 pipe, without being under pressure, drill up this plug  
17 and then drill the remaining plugs that were in the  
18 hole.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. That was your understanding of what the job  
21 consisted of?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Up until the time of the incident, had anyone  
24 reported to you any kind of problem from the rig site?

25 A. I don't believe so.

1 Q. Okay. Normally, do you get a morning report? Oh,  
2 let me back up. Let me ask an important question.  
3 Was this a 12-hour job or was this a 24-hour job?

4 A. It turned into a 24-hour job.

5 Q. But originally you thought it was going to be a  
6 12-hour job; correct?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. When it was determined that it was going to be a  
9 24-hour job, what steps did you take --- did C.C.  
10 Forbes take to convert the rig, to change the rig over  
11 to a 24-hour operation?

12 A. EOG called me, that was about 11:30 at night, and  
13 told me or asked me if I could get another crew  
14 rounded up for a 24-hour job. They were going to go  
15 24 hours. So at that time I called another operator  
16 and told him to round his crew up, we were going for a  
17 24-hour job.

18 Q. They called you about what time of day?

19 A. Around 11:30 at night.

20 Q. 11:30 p.m.?

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. And the crew that was on at that time had been on  
23 all day; correct?

24 A. Since 5:00 that morning.

25 Q. Do you supply lighting for the rig or do they ---

1 EOG handles that?

2 A. EOG, handles that.

3 Q. So 11:30 they called you and asked you to provide  
4 a second crew to go 24 hours. You called an operator,  
5 one of your operators, which would be who?

6 A. It would be Brent Hrubochak.

7 Q. And he mobilized his crew that night?

8 A. No. I did not make contact with Brent until  
9 approximately 5:30, I believe, the next morning.

10 Q. The crew that was there at 11:30, did they stay or  
11 did they work all night?

12 A. They stayed.

13 Q. They continued operating until relieved by the  
14 second crew coming in?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Do you know what time the second crew arrived on  
17 location?

18 A. Noon.

19 Q. So at noon, when they were relieved, they had been  
20 on since 5:00 a.m. the previous morning?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Is that standard operating procedure for C.C.  
23 Forbes that you would have a crew that long?

24 A. No.

25 Q. This was just an extraordinary situation?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Just for curiosity, looking back on it, would you  
3 consider that a prudent move, to have someone --- to  
4 have a crew out there for that length of time without  
5 relief? That's just a question.

6 A. I guess I don't understand.

7 Q. Looking back at it. Looking back at --- I'm an  
8 operations' guy, you know, so when I ask some of these  
9 questions I just want to know. Looking back at it,  
10 would you --- did you think it was prudent operational  
11 procedure to have a crew from 5:00 a.m. one day until  
12 noon the next day without relief?

13 A. I don't like it.

14 Q. That was the answer I expected, so I just wanted  
15 to ask that question. Okay. So they were relieved at  
16 noon on the day of the 2nd?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. 6/2? 6/2. June 2nd; correct?

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. So this crew continued drilling out plugs, as far  
21 as from what you know, and they drilled down to the  
22 end of the perforations. Now, I'm asking these  
23 questions and you might not know the answer. If you  
24 don't, just tell me that. But to your knowledge, they  
25 drilled down to the end of the perforations and got

1 stuck; is that correct? If you weren't there, just  
2 say I wasn't there and I don't know.

3 A. I was not.

4 Q. Okay. When did you first --- the day of the  
5 incident, when were you first notified, and who  
6 notified you?

7 A. I believe it was around eight o'clock. It was  
8 Charlie Kendrick from EOG.

9 Q. This was on the 3rd of June; is that correct?

10 A. I believe so.

11 Q. Eight o'clock in the morning?

12 A. Eight o'clock at night.

13 Q. At night. That would be 6/3. And this was by  
14 Charlie Kendrick with EOG, the EOG well site  
15 supervisor. What did he tell you?

16 A. He told me that they had a problem. The stripping  
17 rubber blew and the ram rubbers blew and the well was  
18 out of control. I believe that's what he told me.

19 Q. How do perceive his attitude? Was he upset? Was  
20 he trying to put the blame on C.C. Forbes, or was he  
21 just simply notifying that this was what happened?

