

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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ALABAMA GAS CORPORATION (ALAGASCO) *

NATURAL GAS RELEASE WITH IGNITION * Docket No.: DCA-14-MP-001

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA *

DECEMBER 17, 2013 *

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Interview of: DAVID GALLAGHER

Alagasco Headquarters
Birmingham, Alabama

Wednesday,
July 16, 2014

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MATTHEW NICHOLSON
Investigator-in-Charge

APPEARANCES:

MATTHEW NICHOLSON, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C. 20594

RAVI CHHATRE, Accident Investigator
Pipeline Division
National Transportation Safety Board

BOB GARDNER, Director, Quality Assurance and Compliance
Alabama Gas Corporation (Alagasco)
(Party Representative)

KEITH BLACKWOOD, Pipeline Safety Investigator
Alabama Public Service Commission

NANCY McATEE, Fire and Explosion Specialist
National Transportation Safety Board

REID CARPENTER, Esq.
(Representative on behalf of Mr. Gallagher)

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LEGEND:

(ph.) = Phonetic Spelling

I N T E R V I E W

MR. NICHOLSON: Good afternoon. Today is Wednesday, July 16th. My name is Matthew Nicholson. I'm an investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board in Washington, D.C. We are at the Alagasco headquarters in Birmingham, Alabama. This interview is being conducted as part of the investigation into the natural gas distribution release and ignition that occurred in Gate City, Birmingham, Alabama on December 17, 2013. This is case number DCA-14-MP-001.

This interview is being record and may be transcribed at a later date. A copy of the transcript will be provided to the interviewee for review prior to being entered into the public docket.

Mr. Gallagher, you're permitted to have one other person present during the interviews. This is a person of your choosing: supervisor, friend, family member, or nobody at all. Please state for the record who you have selected.

MR. GALLAGHER: Reid Carpenter.

MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. We'll now go around the room. Each person please introduce yourselves, first and last name with spelling, your title and the agency or organization you're representing today. I'll start and we'll proceed to my left. Matthew Nicholson, M-a-t-t-h-e-w, N-i-c-h-o-l-s-o-n. I'm an investigator with the NTSB.

MR. CHHATRE: Ravi Chhatre, R-a-v-i, C-h-h-a-t-r-e,

1 Pipeline Accident Investigator, NTSB.

2 MR. CARPENTER: Reid Carpenter, R-e-i-d, C-a-r-p-e-n-t-
3 e-r, and I'm here for David Gallagher.

4 MR. GALLAGHER: David Gallagher, D-a-v-i-d, G-a-l-l-a-g-
5 h-e-r, Manager of Customer Service, Metro, Alagasco.

6 MR. BLACKWOOD: Keith Blackwood, K-e-i-t-h, B-l-a-c-k-w-
7 o-o-d, Pipeline Safety Investigator, Alabama Public Service
8 Commission.

9 MS. McATEE: Nancy McAtee, N-a-n-c-y, M-c-A-t-e-e, Fire
10 and Explosion Specialist, NTSB.

11 MR. GARDNER: Bob Gardner, G-a-r-d-n-e-r, Director of
12 Quality Assurance and Compliance, Alagasco and party
13 representative.

14 INTERVIEW OF DAVID GALLAGHER

15 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

16 Q. Okay. Dave, to begin with, why don't you tell us, let's
17 go back and get a little background with you. How long have you
18 been with Alagasco, maybe when you started and some of the
19 positions you've held up till now?

20 A. Okay. I started Alagasco in 1974, October. This
21 October will complete my 40th year. I started as a crewman, moved
22 into a leaderman. From there I went into the service
23 apprenticeship, served as a service mechanic for approximately 18
24 years and moved into a superintendent and now into a manager's
25 position.

1 Q. And was this within a division, that you were the
2 crewman, leaderman, service mechanic?

3 A. All of it's been in Birmingham.

4 Q. Birmingham? Birmingham Metro? Because --

5 A. Birmingham Metro.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. I did spend 3 years at our western operations.

8 Q. Okay. And I didn't catch, I'm sorry, manager of
9 customer service, you started that job when?

10 A. 2008.

11 Q. And can you elaborate a little bit on your duties as a
12 customer service manager?

13 A. Yeah, the duties that I kind of oversee the day-to-day
14 operations with our field supervisor, supervisors and our
15 technician, service technicians that go out and work from the
16 meter into the house.

17 Q. Okay. And of course you were there on December 17th
18 when the accident in Gate City occurred?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Can you just walk us through the events, how you were
21 notified, when you arrived, what happened when you were on scene?

22 A. Yeah. I got a called from Robert Rumph. We have a
23 weekend team and this was happened to be my weekend that we were
24 on duty, and Robert Rumph was the supervisor on duty that night,
25 or that morning, and Robert called me. I don't remember exact

1 times of the calls, but I want to say I got the call from Robert
2 and I arrived somewhere after 4 a.m. to 4:30.

3 Q. Between 4 -- okay. Were you the first person on scene?

4 A. No. Robert Rumph -- well, first person on the scene, I
5 think, was our service technician.

6 Q. Who was that?

7 A. Max Morrison.

8 Q. Okay. Okay, so when you arrived on scene, who was
9 already there?

10 A. Robert Rumph was already there. Max Morrison was there.
11 Our construction journeyman, Mike Donaldson was there, and
12 Supervisor Chris Hill.

13 Q. Okay. Okay, so what did you do when you get on scene?

14 A. When I got on the scene, I went and spoke with Robert
15 Rumph, just to kind of get some of the details of what was going
16 on. Our construction journeyman was on the backhoe in the process
17 of digging the service up. I spoke with Robert just a moment,
18 went to -- got through talking with him, went and spoke with the
19 fire department on what was going on. They informed me, as Robert
20 did, that they thought we had two fatalities and possibly a child.
21 And after speaking with the fire department, I went back over to
22 where Robert and our journeyman was digging.

