UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *
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MERRIMACK VALLEY RESIDENTIAL GAS *
FIRES AND EXPLOSIONS * Accident No.: PLD18MR003
SEPTEMBER 13, 2018 *
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Interview of: ROBERT McCABE
Columbia Gas of Massachusetts

Northern Essex Community College
Lawrence, Massachusetts

Monday,
September 17, 2018

APPEARANCES:

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I N T E R V I E W

MS. GUNARATNAM: We are here today to conduct an interview regarding the natural gas explosions in Lawrence, Massachusetts, with regard to investigation PLD18MR003. It's September 17th. We are doing the interviews at 420 Common Street, Lawrence, Massachusetts.

And my name is Rachael Gunaratnam, R-a-c-h-a-e-l, G-u-n-a-r-a-t-n-a-m, hazmat investigator. And I am here with --

MR. McCABE: Robert McCabe.

MS. GUNARATNAM: With? Company?

MR. McCABE: Columbia Gas, Massachusetts.

MS. GUNARATNAM: Thank you. And you are represented with?

MR. FENNELL: Ryan Fennell, Wilson Elser Law Firm.

MS. GUNARATNAM: Can you spell your name?

MR. FENNELL: Sure. It's F-e-n-n-e-l-l.

MS. GUNARATNAM: Thanks. For the transcribers.

So, and then we'll go around the room.

MS. DOIRON: Sheila Doiron, S-h-e-i-l-a, Doiron, D-o-i-r-o-n, with Columbia Gas.

MS. MOTLEY: Angela Motley with the Department of Public Utilities. A-n-g-e-l-a, M-o-t-l-e-y.

MR. CYR: Matt Cyr with the Department of Public Utilities. M-a-t-t-h-e-w, C-y-r.

MS. HALLIDAY: And Julie Halliday, U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Pipeline Safety. J-u-l-i-e, H-a-l-l-i-

d-a-y.

MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right.

INTERVIEW OF ROBERT McCABE

BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

Q. So can I call you Rob?

A. Sure.

Q. So can you go ahead and describe what you were doing on September 13th? Actually, backtrack. Can you actually describe your experience as a field operations supervisor, your qualifications, years of experience?

A. So I started in the industry in 1995 with a company out of Lowell, Massachusetts, called Colonial Gas. They were since merged and acquired by KeySpan, which is currently doing business as National Grid. I left KeySpan right as National Grid was acquiring them, and I went to work for the Department of Public Utilities.

Q. Massachusetts?

A. In Massachusetts. I have -- was with the department for just shy of 8 years. And then I went to work for a company in Chicago. At the time it was People's Gas, which changed to Integrys Energy, currently doing business as the Wisconsin Electric Group, or Corp, I think. I was only there for about 10 months, and came back to work for Columbia Gas in Massachusetts. Been here for just over 3 years.

Q. And how did you start with Columbia Gas?

A. I came in as a field operations leader, FOL supervisor.
Q. And what are your certifications or qualifications?
A. Like as?
Q. OQ. Do you guys have like a --
A. I have all my OQ's as required by NGA.
Q. Okay. So why don't we go back to September 13th. Go back to the point where you were first notified about what happened, and what did you hear, who contacted you, that kind of thing.
A. So there was a contractor crew doing a job unrelated at 24 North Lowell Street, Methuen. The job was going late. Not my crew, but I was just interested in the job.

So myself and the -- one of the field engineers, Veena Kothapalli, she and I went out there just to kind of get eyes on it because they were going to be cutting out a section of 6-inch high pressure plastic main. At the time they were just digging and prepping.

While I was standing there, maybe little after 4 o'clock, I don't know the exact time, she got a phone call. I could only hear her side of the conversation, obviously, and the first comments were there's fire coming out of the chimney. And my head snapped, and I said, where are they? And I guess the call was dropped; they called back right away and said that there is multiple gas odors, and someone said that they thought there was an explosion. I said, where are they? She said at the -- the tie-in crew was at the intersection of Salem and South Union in

Lawrence.

I hopped in my truck and started heading there. Obviously, there was a lot going on, so there was a lot of traffic, lot of people, lot of, I guess you could call it havoc that was going on. As I was going there, a police officer from the Methuen PD flagged me down, stopped me, and told me to follow him. I followed him to Inman Drive in Lawrence. It's a kind of a dead-end street where there's some apartment buildings.

When we showed up, there was -- the buildings were on fire. He went into one of the buildings to evacuate. I went into the other building to evacuate. Pounding on doors just telling people get out, get out. We then evacuated the third building. Once we got everyone out, I told him, I said, I need to get to Salem and South Union. That's where there is a crew working.

Started going there. I was in bumper-to-bumper traffic. There was another officer who caught my attention. I said, I need to get over there. He gave me an escort. And then I arrived at Salem and South Union where the construction tie-in crew was working. The crews don't work for me, but I was on the scene. I was supposed to be off the clock, but -- so I went out there.

So I met with the crew, said what's going on? And then it -- do you want me -- should I go on from there or --

Q. Yes, keep going.

A. Oh, okay.

Q. What time was that?

A. I was over at Inman for a while. Maybe 5, maybe quarter of 6, maybe 5:30. I'm not exactly sure. I'm sure we can provide the time.

Q. Yeah.

A. All right.

Q. So did you enter in a time like where you're going?

A. No. I wasn't even supposed to be working.

Q. Oh.

A. But also when this happened, I wasn't just going to walk away.

Q. Sure.

A. I wanted to jump in, see what I could do to help. So --

Q. Okay.

A. So I just went over there. We don't have like tickets where you go en route or on time as management. That's -- the union personnel, so -- but I got there, and my boss was there, the OCM. I met up with the tie-in crew. I said, what have you guys got going on? They said we're just doing a low pressure tie-in. I said, is it a confirmed low pressure to low pressure? They said, yes. I said, what's going on? I said, it looks like there's an overpressurization; is there high pressure? They said that there was some rushing gas.

I then went to my OCM. I said, I'm going to hop on the outside low pressure riser at 78 Salem Street to see if I can get an idea as to what the pressure is in that low pressure system. I

grabbed my -- there's a pipefitter who was there as well, who had -- he actually just showed up. I asked him to breakdown the riser and put a Kuhlman gauge on it to let me know what he had for pressure. When he put the Kuhlman gauge on, he got -- it looks like it was approximately 2½ pounds.