22 A. He was notifying me.

23 Q. What actions did you take at that time?

24 A. I believe I told him to set the collar down on top  
25 of the BOPs to try to make a better seal on the rams.

1 And after I talked to him about that, I'm not sure if  
2 he said something about the blind rams and I said  
3 look, you close the blind rams. It's not going to  
4 shear the pipe. You may be able to work with them  
5 close, work the pipe and hopefully it parts the pipe,  
6 but it's not going to shear 'em.

7 Q. Closing the blind rams up, did he bring that up?

8 A. I did.

9 Q. Did he mention, well, we'll close the blind rams  
10 and try to shear it or did you say if you close the  
11 blind rams it's not going to shear? Just to the best  
12 of your knowledge, if you remember.

13 A. I know I told him that it would not shear the  
14 pipe.

15 Q. Did you notify anybody else at your company or  
16 anybody else at this time? When you got this call,  
17 did you call anybody within your chain of command to  
18 notify them or ---?

19 A. I don't remember at the time.

20 Q. Did you ever go to the location?

21 A. Next morning.

22 Q. Next morning. When you arrived on location, what  
23 was the situation when you got there?

24 A. Everybody was out by the road, away from the well.

25 Q. The well was still blowing at this time?



1 A. Correct.

2 Q. Who did you perceive to be in charge at that time  
3 you got there?

4 A. Excuse me?

5 Q. Who did you perceive to be in charge of the  
6 situation when you got there?

7 A. I believe it would have been Wild Well Control.

8 Q. What actions did you witness Wild Well Control  
9 take to attempt to stop the flow?

10 A. They took a gas sniffer and sniffed around the  
11 well and around the rig itself and couldn't come up  
12 with nothing.

13 Q. So at this time, the well was --- no longer had an  
14 uncontrolled release of gas; is that correct?

15 A. It was still releasing at this time.

16 Q. But they couldn't find a ---?

17 A. Right.

18 Q. So after they did the sniffing and didn't find  
19 combustibles, what did they do?

20 A. They come to me and discussed if I was for  
21 starting the rig because the pipe rams and the blind  
22 rams at that times were in the open position and if we  
23 started the rig, then they would automatically open  
24 and the tubing would fall. And once that was done,  
25 then we'd close the frac valve and the well was

1 secure.

2 Q. Is that what you did?

3 A. That's what we did.

4 Q. Then after it was started, the rig started to open  
5 everything and the pipe fell out?

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. You closed the frag valve?

8 A. Correct.

9 Q. And the well was secured at that time?

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. So when you were up there that morning, it was  
12 still blowing but since there were not finding  
13 combustibles, I would assume that it was still blowing  
14 frac fluid?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. I'm not asking for volume here, but was there a  
17 considerable amount of frac fluid on location that you  
18 saw?

19 ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

20 I think I just want to mention when you  
21 use the term considerable there as a way to  
22 determine ---.

23 MR. VITTITOW:

24 Yeah. I understand. Let me reword this  
25 a little bit.

1 BY MR. VITTITOW:

2 Q. There was frac fluid on location --- on the  
3 location when you got there?

4 A. I believe so.

5 Q. Okay. How far over?

6 A. The frac fluid was coming out around the --- it  
7 would be through the pipe rams through the stripping  
8 rubber.

9 Q. Was it going up in the air? Was it just bubbling  
10 over? Was it ---?

11 A. It was going in the air.

12 Q. Approximately how high up?

13 A. I want to say probably 20 feet.

14 Q. I was just trying to get a visual picture in my  
15 mind of what you saw. And so once they opened, once  
16 you restarted the rig, the rams opened, the --- what  
17 was on top of the tubing? Did they have like a valve  
18 on top?

19 A. Power swivel.

20 Q. Power swivel? How was the tubing disconnected  
21 from the power swivel?

22 A. When I had them set that collar on top of the pipe  
23 rams, the fluid was still coming around the pipe rams  
24 and the sand and the pressure washed out that  
25 collar ---

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. --- and part of that tubing above the pipe rams.

3 Q. So when you opened the pipe rams, when you  
4 restarted the rig, pipe rams opened, basically the  
5 pipe parted on top of the pipe rams?