23 I spoke with Max Morrison, our service technician. He
24 had already been out doing some bar testing. I reiterated with
25 him that we wanted to check all of the sewers, walk around, smell,

1 just look in the area over from what happened out there to see if
2 there was anything else. Sometime a little bit after that, I
3 called for another supervisor, Rob Wall, to come out. I also
4 called for additional service technicians and additional
5 construction journeyman, not knowing what all we had, but at the
6 time of morning it was, I wanted to get some people started on way
7 if we needed them.

8 And we'd got the additional -- there was some trouble
9 locating the service. The backhoe operator was digging, trying to
10 locate the service. He was having a hard time locating the
11 service and he continued to dig. I continued to walk around some
12 just to look and smell and do the same thing everybody else was
13 doing as we were trying to locate that service to cut it.

14 Q. Okay. Were you the most senior person on scene?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Okay. So did that make you incident commander or what
17 was your role?

18 A. Well, on weekend duty I'm the team lead --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- and I just continued --

21 Q. So it's expected when you -- that's team lead being in
22 the event of this sort of thing?

23 A. Right. They would notify me. I would come out and give
24 them direction on what we needed to do.

25 Q. So that was understood when you showed up --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. -- that you were the person in charge? You said you
3 spoke to the fire department. Who'd you speak with early on when
4 you got there? You said you spoke with Robert for a moment and
5 spoke with the fire department.

6 A. Yeah. I --

7 Q. Who was it?

8 A. -- I don't know all names. I do remember talking with
9 Chief Mardis (ph.). I'm not sure if that's his title, but --

10 Q. Right.

11 A. -- it could've been captain, but I call him Chief
12 Mardis. I spoke with him and spoke with someone else. I don't
13 really know -- there was another table or a group of firemen that
14 was kind of out there, and just spoke with them briefly and then I
15 went back around.

16 Q. And what were you speaking about?

17 A. Well, one of the things is, you know, what can we do?
18 What do we need to do? When we respond to a fire, you know, what
19 we do is we make sure everything's safe from the gas side, but we
20 also ask the fire department what can we do to assist them. And,
21 of course, with everything going on, there was not much for us to
22 do, except to get the riser put out.

23 Q. Yeah, that's -- I was going to ask about that. Did
24 Chief Mardis express a urgency to getting that riser fire out to
25 you?

1 A. No, there was no urgency. He just told me, you know,
2 what had been reported, and may have asked how long it would be
3 and I did tell him we were having trouble locating it. And then I
4 went back around and was trying to -- we actually moved locations,
5 the backhoe operator moved locations to try to get closer to the
6 riser to see if we could locate it and now start our digging from
7 going this-a-way to cross-ways, because they were picking up with
8 their pipe locators just different signals.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. And so we decided to go at a different angle to see if
11 we could just hit the service.

12 Q. Right. What -- so they still hadn't found it --

13 A. Still had not found service.

14 Q. And I know at some point they got a map, a service line
15 map sent out to them, right?

16 A. Yes. I requested -- don't remember what time. As we
17 continued to have trouble with that, I asked Pete Stokes to go and
18 see -- and find the valves in case we needed to sectionalize it,
19 go ahead and get the valves found we would need, so we --

20 Q. The distribution, the mainline valves?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Oh, okay.

23 A. In case we needed them.

24 Q. All right.

25 A. I wanted to already know where the valves were. I asked

1 that -- to see if we had a service line drawing, and I think Chris
2 Hill e-mailed our GIS group or group that does that for us and
3 they sent us a -- by the time that it got done, I think we had the
4 riser out.

5 Q. Oh, okay.

6 A. As the riser was burning, there was so much debris
7 around it, we couldn't tell whether we had service cock on it or
8 not.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. The debris was around it. When we did find that -- we
11 moved some debris. When we changed locations of the backhoe,
12 we're digging a different direction, he pulled some of the debris.
13 And when he got through digging, we just, you know, dug down and
14 felt like it wasn't there and I moved him back. Well, at that
15 point, we did recognize there was a service cock there.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. But in talking to Max, he wanted to know if we wanted to
18 get the fire department and put it out and go up and valve it off.
19 At that point I told him no because we still had fire burning to
20 the west of us and I didn't want to have re-ignition of the fire
21 department putting that out and an employee walking up to it, so I
22 told him at this point, until we got the fire out, that, you know,
23 I didn't want to put it out right now because I could still see
24 fire.

25 Q. Right. And you're talking -- Max went over eventually

1 and turned off the riser valve, right?

2 A. Right.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. When Max continued to make rounds of rechecking and
5 checking till we were getting our other service technicians there,
6 when they got there I asked them to do the same thing because we
7 then started getting a, you know, a crowd of folks and people were
8 saying they smelled gas, and so I was trying to get our people
9 out. And at that point, the fire department started putting the
10 fire that, I guess, that I saw west of the riser burning, out.
11 Well, in the midst of them doing that, they knocked the fire out
12 on the riser, and that's when I told Max we got to go. And I went
13 up there with Max and we valved it off. We hadn't asked them at
14 that point to put it out, but as they were putting water on the
15 other fire, somehow the riser went out. So we just went up and --

16 Q. But did I hear you say you had exposed the buried
17 isolation valve?

18 A. No, no.

19 Q. Oh, okay.

20 A. No, the service cock was kind of close to the ground.
21 With all the debris, we couldn't see it.

22 Q. Oh, okay. You're talking the service cock on the riser?

23 A. Service cock on the riser.

24 Q. Oh, okay. But there was another one, right; off the
25 main?

1 A. Well, you're -- on the service card, there was a service
2 cock underground.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. I don't remember how many feet out -- if I had the
5 service, I could tell you -- but that was underground. There was
6 no valve box to it.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I think when service was put in the building, and just
9 my assumption --

10 Q. Right.

11 A. -- the building was probably not complete, they ran the
12 service, put a service cock on it. Then when the building was
13 complete, they grabbed it right there and moved it and teed off to
14 put the two risers up.