At that point I went to my OCM, my manager, and I said, we just got 2½ pounds at the outside low pressure riser. I said, we have high pressure, we have elevated pressure on our low pressure system. I said, unless we know where it's coming from, we need to lock and shut down the system. I told him that when I left Inman and I was driving to there, which is a couple blocks away, I passed several fires, one building that was completely engulfed. I said, we need to shut down the system. And he said, okay. I called the engineer, Veena, who had been going back to the shop to her desk. I told her that we need to isolate this entire system, and to get me the valves to isolate and shut it down.

There was a lot of phone calls en route and driving and while I was out there in the buildings, so I did contact a lot of people. One of my crews, distribution crews called me, said, hey, I'm looking on the news; what's going on? Do you need help? I said, yes. I said, get everyone, bring them all in. They're all off the clock, but they all came in.

So when I was waiting for the critical valves, my guys slowly start trickling in. They were pipefitters. Pretty much everyone who saw it, they didn't wait to get asked to call in, they just

started coming in.

So, and then Veena gave me, emailed me the list of critical valves to isolate the system. I met with all the guys that were out there that had the gate valve wrenches to shut off these critical valves. I gave them all valve assignments. I told them to go to the -- I gave them the address and the type and size of the valve. I said, go there, locate, clear the valve, call engineering, confirm that you're in fact on the right valve. Once they confirm that you're in fact on the right valve, shut it and call me so I can document the time.

That went on for -- at the time it seemed like forever, but they were closing them pretty quick. I did document all times. So we do have those.

Q. Okay.

A. I gave them all to them, so --

Q. So you started around what time, when you started doing the valve assignments and asking them to isolate the system?

A. I think that's on a timeline. I don't, I don't think I have the time that I wrote when I arrived. Just -- oh, I got an email from engineering at about 5:27, 5:28. So it was shortly after that, that I called engineering, and I confirmed the list. I said, I just want to make sure we're looking at the same list. I went through the address. I asked them to give me the size and material of the valve, because the list consisted of the two intersecting streets of the critical valve identifier. So I

received these -- I probably had pits; there's multiple valves. So I asked, I said, at this intersection she said it was a 4-inch steel valve, this intersection was this, this and this. So I confirmed, I wrote it all down. So that took a couple minutes. And then that's when I started giving out the valve assignments. So --

Q. Okay. And so how -- at that first notice, how big was the block, the neighborhood block that you were isolating?

A. It was the entire South Lawrence low pressure system.

Q. Okay. And do you know in mileage how big that is?

A. At the time I wasn't worried about mileage. I wanted to isolate and shut down the system. I didn't want it to build.

Q. Right.

A. The more it builds up, the worse it's going to get. So --

Q. So the entire South Lawrence --

A. Low pressure system.

Q. Low pressure system. Okay. So you identified already on a sheet where those valves were?

A. She has sent me an email. So I had the email opened up on my phone with the list. I actually hand wrote on a piece of paper her list as well as the size and material of the valve.

Q. Okay.

A. Because the size and material wasn't on the original email, just the address. But a lot of these are at reg pits and there's multiple valves.

Q. Yeah.
A. So I wanted to make sure we were on the right valve.
Q. Ryan, we need a copy of that email. I don't know if they've already requested it but --
MR. FENNELL: Yeah.
MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.
MR. FENNELL: I'll make sure we can get --
MS. GUNARATNAM: Just confirm if we requested it already.
MR. McCABE: Yeah, it was just -- the street is Harden and Haverhill, and so I confirmed that Harden at Haverhill, and what the valve was and what the material -- what size and material was so we had the right valves.
BY MS. GUNARATNAM:
Q. Right. Yeah. Who was the email from again?
A. Veena Kothapalli.
Q. How do you spell that?
A. V-e-e-n-a. V-e-e-n-a. I'm not even going to venture a guess on Kothapalli. Sorry.
Q. That's okay.
A. Oh, I may have it in my email.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She's an engineer. She's an engineer.
MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.
BY MS. GUNARATNAM:
Q. She was the engineer you were with at Inman?
A. No. She was the engineer that I was with at North Lowell.

Q. At North Lowell.
A. Yeah. I left, and then the officer brought me to Inman.
Q. Okay.
A. I have her email. I can give the spelling of it.
Q. So the tie-in crew that you were dealing with was --
A. I don't have the email. I do, but this only stores up to so many.
Q. That's okay. I'll get the spelling.
A. Okay.
Q. But the tie-in crew that you were with in Salem --
A. In South Union.
Q. South Union. That was a tie-in crew. Was she with you there?
A. No.
Q. Oh.
A. No. She went back to the office.
Q. Oh, okay.
A. To start looking at the system.
Q. So when you got the call, were you at Inman or South --
A. We were at North Lowell Street with the --
Q. North Lowell. North Lowell, sorry.
A. So there's two contractors. There's one that we were just --
Q. Checking out.
A. -- checking out, and then the one that was the tie-in crew at Union and South Lowell.

Q. Okay.
A. Salem and South Union. I'm sorry.
Q. Salem and South Union.
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And you got the call at Salem and North Lowell?
A. Correct.
Q. Yeah.
A. 24 North Lowell. Yes, right in front of the Irish Cottage.
Q. Okay. And then when you were at Salem and South Union, then you left in a -- a Methuen PD flagged you down?
A. Yeah.
Q. And he took you to where?
A. Inman.
Q. Inman. He took you to Inman. Okay. And then after Inman, you were there for a bit, and then you went to meet up with a tie-in crew somewhere else?
A. At Salem and South Union.
Q. Okay.
A. That was my original destination before I got detoured.
Q. You went back. Okay.
A. Well, I was heading there, but I never got there because I got detoured.
Q. Oh, I see.
A. So once I was done with the officer, I continued going to Salem and South Union.

Q. Okay. And then, okay, so then you went -- you were able to finally catch up with the crew at Salem and South Union?
A. Correct.
Q. Okay. How far away was South -- or Salem and South Union from a regulator station?
A. I do not know that.
Q. Okay. And, okay, so let's go back. You started then turning off the low pressure system. Do you know what time that was completed?
A. I do. It was -- I had -- so I was writing down the times. Kind of, I did -- the email just had the streets, so she gave me the size and material. So as the guys went out, they would locate, clear the valve, call her, confirm that it is in fact the right valve, and then they would shut it and call me. So they started closing them. The last valve was closed at 7:17 p.m. I then called engineering and confirmed that everything on her list was in fact what we needed to shut down to attain a complete shutdown of the system. So I had all valves off as of 7:24 p.m., after I confirmed.
Q. Who from engineering did you speak to?
A. Veena.
Q. Veena. Okay.
A. We talked a lot that day.
Q. Okay. And so once you confirmed that, what happened after that?