6 A. It was already parted.

7 Q. It was already parted.

8 A. From a washout.

9 Q. Do you know if there was any fluid coming up  
10 through the tubing?

11 A. None.

12 Q. None?

13 A. As far as I know.

14 Q. You couldn't see any visually? You have to answer  
15 for me.

16 A. Yes. I understand that.

17 Q. Is the answer no?

18 A. Yeah. I said no.

19 ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

20 Use words.

21 MR. VITTITOW:

22 This is two well guys sitting here  
23 talking. I'm trying to picture in my mind what's  
24 going on, but I've got to make sure that words appear  
25 on the transcript, not just head nods.

1 BY MR. VITTITOW:

2 Q. And so at any point after the incident was over,  
3 what actions did you take after the frac valve was  
4 closed? The well was secure. What happened next?

5 A. Then we rigged our rig down and moved off  
6 location.

7 Q. So then C.C. Forbes was cleared of the location  
8 right after that?

9 A. Correct.

10 Q. The first thing after you closed the frac valve,  
11 you rigged down and went?

12 A. No. I mean, it just didn't all happen that way.  
13 I mean, it was a slow process.

14 Q. But basically, I mean, you didn't know whether the  
15 well activities --- after the well --- after the frac  
16 valve was closed, you rigged down and left, basically?

17 A. Well, we took our BOPs off and the mud cross off  
18 and then put another frac valve on top of the other  
19 frac valve to seal the well better.

20 Q. Both frac valves were 7/16 10,000; correct?

21 A. I believe so.

22 Q. When you say leave, that we just moved ---?

23 ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

24 Away from the well.

25 A. We didn't leave the site.

1 BY MR. VITTITOW:

2 Q. You moved off the well?

3 A. Right.

4 Q. Thank you.

5 ATTORNEY AYERS:

6 How many yards?

7 A. Well, the rig actually moved probably up to the  
8 compressor, maybe less than a quarter mile off the  
9 site, behind the Punxsy Hunting Club.

10 BY MR. VITTITOW:

11 Q. Yes. At what point did the rig move from that  
12 site? Did you go to another well there, or is it  
13 still there?

14 A. It's still there.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Actually, yesterday we moved it back down to the  
17 location because EOG wanted us to move it off where it  
18 was because they were working on some compressors and  
19 it got in their way.

20 Q. Okay. The BOPs were still on the location?

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. The mud crosses are also still there?

23 A. I do not know that.

24 Q. That's a rental unit, it's not yours?

25 A. Correct.

1 Q. And that was put underneath the BOPs?

2 A. Correct.

3 Q. Let me get a little background material, if I can  
4 --- if I may. When you test BOPs, and C.C. Forbes,  
5 I'm sure you all have policies and procedures of how  
6 to do --- how things work, what is your standard  
7 procedure for testing? Now, these BOPs travel with  
8 the rig; correct?

9 A. Correct.

10 Q. Do they travel on the sump on the rig?

11 A. On the base beam.

12 Q. Yes. Okay. And so they want you --- you're  
13 responsible for servicing those; correct?

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. What's your standard procedure when you --- or  
16 does that tell you ---?

17 Strike that. Do you have a standard ---? Let me  
18 back up. I'm sorry. Do you have a standard procedure  
19 for testing the BOPs or do you leave that to the  
20 discretion on the operator?

21 ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

22 Could I have that question back? I'm  
23 sorry. I just want to get a question in here.

24 COURT REPORTER READS BACK PREVIOUS QUESTION

25 A. I guess I basically would leave it to the

1   discretions of the operator.

2   BY MR. VITTITOW:

3   Q.   To your knowledge, the BOPs on the well are tested  
4   prior to their use; correct?

5   A.   Yes.   I believe so.

6                   ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

7                   Just for the record, was there more than  
8   one BOP involved here?

9   A.   No.

10                   ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

11                   Okay.   I mean, you keeping using the  
12   plural.

13                   MR. VITTITOW:

14                   Well, yeah.

15   BY MR. VITTITOW:

16   Q.   There's a set of double rams; correct?

17   A.   There's a pipe ram and there's a blind ram.

18   Q.   There's just one BOP unit but there's ---?

19                   ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

20                   Right.   Yeah.

21   A.   Correct.

22   BY MR. VITTITOW:

23   Q.   Does C.C. Forbes have an inspection policy for  
24   looking at the BOP --- any BOP equipment that you have  
25   that travels with the rig, is it inspected --- I mean,



1 do you have a schedule to look it?