15 Q. Okay. All right. So that wasn't exposed, so that
16 was --

17 A. No, sir.

18 Q. -- never an option at that point? Okay.

19 Can you back up for a minute? Because you said you
20 walked around the site talking to people and smelling. Did you
21 smell gas when your were walking around?

22 A. No, I didn't. This was customers, as we were walking
23 around. Like my technician would come back and say the lady over
24 there at one point said they smelled gas. Well, at that point I
25 just would tell the technician, if anybody tells you that, go with

1 them to wherever they are and you check it. And that's what --

2 Q. But you didn't smell anything yourself walking around
3 the tree or --

4 A. I did not smell anything, no, sir.

5 Q. Okay. Also in your narrative just now, you said you
6 called for Rob Wall, another supervisor; you called for additional
7 service technicians and journeymen. Why did you need additional
8 people on the site?

9 A. Well, for what happened and the crowd was starting --
10 you know, you had people say that they were smelling gas and just
11 for safety, I wanted to have my crews there if we did have
12 something.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. At that point, we didn't know what we had.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. You know, we just are seeing the building we see and I
17 just wanted additional manpower there. I didn't want to have to
18 wait until -- one group comes to work at 7:30 and one group at
19 8:00. I wanted them there if we needed them. I didn't want to
20 have to wait.

21 Q. Okay. But you had a survey crew on scene? You had
22 construction and you had a leak survey team, right?

23 A. Well, at the time, we had -- construction was a first
24 responder out there --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. -- and a service technician. Now, as I called for Rob,
2 now we were still in the dark. It's hard for me to put times on
3 this.

4 Q. Sure. I understand.

5 A. Rob is a part of my team, my weekend team, so I went on
6 and immediately called for him. And what I did, I called my whole
7 team out.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. As soon as I got there, I had to make some decisions.
10 Made my decisions and continued to call all of my supervisory team
11 and asking our dispatcher to start calling our field people out
12 because I wanted field people out there.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And then I additionally asked for a supervisor over the
15 construction area because I wanted experience, more experience out
16 there. My role --

17 Q. For digging? Is that what construction was going to do,
18 or?

19 A. No. That's just over -- the supervisor area of the,
20 superintendent over that area --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- I wanted to come out and help direct the field
23 people, where I can concentrate, one, with the service folks and
24 on what we were doing and have him helping the bar testing because
25 that's what they do every day. So --

1 Q. Okay, so the construction group was going to be out
2 there doing the bar testing?

3 A. Yes. I had one crew out there, but I asked for
4 additional.

5 Q. So was -- I'm sorry -- Rob Wall, was his group --

6 A. All right, Rob Wall was a supervisor, but he is a
7 supervisor in the construction area.

8 Q. So, but was he overseeing leak surveys or the bar tests
9 or --

10 A. Yes. When he got there, I asked him to then take over
11 all the bar testing --

12 Q. Okay, okay.

13 A. -- that was going on, and I was concentrating on other
14 things, and Bill was monitoring and telling our field people what
15 he wanted bar tested.

16 Q. So Rob was directing the leak survey for the bar hole
17 testing?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Max Morrison was a --

20 A. He's a field -- he's a service technician.

21 Q. Working for Rob?

22 A. No. Rob works -- Max works in my area.

23 Q. Oh, okay.

24 A. He's a inside -- we can say this by inside workers and
25 outside workers.

1 Q. Okay. But Max was taking bar hole test readings, right?

2 A. Yes, he was doing bar test. He is a first responder
3 too.

4 Q. But he was rolling up under Rob for this response?

5 A. No. Well --

6 Q. No. You were still giving --

7 A. -- at the time, I was trying to give the service guys
8 direction.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Chris Hill, I was trying to give Chris Hill directions.
11 He's a service supervisor.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Chris was monitoring -- we were now starting to get some
14 calls.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And what we instructed them to do was -- our field
17 people had got out there -- call us and give it to us and we're
18 going to give it to this technician with us.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. So we had everybody bar testing when they got on --
21 whether they were inside or outside people.

22 Q. I see.

23 A. If they didn't have an inside leak, we had them bar
24 testing. If a customer stopped them, we checked it.

25 Q. Okay. Around the immediate site, how was the bar

1 testing conducted? Were you looking for something specific?

2 A. Well, we just wanted to check. Part of the procedure we
3 do when we respond to fires is we bar test all the way around the
4 foundation of -- you know, we --

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. -- we do sewer lines, we do service, we do the main, and
7 all the way around the foundation of the house, apartment,
8 whatever it may be.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So we wanted to continue that. So that's one of the
11 first things we do, which we kept some crews right there with us
12 to continue that.

13 Q. Okay. And that's what prompted the readings on the west
14 side of that apartment complex, I guess?

15 A. East side, maybe.

16 Q. I'm sorry, the east side.

17 A. Okay.

18 Q. Right. East side is what I meant. But you couldn't get
19 to the north side? Because I didn't see a lot of readings on the
20 north side.

21 A. Well, there were -- I don't -- let me get my north. The
22 north would've been where the main was.

23 Q. Right.

24 A. So we were not getting -- there was a lot of water from
25 the fire department and we just wasn't getting readings.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. What our first inkling was that we had something was
3 every now and then we'd see a bubble. I would see a bubble.
4 Robert saw a bubble, and I was going let's get our crews bar
5 testing. Well, we really wasn't getting any readings, but when
6 they started bar testing, we started getting some bubbles in the
7 hole.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. So as they were now found out there wasn't two
10 fatalities, that were still somebody alive under there, we had
11 realized we needed to dig. We kept bar testing while they were
12 doing that work because we didn't want to get an open hole and
13 more gas blow in while they were doing that. So we continued our
14 bar testing.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And that's when we sort of went up the east side --

17 Q. Right.

18 A. -- and was trying to do that bar testing. We had
19 already been around the building in the first, Max had bar tested,
20 and so we had kind of went around the foundation where we could.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And so, but that's what drove us around there. And then
23 when --

24 Q. So he did go -- he went to the south and the west as
25 well?

1 A. Yeah. Max went all up -- Max went all the way around
2 the whole --

3 Q. Oh, okay.

4 A. -- the whole --

5 Q. I hadn't heard that.

6 A. Now, he didn't have a flame pack, but Max was on the
7 move the whole time from the time we got there. Because when I
8 told him, you know, I didn't want to put the riser out right then
9 because of the fire that was west of us, Max continued to go
10 monitor sewers. There were some plastic plugs we pulled the lids
11 off of, cleanouts. I don't know what they were. He was just
12 checking everything and double-checking everything.