A. I asked her to get me locations at the extremities of the system so I could send pipefitters out to the risers to verify that the pressure was not being backed there from somewhere else, and that the pressure was either coming down or gone.
Q. So you wanted to additionally confirm that the pressure was --
A. I wanted to get to the extremities of the system to put gauges on the risers to make sure that I wasn't being back-fed and we missed a connection or there was something else going on. I wanted to confirm I had a full lockdown.
Q. Okay. And so describe that. Where did you go?
A. It was a lot. I did the best I could to write down as much as I could, but --
Q. Yeah, that's great.
A. -- I was -- I knew Angie was going to be asking me all these questions, so I was trying to get it all for you. I was trying to get it all for you.
MS. MOTLEY: I appreciate that.
MS. GUNARATNAM: Hopefully, I'm covering everything.
MS. MOTLEY: No, you are.
MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.
MS. MOTLEY: I'm hoping I'll have some questions. I'm trying to think of what else can I ask. I wanted to at least --
MR. McCABE: So I was still out in the field when she was gathering the list, and I had called one of the pipefitters and I

said, grab all the pipefitters, go into engineering and see Veena. She's gathering you a list of addresses at the extremities of our system. I want to verify -- I want to find a riser, get a gauge on it. I want to verify that the system is coming down or is completely down. I want to make sure I'm not being back-fed.

So they all went in there to meet up with her. By the time I got in there, they had pretty much all gotten the addresses and had gone out to the field for the initial group. I have a whole bunch of addresses. You want me to read them all or --

BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

Q. How many do you have?

A. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. Nine.

Q. Okay. So you went to nine. So, yeah, if you can -- you can provide those later.

A. It started out with, I think, five, and then we wanted to make sure that we completed -- so we added a couple more and started moving guys.

Q. And those are outside the low pressure system --

A. These are the -- on the lower pressure system, but the extremities.

Q. Extremities. Okay.

A. So I wanted to make sure I was on the same system, verifying that that system was in fact coming down or down and not being back-fed.

Q. So you started with five --

A. I think it was five or six.
Q. Okay.
A. And then we started having -- then we started adding a couple others just to kind of -- it was like a redundancy.
Q. Okay. And you put -- in that process you were putting gauges?
A. We were going to outside risers. You shut off the riser. You put your test fit on, and you verify what the pressure is. I think they were all using Kuhlman gauges.
Q. Kuhlman gauges. Okay. And what were the readings saying for all nine?
A. Say, for instance, numbers 2 through 16, it's a big building, Shawsheen and Lawrence, as of 9:23, I had zero inches water column. I had a guy over on 94th South Union in Lawrence. At 9:43, he said that he had zero inches water column. And then there were a couple zeros, and then there were a couple quarter of an inch water column, and slowly starting down. So it was like the line pack was starting to bleed down.
Q. Okay. So when did you finish all those nine addresses?
A. As of, I think -- they were all pretty much down to --
(Buzzing sound.)
MR. McCABE: Can I shut this off?
BY MS. GUNARATNAM:
Q. Sure.
A. It's driving me nuts. I knew that was going to happen too.

That one's down. And that one's down.

So they were giving me updates throughout. They were pretty much all down to zero or a quarter of an inch and dropping slowly throughout the -- between, I want to say 8:30, 9, and 11:01. They were all pretty much zero or a quarter of an inch and dropping. There was one that was at a half-inch water column. It was fluctuating between a half and three-quarter on one. It was just kind of like -- it was a weird one. The fact that it never got to zero made me wonder if we in fact had 100 percent shutdown. I figured if it was 5, 6 inches, I would assume we were being back-fed. So I figured 1-inch water column was maybe something was leaking by. I had M&R pull out and lock in all these reg stations to confirm 100 percent shutdown.

Q. All 14?

A. Correct. Fourteen, correct.

Engineering -- I mean, the M&R group indicated that they had locked in all the stations. So I actually went out to this address to see the pipefitter to see if it was -- if there was pressure behind it or if it was just like bleed-out. And it presented like there was actually something feeding it. So I went back into the shop. I'm sorry. I didn't. I actually took a pipefitter, and I went to -- I sent one to the next street over, on South Bowden Street, to verify that pressure, and I took one up to Thomas Drive in Methuen -- I'm sorry, Lawrence, to get pressures on both sides of that street. And we were -- all three

of us were seeing a 1-inch water column.

At that point, I went -- we opened up some purges at the risers, and to see if we could bleed it down. Because this was kind of like the dead-end of a system. It was at the top of a hill. So I just wanted to know if it was stuck or whatnot. And it wasn't coming down. So I went back into the office. I met with engineering. I met with Maggie, the manager of -- I don't know what Maggie's -- what's Maggie's --

MS. DOIRON: Maggie Cousineau.

MR. McCABE: Is she the -- what's her title?

MS. DOIRON: Manager of systems ops.

MR. McCABE: Systems Ops.

MS. DOIRON: Yeah. And Cousineau is C-o-u-s-i-n-e-a-u.

MR. McCABE: Yeah. To confirm with her guys that they in fact did lock in all 14 stations. Apparently as a result of all the conversations that went around, they had informed us they had locked in 10 of the 14 stations.

BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

Q. Ten?

A. Ten of the 14.

Q. Okay.

A. So I got a list of the remaining four. And I know that the crew at one of them notified me that they had a hard time with the valve, turning it, but they thought that they had it 100 percent shut. So that was my starting point of -- and that was on the

list of those four that hadn't been locked in.
Q. What was the name of -- what street?
A. That's the -- it's titled the Mass LP.
Q. Okay.
A. Critical valves.
Q. That's the name of the reg station?
A. Yeah. That's what it's identified in our system, the Mass LP. It's more (indiscernible) I think it's just the low pressure system only.
Q. Oh, okay.
A. But I wrote down Mass --
Q. Mass LP. Okay.
A. So that was my first focus. I sent a pipefitter out there, and he called me and said that he could hear the reg pit running. I was in engineering at the time. I asked them for the downstream isolation valve. So we, I -- he -- the valve was visible. I sent a street crew over to assist him, a plant crew. I don't know what people call them. Distribution crews.