2 A. No.

3 Q. So if a BOP does not pass a test when you rig it  
4 up, then you attempt to replace parts or what's needed  
5 to make it achieve a test?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. Do you know the date that the --- the last  
8 date the pipe rams, the rams themselves, were replaced  
9 or visually checked? Do you have any knowledge of  
10 that?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Are you aware that C.C. Forbes has a policy about  
13 looking or having the BOP that travels with the rig  
14 inspected? Do you know if there's a corporate policy  
15 at C.C. Forbes?

16 A. I do not know that.

17 ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

18 Can we take a break for one second? I  
19 just want to talk to him about something.

20 SHORT BREAK TAKEN

21 ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

22 I want to clarify something, based on the  
23 questions you were asking. I have the impression that  
24 you have the impression the BOP malfunction?

25 MR. VITTITOW:

1 No.

2 ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

3 Okay. Well, I just wanted to ---.

4 MR. VITTITOW:

5 I assure you, that's not the case.

6 ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

7 Okay.

8 MR. VITTITOW:

9 I'm just getting background information  
10 because I know what's going to be coming up here in  
11 the next few days.

12 ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

13 Okay. That's fine. I just wanted to  
14 make sure that you understood that our position is  
15 that the BOPs acted fine.

16 The reason I brought it up is, it sounded  
17 like you were trying to develop whether or not there  
18 was a reason to support that conclusion by  
19 inspections, whatever. And I just wanted to make sure  
20 that you understood that that's not our understanding  
21 of what happened.

22 MR. VITTITOW:

23 That's not the case. I'm just getting  
24 background information so that ---. Questions are  
25 going to be asked and while we're all here together,

1 we don't have to do this again, so I'm trying to do  
2 this ---. I'm anticipating some other things.

3 ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

4 Okay.

5 MR. VITTITOW:

6 I think that's all the questions I have  
7 for you. Thank you for your cooperation and your  
8 honest answers. And we'll get to the other two guys  
9 in here.

10 ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

11 Do you have any questions?

12 ATTORNEY AYERS:

13 I don't. Thank you.

14 ATTORNEY SHERMAN:

15 Okay. We'll read. We'll read and sign.

16 MR. JANKURA:

17 One quick question.

18 EXAMINATION

19 BY MR. JANKURA:

20 Q. Just in terms of your normal routine for you guys  
21 on location, what instructions do they have for doing  
22 safety meetings?

23 A. I have given to have tailgate meetings on Fridays,  
24 so ---.

25 Q. Do they do anything like depending on each tower

1 typically or ---? Or is that kind of a formal or  
2 informal setting?

3 A. On this 24-hour job, they --- when they relieve,  
4 they discuss the operations that happened during the  
5 day and what they're coming on to, what they expect  
6 and what they gotta do.

7 MR. JANKURA:

8 Okay. Very good. Thank you.

9

10 \* \* \* \* \*

11 STATEMENT UNDER OATH CONCLUDED AT 10:36 A.M.

12 \* \* \* \* \*

13

14 COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA )

15 COUNTY OF CAMBRIA )

16

17 CERTIFICATE

18 I, Jacqueline L. Hazlett, a Notary Public in  
19 and for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, do hereby  
20 certify:

21 That the foregoing proceedings, statement  
22 under oath of Bill Ralston, was reported by me on  
23 06/12/2010 and that I Jacqueline L. Hazlett read this  
24 transcript and that I attest that this transcript is a  
25 true and accurate record of the proceeding.

1           That the witness was first duly sworn to  
2 testify to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but  
3 the truth and that the foregoing deposition was taken  
4 at the time and place stated herein.

5           I further certify that I am not a relative,  
6 employee or attorney of any of the parties, nor a  
7 relative or employee of counsel, and that I am in no  
8 way interested directly or indirectly in this action.



*Jackie Hazlett*  
Court Reporter