13 Q. When you first arrived on scene, did you -- were you
14 under the assumption of what the cause of the accident was or did
15 you have a preconceived idea of what you were responding to?

16 A. Well, I guess when I got there and saw debris
17 everywhere, I knew it wasn't a typical fire.

18 Q. But you didn't --

19 A. But didn't know the cause.

20 Q. You didn't know if it was internal or external? Okay.
21 I cut you off. Go ahead with your on-scene narrative.

22 A. And then, you know, as daylight came on and, you know,
23 we wanted to dig that hole there, you know, some of the -- a
24 couple of the crews that we had called in early, they had already
25 gotten there. And then from there, I sort of turned it -- Bill

1 Roberson came out. He is a construction supervisor. And at that
2 point I just really turned it over to Rob and Bill. This is what
3 they do every day and I said, hey, you all do what you all do.

4 Q. So Bill was on scene after the riser fire got put out?

5 A. Yes. Bill came up after that.

6 Q. Okay. Okay.

7 A. Because when I called for the superintendent, I was
8 trying to get some of their supervision out there as well to just
9 help monitor that and direct their crews.

10 Q. Okay. And at that point, you actually handed everything
11 over to the --

12 A. Yeah, I asked Rob and Bill to work with the construction
13 crews to get -- once they started digging down, they informed me
14 we had a broke main, and I asked them just to do what they do to
15 fix the main and they did.

16 Q. Okay. And you mentioned earlier when I asked about the
17 bar testing readings, you said it's part of your normal procedure
18 when you respond to accidents, I think you said?

19 A. Yeah, if we go -- if we get a fire call, if a fire
20 department calls us out on a fire, first thing we do is we meet
21 with the fire department and ask them how we can assist. Once we,
22 you know, the fire's out, then we start a bar test on every one we
23 go on, whether we suspect gas or don't suspect gas. That's just
24 part of our procedure is to do a bar test, and all the way around
25 the foundation to make --

1 Q. But is this a -- what is this procedure you're referring
2 to? Is this a operations procedure or accident --

3 A. It's just an operation -- just an accident procedure we
4 have that we just want to bar test every emergent fire we go on.
5 We just --

6 Q. What is that? Is that part of the OPM we have,
7 operations procedures?

8 A. It's not an OPM. This is just a procedure we have when
9 we respond. There's nothing written, but it says right there --

10 Q. Oh, oh, I'm sorry. This isn't a formal written
11 procedure?

12 A. No, it's one that --

13 Q. It's protocol?

14 A. -- we do every time we -- protocol, okay.

15 Q. Something you do? Okay. Is that what you're saying?

16 A. Right.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Every time we go on a fire, we bar test.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And document it.

21 Q. And document it. But was this documented? I thought
22 the readings from this bar hole test weren't documented. Do we
23 have --

24 A. Well, remember, at this, we couldn't get any bar
25 holes -- when all this was going on, there were no bar holes that

1 we could get up next to because of all of the water. We couldn't
2 get a reading from anything.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Now, when they went up on the east -- off the main, we
5 couldn't get readings there because of the water. They dug
6 because of the bubbles and found a broke line. Now, going up the
7 east side, there were some. I think at that point Ravi may have
8 come in -- somebody had come in and ask us, and I'm pretty sure it
9 was Ravi that asked me to document every reading we got, and Rob
10 had documented some readings up the east side.

11 Q. Okay.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Ravi, you want to?

13 BY MR. CHHATRE:

14 Q. Okay. I guess there was lot of, lack of -- I guess a
15 lot of time was gone when you arrived and the fire was put out.
16 Did you consider shutting off the main now that you know the
17 gas -- when you saw gas bubbling, you start keep to, you know,
18 trying to locate the service. Was there an option of shutting off
19 the main itself?

20 A. Well, we didn't -- I didn't see the bubbling until after
21 the riser was out, and that's when we were just walking. While
22 the riser was still burning, if I'm understanding you correctly,
23 while the riser was still burning, I asked Pete to go find the
24 sectional valves for me on MAGI Mobile, where he could look at
25 that and tell me where the valves, so we could be prepared if we

1 need to cut the main off, that we would already know where those
2 valves were while we were still looking for the service.

3 Q. Okay. But I guess my question, more direct question is
4 why the main was not -- why the gas flow in the main was not cut
5 off?

6 A. To start with?

7 Q. Yeah, to start with?

8 A. Well, it's --

9 Q. I mean, earlier you said you will not let somebody go in
10 because the fire was still burning. At that time, why the mains
11 are not cut off?

12 A. Well, the riser was still burning.

13 Q. Right.

14 A. And we just felt like that it was burning, that we were
15 safer with it burning while we were trying to locate the service.
16 It's -- you know, when you're out there and you're going to
17 sectionalize something, you know, the kind of weather we were in,
18 I wanted to take into consideration how many people would we cut
19 off. The riser was burning. My understanding was we were not on
20 a rescue anymore, so I left the riser burning.

21 And while we were trying to locate that, we were trying
22 to get the valves -- see where our valves were and we were also
23 trying to see if there was a service line ticket that would help
24 us find that service a little bit easier.