There was a 6-inch plastic valve on the downstream -- no, on the low pressure side. Once they closed that valve, the regular pit --- the regulator pit shut off. I still had a pipefitter at the address that we were getting a 1-inch water column. He called me and said that he's at zero. He sent me -- he took a picture of it, and sent me a -- he sent me a picture. Honestly, I said it's a thing of beauty, because I was trying to find a 1-inch water

column. So --
Q. Right.
A. And the fact that we found it right on our first try.
Q. We'll need a picture -- that picture, that last picture.
A. I have it. I can send it to you. Right there.
Q. And so he sent you the picture, and that meant it was closed off completely?
A. Everything was there, yeah.
Q. Right. Was that the last that you had to worry about?
A. Well, there was, I mean -- well --
Q. With closing off the system and --
A. Oh, yeah, yeah. That was my, okay, the system is 100 percent shut down.
Q. Okay. And then what time was it?
A. I got -- the valve was shut off at, I believe it was 6:26 or 6:27 a.m., Friday morning.
Q. That was when he sent you the text message?
A. Yeah. I think it was 6:26, 6:27.
Q. Okay. On Friday morning?
A. A.M., correct.
Q. A.M. Okay. So after that?
A. I went in and, obviously, there was -- when this happened everyone was in. There was people everywhere. So I just went in, and I just informed everyone that all of our verification locations are in fact at zero.

Q. Okay. And that was around?
A. 6:26, 6:27 a.m.
Q. When you went into the office or --
A. No, no. I was already in the office.
Q. Oh, okay.
A. They were feeding the information back to me.
Q. Oh, I see.
A. Because I was in with engineering.
Q. Right. Oh, okay. I see. Who was the name of the guy who was sending you the text message?
A. He's a pipefitter. The picture you mean?
Q. Yeah.
A. Mark Vigint.
Q. Mark Vigint?
A. Vigint -- V-i-g -- int.
Q. Okay.
A. I can look him up, if you want.
Q. No. That's good. Okay. So after everything was confirmed, shut off, then continue with what did you do after that?
A. Took a deep breath.
Q. Put that in the official record.
A. I mean, at this point I'm up over 24 hours, so -- but at least we got it shut down. I was in the office -- I'm trying to think what I was doing. What was I doing after that? There was just so much going on. I think I was told to go home. Like an

hour later, I was told to go home because I had been up. I get into work at 5 a.m. So this -- I did my regular workday. This happened after work and now we're in the following day. So I think I was told to go home. I didn't do anything in relations to this.

Q. Oh, okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. So you were relieved around 7:30, 8?

A. 7:30, 8 o'clock.

Q. Yeah.

A. Yeah. Had a cup of coffee, and I think everyone was talking just in general.

Q. Okay. So did you return?

A. I returned back at -- I think I was asked to come back at -- I'm trying to think because the days all washed together. So Thursday into Friday; I went home. I think I came back at 5 p.m., 6 p.m. I think we had to be there at 6, and I got in around 5.

Q. On Saturday or Friday?

A. Friday night.

Q. Friday night. Okay.

A. Friday night. It was like 5:30, 6 o'clock p.m. Just to get my assignment as to how things are going to proceed going forward.

Q. Okay. And what did they ask you to do?

A. They had a whole staging area, setup area, as to shutting down the system, I guess, shutting off meters and all that stuff.

Q. So you were getting direction. Was this at Marston? Is it Marston Street, the staging area?
A. I can't --
Q. That's okay.
A. I'm trying to think when we moved over to the North Andover Shopping Plaza. I don't know if that was that night or the next night. They all blend together.
Q. Yeah.
A. Did we go to -- trying to think when -- Friday. So it happened Thursday into Friday. Friday night were we working out of the North Andover?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think you were probably there by Friday night.
MR. McCABE: By Friday night, yeah, yeah. I must have been over at the North Andover Mall, Plaza, on Winthrop Street.
BY MS. GUNARATNAM:
Q. Okay. So when you went to the staging area, what were you asked to do?
A. We were -- we all had just teams of two, and we were going to start grabbing lists and going to start doing shutdowns.
Q. Outside of what you already did?
A. Yeah. I don't know what happened during the day, but when I got there, that's what the plan was, was the guys who I was with were going to grab some lists, start doing shutdowns.
Q. Okay. So where did you start shutting down?

A. They actually had -- held us aside for, I guess, maybe PR work, so all my guys could -- they had all been up for 30 hours, so I don't know if they just kind of let us hang out and do like emergency response for grade 1's and whatnot or PR response.
Q. Okay.
A. So we kind of hung out there until they needed us.
Q. So did you respond to any grade leaks, grade 1, grade 2?
A. That night?
Q. Yeah. When -- Friday evening when you returned to work.
A. We got a couple calls. Trying to think. That might be in my other folder. I have -- pads of paper. So that was -- yeah, I don't have them off top of my head.
Q. Okay. Do you remember if any of them were grade 1's?
A. The one that I do remember was we got a call, I guess, an Eversource text. I had gotten like -- I don't know the address. I just remember the call. Had gotten like, I think, 3 or 4 LEL in a manhole.
Q. Okay.
A. That they vented out. I sent one of my guys over to assist and take a look at it. He actually ended up writing it up as either a grade 2 or grade 3, because by our standards it's 4 percent -- if it's sustained 4 percent gas or less, it's -- in a single substructure that's not connected to anything else, it's considered a grade 2 leak.
Q. Okay. So then you continued on to do response, basically, to

any --
A. Yes.
Q. -- odor or leak. Yeah. And how long did that go to? How long was your shift?
A. We were working 6 to 6. 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.
Q. Okay. And so you stopped at 6 a.m., Saturday morning?
A. 6 a.m. I sent all the guys home. Actually, I think we all went home. We were -- and then we then came back at 2 o'clock that -- so that was 6 a.m. We came back at 2 p.m. that day, and worked 2 to 10, with the understanding that going forward we were going to be working 7 a. to 7 p. to kind of put us back on that daytime schedule because we got flipped upside down by the long night.
Q. Right. Okay. We'll stop there. Now probably going into operations. So I wanted to go back in that first night when you were, you know, responding to the incident. Did you have any interaction with the fire department?
A. I never even saw a firefighter.
Q. Okay.
A. I went to the jobsite. Obviously, that's -- was the likely location of the overpressurization. There was no one there. I'm assuming they were responding to the fires and whatnot elsewhere. So there wasn't nothing there because there was nothing going on at the intersection; they were everywhere else. Normally, if they were there, I would go up and introduce myself: I'm Rob McCabe,

Columbia Gas. If it's a -- if it's something I can do for them or do they need us to do something or assist. Just kind of put like a point of contact.

Q. Okay. And were you ever asked to try to touch base with any of them?

A. Usually they're there or we're there, and then they come.

Q. Okay.

A. So like if, say for instance, an example is if there's, say, a fire and the gas -- and they call the gas company, we come out, and we say Columbia Gas. We're here to assist you; do you need us to do anything? They either say stand by or is there a curb valve; can you shut it off? And we work under their direction.

If, say, there's a damaged facility, and we get there and then they show up, they'll come up to us, and we'll let them know, this is what we got, this is the situation. We try and team together as to how we need to address the situation.

Q. Right. Okay. So you will -- normally your process is they will call you guys, dispatch will call or firefighters will call for you guys, to Columbia Gas, and then you respond to that location?

A. Well, I mean, if it's just a -- if it's like a house fire, they may call us, and then we'll get there when they're there. If it's, say, like a third-party damage or say like an odor complaint, and we're there before them, then they come. So pretty much whoever pulls on site, we make it a point to. But I know any

time there's like a third-party damage or release of gas, we're calling 911, calling them anyways.

Q. Okay. Do you ever get calls from residents?

A. Like --

Q. For smelling gas?

A. Oh, directly? I don't. I think they all just go through the emergency line.

Q. I mean, the process of like how would a resident, if they smell gas, what's their process of calling you guys?

A. Well, if they don't have our emergency line, they usually dial 911. And then the fire department will have a contact to us.

Q. So you guys have an emergency line. Where is this -- how would a customer find an emergency line?

A. It's on the bills. It's on the website. It's -- I think it's part of our public awareness program, all the pamphlets and advertisement for if you smell gas.

Q. Yeah. Were you getting a lot of gas calls, gas odors after you shut down the system?

A. I believe -- yeah. I believe so. I'm not in the integration center, but my understanding was that there was quite a few.

Q. Okay. But you didn't respond personally to any of those?

A. I -- no, no. That's the bargaining union or --

Q. Okay. So you said you didn't see any firefighters that whole night because you were shutting down the system and they were responding.

A. Well, like -- I mean, when I left Inman, I was driving. There were firefighters; I did talk to that officer. I did see them throughout, but not as a we were responding to this address for this something.
Q. Sure.
A. Stuff was just popping up everywhere.
MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right. Angela?
BY MS. MOTLEY:
Q. Can you just tell us a little bit about your responsibility, your -- as a supervisor?
A. Oh. My official shift, I am typically the 2 to 10, the second shift supervisor. The last couple months I've been working first shift because the first shift supervisor has dislocated his shoulder and had surgery. So I've been working daytime distribution, which is the maintenance department, leak emergency response, customer requests, stuff like that.
Q. Can you tell us your area of coverage?
A. We cover, we service, called Lawrence Division: Lawrence, Methuen, Andover, North Andover.
Q. Okay.
A. Everything that the Lawrence Division services.
Q. Do you have any interaction with the construction crews?
A. Like, in general, like on a daily basis? So the construction crews, they are actually on the distribution roster, but during the summer they stay with construction. We don't use them for

anything because they have customer appointments and tie-ins and whatnot. During the wintertime when construction is slow, they will, if they don't have work, they will come back and they will work in our department.

Q. Okay. Are the contractors allowed to work on live gas?

A. That is new construction.

Q. So -- okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. Sometimes I would see that the -- in other operators, that the construction company contractor would do the work.

A. The live gas.

Q. And then have the --

A. A tie-in crew do it?

Q. Um-hum. That's not the case here?

A. We do have a tie-in crew.

Q. Okay.

A. I don't know if they just do plastic tie-ins. I don't know if they do maybe the steel and the Mueller. That would be up to -- you'd probably be better off asking someone in construction.

Q. Okay. Regarding the incident, you said that you were at a construction site North Main?

A. North Main, 24 North -- I'm sorry -- North Lowell.

Q. North Lowell. And then the call was made to the engineer on site?

A. Correct.

Q. What was said or directed you to go into the site of the tie-in on South Union?
A. That was the -- the phone call was from the tie-in crew, so I figured that would be a good starting point.
Q. So the tie-in crew called the engineer?
A. And said -- again, I only heard half the conversation. She repeated what he said, and then she said, there's gas coming out of the chimney. There's fire coming out of the chimneys. Then I guess the call was dropped, and another call had come.
Q. Do you know if the engineers are always on construction sites?
A. Not always, but they will go out. They like to see and learn, and just verify that what's going on. But I wouldn't say always, but that's something maybe you should -- you might want to follow with them because I do see them out a lot. Not necessarily always.
Q. Can you tell us about the -- when you arrived at the site of the tie-in, you said you went to 78 Salem Street to check the pressure.
A. Um-hum.
Q. What's -- can you tell us about the proximity to the actual work where the crew was doing the tie-in to where you actually checked the reading?
A. Where the tie-in hole was, it was -- that address was maybe four doors down from the tie-in hole, approximately, four to five

doors down. And it was an outside low pressure meter fit.
Q. So when you arrived at the site you spoke to the tie-in crew?
A. Yes.
Q. And what did they say exactly to you at that time?
A. I asked them, I said, what have you guys got going on? They said, we're just doing a low pressure tie-in.
Q. And then --
A. I said, this is confirmed low pressure to low pressure? And they said yes.
Q. I think you mentioned something about a sound? You heard something?
A. I thought one of them had said -- I'm trying to think if it was either on Veena's call. Actually Veena's, because the call was dropped, and then she got another one, and then someone had said that there's a lot of gas. So I'm assuming that was rushing. But I -- the crew out there, I don't believe said that they heard rushing gas. So I may have been confused there.
Q. At that time when you arrived, was the tie-in complete or they were in the process of? Did you happen to notice?
A. I honestly didn't even notice. I just -- I verified what they were doing, and they said that they were doing a low pressure tie-in.
Q. Did you smell any gas? Anything at that time?
A. I actually did not smell gas.
Q. You didn't smell gas? You didn't hear anything?