25 It didn't -- it wasn't a normal run. Most of the time

1 when we run a service, we kind of run straight to the -- a meter
2 set, and it was down west of us. And after doing the digging and
3 we went out to dig up everything, now I can understand why they
4 were having such a hard time with the sewer and dead water lines,
5 new water lines with, I guess, copper wire, where they could be
6 located, and -- you know, after the fact, you could -- they were
7 having trouble locating it, so --

8 Q. So your impression was that it was no longer a rescue
9 mission at that time?

10 A. Yeah, because when I think I was talking to Chief
11 Mardis, and I think that's who told me that there were two, I want
12 to say he told me there were two fatalities. And I don't remember
13 who told me that there possibly may have been a child. And I
14 found out later there wasn't a child, but I don't remember who
15 told me that.

16 Q. Now, with the bar hole testing, once the fire was out
17 and you could have access to building, there's only one reading
18 taken underneath the slab. Were there any other readings -- did
19 you guys consider taking gas reading in other buildings around the
20 rupture? Like the building on the north side, there is no bar
21 hole testings; bar hole testing was done across the street.

22 A. Okay. I'll back up just a little bit. After things
23 started settling and they got the people moved out of there and
24 the crowds were getting larger, I called and wanted the area flame
25 packed. I wanted the whole area that -- on each side of the

1 incident scene, there was a building north and a building south.
2 So I called and asked them to send what we call operators out and
3 ask them to flame pack the whole area for us, because I just
4 wasn't sure with what I was seeing out there, was there any other
5 damages. So we flame packed that. I'm not going to tell you they
6 put a bar hole down, but they used what we call a flame pack and
7 they flame packed that area building on each side.

8 And as time went on and the crowd -- you know, we just
9 kept hearing, you know, people would point people in my direction
10 and say, that's the gas man, that's the gas man; I smell gas, I
11 smell gas. So I then instructed them to survey the whole housing
12 project because with a crowd, I wanted them to know we were there
13 to make things safe. And I asked them at that point, now that
14 they've surveyed this, to survey the whole housing project. So --

15 MR. NICHOLSON: With a flame pack?

16 MR. GALLAGHER: With a flame pack, yes, sir.

17 Now, there's very possible, I can't tell you for sure,
18 if some calls came in at the later point and they were now putting
19 them in the guys' computers. There could have been bar testing if
20 somebody called an outside leak in; I wouldn't be aware of that.
21 You know, at the time, I wouldn't be -- they would've put it in
22 their laptop as a, what we call a code 2, and that's an outside
23 leak and they would have went directly to that house.

24 Chris was giving it out, but at some point in time, some
25 guys got some calls that wasn't out there with us. So I can tell

1 you all, where all the bar -- I can talk about bar holes around
2 the incident.

3 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

4 BY MR. CHHATRE:

5 Q. I forget, who's -- north group was lost -- there was
6 some -- north group was missing the bar hole test numbers?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Did anybody ever find it?

9 A. Rob Wall -- first day, Rob and I -- that when we went up
10 the east side of the building, there was an area up there that had
11 some gas readings on top of that plastic water line. We dug it up
12 because we wasn't sure what it was. We picked something up, and
13 when we dug it up it was a actual water line. And Rob documented
14 that.

15 Well, Rob got a call that same day, he had a death in
16 his family and he had to leave. And when we asked Rob for his
17 drawings and his readings, he recalled or he thought he left them
18 on the piling that we put out there. The document was lost.

19 Q. He had never really found it again?

20 A. No, sir.

21 Q. Now, were you in communication with the gas -- the
22 people who were doing the bar hole testing or the readings were in
23 the vicinity?

24 A. Where I got back involved is after you got there and we
25 started looking and you asked me to report every leak that we

1 found. And at that point, I am now involved in, when you all find
2 a leak, I would come and find you and take you to tell you we
3 found a leak. So I was back involved at that point.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. When Bill -- Rob was there, before he had to leave, and
6 Bill got there. Bill really read them. He would know about all
7 the bar testing.

8 Q. But did you hear about the high reading underneath the
9 slab?

10 A. I did. Bill, I want to say late afternoon, day one,
11 Bill walked me up to the slab and told me that he was getting a
12 reading there.

13 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

14 Q. Can you show me -- we got a lay out in front of us --
15 where that would've been? If you're looking, yeah, south?

16 A. All right. Which way is north? This is south?

17 MR. CHHATRE: This is north right here.

18 MR. GALLAGHER: Okay. That's the water main?

19 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

20 Q. No, actually it's upside down. North is towards you.

21 A. Where is my sewer line?

22 MR. CHHATRE: This is your north.

23 MR. GALLAGHER: Where is -- it's 80 -- that's going to
24 be -- all right, if this is unit 80, what are all these? Well,
25 that's the water line.

1 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

2 Q. Yeah, the red is the gas.

3 A. Is that where the riser was?

4 Q. Yes. Um-hum.

5 A. All right, Bill took me somewhere up in here off, I want
6 to say it was, it would be west of the riser.

7 Q. The riser?

8 A. And he told me that he got a gas reading. And in our
9 conversation, I understood it to be a very small reading. And
10 with us having a broke main out there earlier, I said okay, we got
11 some gas that's migrated up there, low reading, and I moved on.
12 At that point didn't think nothing else about it until we were
13 plotting leaks. And when we were plotting our leaks to send to
14 you guys, Bill came into the room and he said something about the
15 leak there. And when he said the reading, I said, well, Bill, I
16 don't think that's what you said out there that day. I said, I
17 think you told me we had a small reading there and with the broke
18 main, we had some migration. And that's when he said, no, I think
19 it was 90-something.