A. No.
Q. One of the things you talked about was the isolation of the low pressure system, and identifying the critical valves. And the critical valves for this particular system are all located at the regulator stations?
A. I believe, I believe so. I had one station, two station, three stations. I had two valves at a station. I believe there were all at regulator stations. Yeah.
Q. And do we have --
A. The last valve, that 6-inch plastic valve that we closed on the outlet to lock in that one that was passing, that I don't think is a critical valve. I think it's a distribution valve. I think it's titled distribution valve.
Q. So total number of regulator stations that were --
A. I was told there was a total of 14 stations and 15 valves. Fifteen? Fifteen.
Q. And that includes the distribution --
A. No, 16 -- 15 critical valves. The 16th valve is that distribution valve. So one regulator station had two valves.
Q. Two critical valves?
A. We were told to shut down two valves. There was a 6-inch steel and then there was a 6-inch plastic.
Q. Which station was that?
A. Four. I would have to look it up in my email what number 4 was.

Q. So just indicate number 4?
A. Yeah.
Q. For the location?
A. Yeah. So she sent me an email. There's -- broken out in like Lawrence, and I think it was North Andover, then it was Andover. So I originally just started writing 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. And then as we were verifying, I actually started writing down the addresses in the stuff, and I don't think I wrote that one, the title of it down, but it was number 4 on that list. Oh, I'm sorry. It was South Union at Winthrop, I believe. I did write it down. I believe.
Q. Okay. So when the critical valves were identified, that was through records that were sent from engineering and provided to --
A. Yeah. Correct. Engineering sent me the email.
Q. So who were the individuals closing the valves; do you know?
A. There were quite a few different people.
Q. Were they qualified individuals, you would say, or what role? What would be their title?
A. They're all either distribution foremen or crew leaders.
Q. Okay. No one necessarily from the -- I don't know what you guys call the people in charge of the regulators.
A. Like our -- like from M&R?
Q. M&R.
A. I don't believe I had M&R out there.
Q. So they were relying on the sketches and information that was

provided by engineering?
A. Right. So I would say, this crew, you go to Broadway at Boyd, there's a 4-inch steel valve. Call engineering. Confirm and verify that's the valve, that you're on the correct valve.
Q. So they were using a sketch?
A. Right. Their mapping system.
Q. The mapping system provided by?
A. GIS. It's the maps on their computers. So that would give them location, and then they were to call engineering and verify that they were in fact on the correct valve. Then once they got the okay, then they could shut it, and then call me.
Q. Does the mapping system provide them with the number of turns required to operate the valve?
A. That I do not know. I think engineering would be able to tell you.
Q. So one of the things that you mentioned was the lock-in procedure. Can you explain exactly what happens when you lock a regulator station in?
A. Well, maybe that's my terminology. I want an inlet and outlet completely closed. I think M&R may use it as inlet/outlet via sensing lines, disconnected everything, so -- I believe.
Q. But when you were referring to it, it was --
A. My referring to, I wanted -- I want an inlet and outlet completely closed, and then verify that there was no flow.
Q. That was a request after you were still getting readings?

A. No. So as I closed them all --
Q. Your initial request was to isolate the system.
A. I wanted them --
Q. What was your initial request?
A. Correct. So I wanted to -- so I went out and I closed them all. And then I wanted M&R to go out and what I consider lock them all in. Make sure that they are in fact all closed and stopped. And so they went and they did, I guess, 10 of the 14.
Q. Okay.
A. I wanted to make sure that closing these valves did in fact take the system down.
Q. And that's when you discovered after they went out, you were -- were you under the assumption that they did all 14?
A. Correct.
Q. And discovered later when you were getting readings that they had only --
A. There was the 10 of the 14 were done.
Q. Now that request to lock in the regulator stations, was that a email or verbal request, or how did M&R get the information to actually lock in the regulators as you requested?
A. I had talked to -- did I speak to -- I don't know if I spoke to engineering or -- I know they went around and they did them. I don't think it came from me. All I know is that they did them.
Q. So you made the request to engineering, and then they contacted --

A. I don't think I asked them to. But I remember hearing that they did it. I don't think I asked them to, though. I don't remember asking them to.

Q. Do you know -- the request was made. Do you know who they reported back to as far as the status of those regulators being? I'm trying to understand why --

A. Yeah. Yeah.

Q. -- there was only 10 instead of 14.

A. Right. That I -- and you might be better off asking maybe someone from the M&R group. Yeah, I just remember hearing that they locked them in or closed them off.

Q. So are you aware of any difficulties they had in identifying the critical valves and then operating them?

A. When I was -- when we were sending them out and doing the initial, no. So the guys went out, they called me. So I did get times on all of them saying that they were all in fact closed.

MS. GUNARATNAM: Except for the one from Mass LP, you said.

MR. McCABE: I found out afterwards that the crew said that they had a difficult time turning that valve.

MS. GUNARATNAM: But had closed it?

MR. McCABE: But that was after I wrote down that I was called and notified that it was closed.

MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

BY MS. MOTLEY:

Q. During the incident, I know that you mentioned at the Salem

Street location when you put the gauge on you get 2½ pounds.
A. That's what it looked like it was reading. Yeah. It's a Kuhlman, so it's pink fluid. But it was right at that 2½-pound range.
Q. During the course of the incident did you hear of any pressures that were above 2½ pounds that were discovered?
A. I hadn't heard anything.
Q. So 2½ pounds is the --
A. That's all that I saw or knew, yeah.
Q. Can you tell me again the location of the 1-pound, where you got the 1-pound reading?
A. One-inch?
Q. One-inch.
A. One-inch water column. That was 234 Mount Vernon Street in Lawrence.
Q. For maintenance of critical valves, do you know how often those are performed?
A. That's a M&R function, but I think they are annually, not to exceed 15 months. But I think M&R may be better suited to answer that.
Q. Are you aware of any overpressurizations or any other regulator station related problems in the past, in the Lawrence --
A. That's M&R. I don't. At least not since I've been there.
Q. Just checking your knowledge. I'm sure that if something happened, you'd probably be --

A. I would like to hope so. We're a small group. There's only four of us.
Q. That's why I'm asking. I figured you still would probably have heard.
A. Oh, yeah.
Q. I'm not asking if you actually responded --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- but if you had knowledge.
A. No.
Q. Okay. You spoke about going to different locations after the area was isolated and shutting off meters. Who were the individuals with you doing that? Were there also --
A. We didn't shut off any meters. That following night we were asked --
Q. To stand down.
A. -- well, wait, and they'll get to us when they needed us. So I'm assuming we were PR response, so --
Q. I'm sorry. I forgot you said that.
MS. GUNARATNAM: What is PR?
MR. McCABE: Priority response.
MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.
MR. McCABE: Emergency response. Yeah.
BY MS. MOTLEY:
Q. Does Eversource have an emergency plan?
A. NiSource.