20 MR. CHHATRE: Ninety-eight or something.

21 MR. GALLAGHER: And at that point, I think -- Bob was
22 notified, everybody was notified that we -- that was there. But
23 he did make me aware on day one, but my communication, I thought
24 it was a smaller reading and just said with the broke main -- I
25 understand it now. Bill told me he monitored the leak, but he

1 didn't tell me that until now. I had no idea it was being
2 monitored. He said he monitored it for the next 2 days.

3 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

4 Q. Would that have changed anything about the response had
5 you --

6 A. Well, it wouldn't have with the response because, I
7 mean, it was over. But what it would have made me do at that
8 point was clearly -- even though we go all the way around the
9 foundation, I probably would have went all the way back around the
10 foundation again. And if that reading was there for 2 days, I
11 would have continued, okay, is there some other line here?

12 Now, in the course of -- and like, I know I'm all over
13 the place, but I'm trying to tell you everything that -- I went
14 over to a vacant apartment over there because I wanted to see how
15 the fuel lines ran. I just really couldn't tell from where we
16 were, so I went over to the building behind us that was open
17 because I wanted to see was there any fuel lines that might have
18 been down in the slab. So I went over there and just kind of
19 walked through it to seek out the gas lines, and I didn't see any
20 gas lines that went -- any fuel lines that went through the slab.

21 So but I was doing all this as we were moving. But if I
22 had've known that then, I probably would have just kept double,
23 you know, double-check around there to see did we have any other
24 lines that would've (indiscernible) --

25 Q. So in the apartment you went to, no fuel lines ran

1 through the slab. How did the fuel get to the water heater then
2 at the center?

3 A. Well, I -- let me check my, how I went through this.
4 The heater was in the front room and I want to say it came out the
5 ceiling.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. The range traveled down by the end of some cabinets.
8 And I think it might've went up to get into the ceiling to get
9 over to the heater. So I'm thinking stuff went through the
10 ceiling and --

11 Q. Okay. Top down?

12 A. -- and back down to it.

13 Q. Right, okay. Okay.

14 MR. NICHOLSON: Sorry, Ravi.

15 BY MR. CHHATRE:

16 Q. Now once you learn about the high reading, do you change
17 your mind about taking some additional readings on the sewer line
18 or whatever was available to do more bar hole testing?

19 A. Well, I didn't learn about the high readings for weeks,
20 when we were plotting the leaks for you guys. See, I never --
21 after Bill talked to me, I thought I heard low reading and
22 associated it with that. But that day out there, after we found
23 this, and as we were bar testing here and went up, you know, we
24 had some gas readings here, and that's what made us continue to go
25 this-a-way because we located something that we thought, okay, we

1 don't see a gas line going up this street, but for some reason we
2 got a reading. But when they got up beyond that tree -- I
3 remember a tree there. Once we got beyond the tree, we decided to
4 dig it up and just see what it was, and that's when we found that
5 it was a PVC water line, but it had a gravel, some type of gravel
6 bed that, you know -- but we had no more gas lines up there.

7 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

8 Q. I'm sorry, can you point on here, where did you expose
9 the water main? Did you say it was exposed?

10 A. The -- yeah, we --

11 Q. It's the blue on this map.

12 A. -- exposed a 3-inch water main that would've been I
13 guess this right here.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. This is the main. I got my building crossed up again.
16 We exposed --

17 Q. That's sewer. That's the water.

18 A. We were on this water line and somewhere past middle of
19 the building, we dug a hole and exposed it. And they came and got
20 me and showed it to me. They were going -- we have gas and PVC.
21 And I said, no. And I said, well, it's probably a water main. So
22 that's when the readings were taken up here that got lost. That's
23 where I think at that point you told us you wanted us to document
24 every reading, and Rob did. I saw his pad. And when he got the
25 call, he seems to think he laid it on that line and -- but it

1 would've been somewhere up in there that we exposed --

2 Q. Over the water?

3 A. Over the water.

4 MR. NICHOLSON: Is that, that's not on that layout you
5 provided, is it?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's on my (indiscernible).

7 MR. NICHOLSON: Is it? Oh, is it? Okay. I don't
8 remember seeing it. Okay.

9 BY MR. CHHATRE:

10 Q. Now with the cast iron main, with all your experience,
11 do you see a problem with that particular main, the quantity of
12 your leak rate or calls going up in the winter or is it kind of
13 random?

14 A. Well, I think in the winter I would say that, you know,
15 I guess my opinion is that we may have, you know, more leaks than
16 we would in the summer.

17 Q. The reason I ask you was not really -- we wouldn't ask
18 for opinion, but you have some long experience in the company with
19 leaks.

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Your opinion does --

22 A. That's in the wintertime, as to the leaks, yes, sir.

23 Q. -- matter a lot about (indiscernible).

24 Now, does that -- now your annual surveys are done when?
25 Or the leak surveys are done when?

1 A. I can't tell you the dates of the surveys. I know we do
2 cast iron, I believe, every 3 years.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. I don't know what year the survey was done here.
5 That's --

6 Q. No, okay, but at least like remember time frame like
7 month. Is it done in the winter, is it done in spring, or it kind
8 of depends?

9 A. I really don't know how they're given out to the
10 contractor. The survey, that's done by a different group, so --

11 Q. Now after the accident, was there any discussion about
12 doing the leak surveys more frequently on the cast iron or doing
13 them in winter? Were there any lessons learned meeting that you
14 were involved with?

15 A. I think, from what I've heard and -- I think we're going
16 to be doing some different things with multi-family housing and,
17 you know, with surveys, maybe more frequent with that.

18 Q. I guess after the accident, Alagasco as a company, did
19 anybody who responded -- and I'm going to call the first
20 responders from Alagasco side of it, did you guys have any meeting
21 to discuss what happened, what went right, what went wrong on this
22 accident?

23 A. Well, I mean, yeah, we've had meetings with Bob and the
24 group to sit down about, you know, what we had out there and --

25 Q. Any finding document, minutes that came out of that

1 meeting that you guys met and this was discussed or some kind of
2 document that came out?