Q. NiSource. Sorry.
A. Columbia Gas has --
Q. I hope Eversource has one too.
(Laughter.)
MR. McCABE: I think we all do. But, yes, they do have an emergency plan.
BY MS. MOTLEY:
Q. Have you been provided a copy of the emergency plan?
A. Yes. I have it electronically on my PSD tool and I have a hard copy. And we update it. We actually had a meeting maybe a couple weeks before, for the updating of the manual and the ERP and the Section 6 updates.
Q. A couple weeks before the incident?
A. Yeah. That doesn't -- I don't know the exact but --
Q. Is there any training that's provided on the emergency plan, emergency response?
A. Yeah, they -- I know when I came here, I -- there's LMSes. When they do the annual --
Q. What's LMS?
A. Learning Module System, computer-based training, I guess. There's a lot of acronyms I'm still getting caught up on. There's annual, when they come and they do the review of the emergency manual and the updates and the changes. They go through it all.
Q. So that was done when you first came aboard or is that done --

A. It's just done every year.
Q. Every year.
MS. GUNARATNAM: Ryan, we need a copy of that. The last copy of the emergency manual, if it hasn't already been uploaded.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you also want the documentation that it's reviewed annually, and any changes that were made?
BY MS. GUNARATNAM:
Q. Is that in the manual that they updated? Yes. If they have a separate policy letter --
A. Yeah. It's the front page.
Q. The front page, yeah. Okay. Of the manual?
A. Yeah. It's all the changes, and then there's like a control sheet of this was changed on this date, and any (indiscernible) tabs.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is it possible to get the training records?
MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. Can we get the last training records on that emergency response plan?
BY MS. GUNARATNAM:
Q. When was the last training you had on that?
A. We did have a meeting a couple weeks before.
Q. Is that a training?
A. We -- well, we went through, and then there's -- they do like a scenario, like a mock scenario of like one of the sections in it. Yeah, and they go through all the changes and they make

sure --
Q. Understood.
A. Yeah.
MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.
BY MS. MOTLEY:
Q. It's not related to the incident, but I'm just curious about grade 1 leaks, grade 2 leaks. Tell me about your grading system. Is it grade 1's, 2's?
A. We have a 1, a 2+, a 2 and a 3.
Q. Grade 1, 2, 2+?
A. Plus. 1, 2+, 2, 3.
Q. The classification or the grading, is that part of your procedures?
A. Leak classification.
Q. Have you -- do you know the status of any grade 1 leaks there were on the books at the time of the incident? Do you know if you were working any particular?
A. There were no distribution crews out there working grade 1 leaks. All my guys had gone home.
Q. Were there -- are there any areas within your low pressure distribution system where you may have chronic leaks? Particular material, anything --
A. Just the cast iron bell joints might have some bad pressure, some bad steel spots, but --
Q. No chronic areas that you can think of as trouble areas

within the --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- system?
A. Engineering might be, might be able to give you a better idea. I think as part of their plan they do an analysis risk assessment for criteria for main replacement.
Q. So your distribution crews are -- when they're going out taking care of leaks, would you say a majority of them are on cast iron?
A. Yeah.
Q. Cast iron?
A. Yeah. Lot of cast iron. A lot of services.
Q. And services?
A. Yeah.
Q. Regarding operator qualifications, does Columbia Gas work with NGA, or how is the OQ? When you're tested for OQ, is that through Columbia Gas's own program or is it through --
A. No. They're part of the NGA program, I believe. But the training might be able to -- the training department might be able to better answer, but I believe by the NGA. Because we go down to Shrewsbury, and NGA is there checking us in and checking us out.
MS. MOTLEY: Okay.
MS. GUNARATNAM: And operations will be going through that training stuff, OQs and all that.
MS. MOTLEY: I think I'm good.

BY MS. HALLIDAY:

Q. First, just for my clarification on your isolation valves, you have your 14 reg stations, and then are your isolation valves within the system to compartmentalize to make that smaller? Explain your isolation valves.

A. That would be up to engineering. I just --

Q. No. I mean what --

A. They provided me the list.

Q. Explain the -- is an isolation valve within the system so that you're shutting down this part within the entire system?

A. I'm not sure I understand your question.

Q. All right. So you have 14 regulator stations that feed this low pressure system.

A. Okay.

Q. Are your isolation valves within the system so that you have, between here and here, when you shut this -- so you have here and here. You're shutting all the services that are off in this section. Is that what your isolation valves are closing?

A. I'm not -- I'm trying to understand. So you're saying I have a system. Are my isolation valves on the ends, are they here or here; is that what you're asking?

Q. So somewhere there's feeds that come into the system --

A. Right.

Q. -- on your regulators.

A. Right. So this is your regulator. You got high pressure

coming in. You got low pressure coming out.
Q. And you have 14 of these.
A. Yeah.
Q. And with that, the pipes are all interconnected. So your isolation valves are within the system to compartmentalize. So within this you have 8500 services.
A. Services.
Q. So within that, I'm guessing you have different isolation sections, and when you're shutting down your isolation valves you're shutting down different parts within this system? What are the isolation valves doing?
A. They're isolating the sections of the system, I guess, or the system. Well, they're critical valves is what we shut down.
Q. So if you shut off all your regulator stations, you don't have anything feeding the system.
A. Correct.
Q. So that would -- so what's the purpose of your critical valves, if you're --
A. Well, so the valves we're shutting down, I believe they are called critical valves. Those were the critical valves we shut down.
Q. And are they at each -- the outlet of each of the regulator stations?
A. I believe so. You'll probably want just to verify with engineering. There may be others not associated with regulator

pits, but I think engineering might be better suited.
Q. Have they ever gone over with you an understanding of the role of isolation valves?
A. I'm not sure what you're -- like engineering or the training or --
Q. Right. Yeah.
A. -- the company?
Q. Yes.
A. I believe -- have I ever had training on isolation valves and critical valves? I don't remember.
Q. Okay.
A. To be honest with you. I mean, 25 years, I have a working knowledge as to what critical valves and isolations and, but I'm not sure.
Q. Okay.
A. I think the terminology -- because you're referring to isolation. And so if you have, say, a cul-de-sac street, say, they have pipe damage. The valve at the top could be an isolation valve, but not a critical valve. So I think that's where I was getting a little confused when you're saying isolation versus critical.
Q. Okay. So, I guess, what's your understanding of isolation valve, and then what's your understanding of a critical valve?
A. Well, critical valves, they are -- critical valves will shut down large, larger parts of the system. They're required under