3 A. I think it was just conversation of, you know, kind of
4 what we did out there.

5 Q. Okay. Anything significant that stuck with you that you
6 want to share with us or -- when you're at a meeting, what was
7 discussed, I guess?

8 A. Well, I mean, I just talked about things that I had
9 done, you know, responding to it. Can't tell you who was in the
10 meeting.

11 Q. Right.

12 A. You know, just -- and talking when we were putting maps
13 together, gathering up information, you know, to send.

14 MR. GARDNER: Yeah, we had several meetings related to
15 the information request that you --

16 MR. CHHATRE: Right.

17 MR. GARDNER: -- you provided, and that led to
18 discussions, obviously, about where the leaks were located, some
19 of the things I've already mentioned in earlier discussions.

20 MR. CHHATRE: That's all I have now.

21 MR. NICHOLSON: Keith's got nothing.

22 Nancy, you got questions for Dave?

23 BY MS. McATEE:

24 Q. Your services just deal with the outside gas line
25 services? Do your technicians ever deal with inside residences?

1 A. Yeah. The group that I manage now works from the meter
2 in and they deal with the inside leaks.

3 Q. What has been your experience with residents using other
4 methods of heating their home, i.e., their oven or things like
5 that?

6 A. We tell each customer that uses their oven that it's not
7 safe to use their oven, they shouldn't use their oven, and if we
8 see them using their oven, we recommend that they don't because
9 it's just not safe to use it. We don't feel it's safe.

10 Q. Do you have a written procedure or is that just
11 something that your technicians do, just know to do when they come
12 in and they see that scenario happening?

13 A. Yeah, it's just when they see it happening, they talk
14 about it. I mean, it's just a potential hazard and, you know, we
15 just want to make the customer aware of it and --

16 MS. McATEE: Thank you. That's it right now.

17 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

18 Bob, anything?

19 MR. GARDNER: I don't. Thank you.

20 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

21 Q. I got a couple follow-ups. Since you guys, since your
22 crew works with at the inside, from the meter inside, I was just
23 curious how a odor complaint that's called in to Alagasco is
24 handled internal. You know, if I'm inside my house, I smell gas,
25 I call you out, what is it that's going to happen?

1 A. Okay. When you call our emergency number, the rep takes
2 it and puts in our customer counting, the customer counting
3 system. It then, within seconds, I guess, goes over to what we
4 call RMS, our router.

5 Q. Okay?

6 A. It goes to our dispatch office and from there, our
7 dispatch office will see the leak and she will contact a -- we
8 kind of do it two different ways. We have some trucks that we
9 called forward people, first responders. They wait on
10 emergencies. So if they don't have one, they take that leak. It
11 goes to them in their laptop --

12 Q. Okay?

13 A. -- and they go respond to the leak. If all those
14 responders are busy, then they look at the closest responder that
15 may be on route at work, they call that technician, tell him they
16 got a leak, can he accept the leak? If the technician says yes,
17 then they put the leak in the technician's box. He accepts the
18 order and then heads to the leak. He'll leave the job that he's
19 on.

20 Q. When I call in, is the operator going to ask me anything
21 like do you smell a lot of gas or a little bit of gas or --

22 A. Yeah, there's questions they ask. They, you know, ask
23 them where they're smelling the gas, do they have pilots, are the
24 pilots on? I can't tell you everything they ask, but I know that
25 if they smell gas, they tell the customer that, you know, let us

1 disconnect the call. Once they get their questions, they ask them
2 to let us disconnect the call, just lay the phone down and leave
3 the residence or business.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. If a customer calls us and says that they smell gas but
6 they want us to come at 5:00 and it's 8:00 in the morning, we tell
7 the customer we've got to come out. And they'll say no, we don't
8 want you to come out. We tell them we're coming and we're going
9 to cut your gas off, and that's what we do. The customer, we go
10 over their house. If they're not home --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- we valve their meter off, we seal it, and leave them
13 a note on their door to call us when they return. If --

14 Q. Do you take bar test readings after that?

15 A. Yeah, they'll bar test the service. But if we get the
16 call and they say they're smelling gas, we're going.

17 Q. You're going. What if you can't find the source? You
18 get to the -- you've gone indoors, you can't find the source of
19 gas indoors, what does the protocol say? You smell it but you
20 can't find it.

21 A. Yeah. Well, we don't leave the scene until we find it.

22 Q. So that would mean what?

23 A. Well, that would mean we would call for the construction
24 area. If we were bar testing outside and we -- our service
25 technicians work from the meter in or we have to bar.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And they'll bar it. If they can't find it, they'll call
3 the construction area for a flame pack, which is more sensitive,
4 and they'll flame pack it. If we don't find it there, we start
5 each area.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. We're also trained to look at vents on roads and sewer
8 stacks to see if we see anything coming off, because sometimes
9 you'll have a bad safety on a furnace and it's spitting out --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- the roof and that's where it may be coming from. So
12 we don't leave until we find something. I mean, there has to be
13 some end to the call.

14 Q. Okay. I don't have anything else.

15 MR. NICHOLSON: Ravi?

16 BY MR. CHHATRE:

17 Q. Just a couple of follow-up questions. And what is, in
18 your experience, gas migrating through soil in the Gate City area,
19 what -- would the gas lose it's odor? Have you ever seen
20 anything, see a leak but no odor?

21 A. Uh-uh. I guess, depending on the type soil, I guess you
22 could lose an odor. I'm not sure I've ever found a leak that we
23 didn't have an odor come up, just in the experience when I was in
24 the field --

25 Q. Right.

1 A. -- or out meeting somebody. I don't know -- and I guess
2 it's possible, but I can't say in my experience I've ever been
3 where we found a leak but we didn't smell it.

4 Q. The reason I'm asking that question is because, you
5 know, you say you didn't smell the gas when you reached the
6 accident scene. So with the water --

7 A. Yeah. Well, I didn't, but there was a lot of water.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I mean, they were putting water and it was running on
10 top of the main. It was puddled. And we just wasn't smelling it.
11 When the water started settling is when I saw bubbles and that --
12 again, we started putting the holes. But there was so much water
13 in the ground, we couldn't get a reading, so -- but I did, out
14 there just for checking, I ordered an old romper (ph.) test in the
15 building I talked about that was vacant. I went out there and ran
16 a test on the whole room.

17 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

18 Q. Is that this?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And I just wanted to run that test.

22 Q. Where was that done, then? It was --

23 A. This would've been at the building --

24 Q. -- the exemplar (ph.) that we went to --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- that's south of us? Okay.

2 A. And it just was empty and we were able to get to a
3 inside line to disconnected it and get some gas type of reading.

4 Q. Which line did you disconnect to do it?

5 A. I want to say they did the, I believe, water heater. I
6 didn't oversee it. A crew did that and did the documentation on
7 it. I just asked them to do it.

8 Q. Okay.

9 BY MR. CHHATRE:

10 Q. With your almost 40-plus years' experience, now how
11 often do you see a gas migrating from a main 30, 40 feet, 50 feet
12 into the building? Have you ever had in your experience?

13 A. Yeah, over the years. I mean, I've seen gas migrate
14 and, you know, get -- be at a foundation. You know, that's one of
15 the reasons when we respond to fires that we won't go all the way
16 around the foundation because we don't want migration. Even
17 though our main may be on this side, we don't know what's over
18 there. So. I mean, there's -- I've seen migration, you know, just
19 from gravel beds. So, yes, in the years I've been out, I've seen
20 migration.

21 MR. NICHOLSON: We need -- Ravi, let's take 2 minutes.
22 We have some construction going on out there, I want to be sure --
23 okay. Go ahead.

24 BY MR. CHHATRE:

25 Q. Have you seen the gas migration in the Gate City area in

1 the past, since --

2 A. No. Not when I was out there, you know, both prior to
3 then.

4 Q. That doesn't have any explosion or fire, just complaints
5 of a gas odor and you'll see it -- the person maybe complaining
6 gas odor inside the building and the leak happens to be outside?

7 A. And that -- and I'm not going to say this happened in
8 the Gate City area. I've seen that in my career, where a customer
9 will say I smell gas in my bedroom and the meter may possibly be
10 right outside the window. And we go through the process of
11 checking inside the house and then we coming outside and check the
12 outside. If there was a leak, we would repair it.

13 Q. And what about the ground water? Would that impact the
14 kind of leaks you get in a certain area, depending upon the water
15 table? Because I saw in the Gate City on, I think, west side of
16 the exploded house, we were -- we had an indication and we dug up,
17 and I was there and I could see the water flowing over the pipe.
18 Is that -- is there something that impacts your frequency of
19 reading or do you factor the ground water into the overall
20 picture?

21 A. I'm not understanding.

22 Q. Okay. If you have a gas line pipe in a certain
23 location, do you pay attention in terms of your corrosion
24 mitigation or leak surveys where the ground water or water table
25 is when they're putting a reading --

1 A. That's an area I'm not in and I would not know of.

2 Q. Okay. But that is not a part of --

3 A. Well, I'm not --

4 Q. -- the frequency of leak survey? That would not --

5 A. No, I can't tell you that.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. I don't, I don't know if they take that into
8 consideration.

9 Q. That's pretty much it for me. Thanks.

10 A. Okay.

11 MR. NICHOLSON: Keith? He's shaking his head no.

12 Nancy?

13 BY MS. MCATEE:

14 Q. I just have one more question. If you have a resident
15 who calls 911, how are you notified?

16 A. We would be -- well, it could be one or two ways. Most
17 of the time the fire department calls us and we respond to their
18 call. And every now and then the fire department may just tell
19 the customer you need to call the gas company.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. They very possibly could valve a meter off or something,
22 but --

23 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

24 Q. Okay, I got one. Were you there -- we didn't talk about
25 when they actually uncovered the main and the crack. Were you

1 witnessing that?

2 A. I was there. I did not see the repair on the main.

3 Q. You didn't see the repair?

4 A. That they were making.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. I mean, they were in the --

7 Q. But you saw the main when it was first exposed?

8 A. Oh, yeah, I --

9 Q. Okay. Can you describe what you saw? I mean, because
10 we weren't there.

11 A. Well, there was a clamp on it when I saw it.

12 Q. Oh, okay. You saw it after the repair?

13 A. After the fact.

14 Q. I'm sorry.

15 A. Yes, after the repair was made.

16 Q. So you didn't see it exposed?

17 A. I did not see it exposed. No, sir.

18 Q. When you were -- I mean, you spent a long time as a
19 crewman and then a leaderman, right? Was part of that time spent
20 repairing pipe --

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. -- for leaks? Okay. Can you talk about a little bit
23 what did you see in your time in those roles? Did you -- what
24 were most of the leaks caused by in the cast iron systems? Can
25 you --

1 A. Well, I mean, I --

2 Q. Is there a typical --

3 A. -- I think through the time, you know, you see a cracked
4 main, you maybe see corrosion, damage by a contractor.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Joints, a lot.

7 Q. Okay. You can't speak to what made up the majority of
8 the calls you --

9 A. No.

10 Q. -- went to? Okay. Okay. All right. I don't think I
11 have anything else.

12 MR. CHHATRE: No, I --

13 MR. NICHOLSON: All right. No other questions? Okay.
14 We'll go off the record.

15 Thanks, Dave. I appreciate it.

16 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: ALABAMA GAS CORPORATION (ALAGASCO)
 NATURAL GAS RELEASE WITH IGNITION
 BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA
 DECEMBER 17, 2013
 Interview of David Gallagher

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-14-MP-001

PLACE: Birmingham, Alabama

DATE: July 16, 2014

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.

Karen Stockhausen
Transcriber