PHMSA. You're supposed to have critical valves in a program, and X amount of customers per spacing requirements and everything; whereas, an isolation valve could be a valve at the top of a cul-de-sac to shut down just that main.

Q. We just call them distribution valves.

A. Yeah.

Q. So during this you were reading 2½ pounds?

A. That's what was -- I mean, it's fluid in a Kuhlman gauge, but it was right around that 2½-pound range on a Kuhlman gauge.

Q. Okay. And what's the range of a Kuhlman gauge?

A. It has inches of water column and psi. It's got a setting.

Q. And what's the -- how high pressure can it read?

A. I'd have to check it. I think it goes up to 100 pounds. I'm not sure.

Q. But the idea is -- you're thinking the system is at 2½ pounds?

A. I'm hoping it was at inches of water column.

Q. Well, I mean, based on the reading that you had.

A. It was -- so the settings are, you'll go into water column up until you hit a pound. You flip a switch, and now you get into the pound range, and you'll start going up and it'll start -- the fluid will start indicating pounds.

Q. Do you -- have you heard what pressure the system did go up to?

A. I have not.

Q. At any point did anybody try and just vent the system to bring the pressure down, break the pipe open?
A. I believe there was talk about it at that tie-in hole. I believe they had -- they had set up a purge stack to try and maybe bleed line back.
Q. And about when did that happen?
A. Prior to me getting there.
Q. And why did they not do that?
A. I wasn't there. I --
Q. Okay. Do you know who would be there to talk to?
A. The crew. The contractor --
Q. The contractor crew?
A. Contractor crew, yeah.
Q. Was there -- so the engineer was there, but not --
A. No. The engineer was back in the office.
Q. Oh, okay. Was there any company person at the tie-in?
A. I believe Dana Argo was out there. And I'm not sure if Dave DiFrancesco got there before or after me or maybe right at the same time. I was a little delayed in getting there.
Q. I think we had the question was the system overpressured? You're not aware of that happening before?
A. I'm sorry?
Q. The overpressure, you weren't aware of any previous overpressures?
A. Oh, historically, no.

Q. When the techs got to the critical valves, were they all numbered correctly? Did they have any problem identifying which valve to shut?
A. I wasn't there. I do know, and several guys when they were calling me with their times -- well, they would call me and say, hey, I'm over here; I got valve -- I guess there's a tag inside it.
Q. There's tags on it. Well, there should be tags on it.
A. So I said, okay; I said, just call engineering and verify and confirm that you are in fact on the right valve.
Q. Okay.
A. And then once they get the okay, they were getting the okay, then they shut it, and they'd give me the time.
Q. Okay. But they didn't have any -- they all seemed to have tags when they got there?
A. I didn't ask for every single one, but guys had volunteered that information a couple of times throughout the --
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah.
Q. So I think it was Angie already -- Angela, you already asked.
They -- so they said like they heard a rushing when they did the tie-in.
A. I'm not sure if I had heard that from the conversation to me prior to going out there or if it was while I was out there. It may have been prior to me even going out there.

Q. Okay. Did anyone --
A. I don't --
Q. -- recognize this as like this is abnormal? Obviously they said something, so it seemed --
A. My conversation at the time, it was back brief. I was, I -- what do you guys got going on? What are you doing? We're tie-in a low pressure, low pressure. I said, are you confirmed to be on full-size on a low pressure? And they said, yes. Said, okay.
Q. And so, I guess I go back to my experience with tie-ins. We would have gauges on the pipe.
A. Upstream and downstream on both sides.
Q. Yeah. So when they confirmed it, were they reading those gauges, that they knew what the pressure was?
A. I did not look for them. I asked them and went with what they told me.
Q. Okay. So --
A. I wasn't looking for gauges. I -- literally, as I drove from Inman to there, I passed fires. I passed a house that was completely gone, and I just pulled people out. I knew -- I wasn't going to spend too much time like, where's your gauge? Let me get in there and check it. I wanted to get the system down.
Q. Did anyone go back then to the tie-in, location of the tie-in to, you know, figure out is this -- have we tied -- you know, is this --
A. I don't know that. I know they pretty much threw a plate on

it. So whatever they needed to do. It wasn't my crew. I was just trying to get the system shut down.

Q. It was Dave Argos?

A. Dana Argos.

Q. Dana Argos. A-r-g-o-s?

A. Correct.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: A-r-g-o.

MR. McCABE: Oh, Argo. I'm sorry. Yes, A-r-g-o.

BY MS. HALLIDAY:

Q. Dana Argo. It was her crew? His crew?

A. He's the OCM. So when I got, when I got the call over on North Lowell Street, I called him and said, hey, I'm going over here; this is what I heard. I also called the on-call FOL, which was Dave DiFrancesco. I said, hey, I'm going over here; this is what we got going on. I started going there. I got detoured. And by the time I got there, the others had arrived before me.

MS. HALLIDAY: Okay. Are we going to be talking with Dana or --

MS. GUNARATNAM: I'm not sure. Are we?

MS. DOIRON: Yeah.

MS. GUNARATNAM: She's on our list?

MS. DOIRON: He.

MS. GUNARATNAM: He. Okay. Yeah.

MS. DOIRON: OCM is Operations Center Manager. He's responsible for the whole Lawrence Division.

MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

BY MS. HALLIDAY:

Q. M&R was not on the tie-in?

A. I did not see them out there. But, again, I wasn't -- I wasn't looking. I was kind of trying to figure out what we have on pressure and how do I possibly get it down before more stuff pops up. Run out of a burning building, you pass a couple others. I'm trying to figure out what's going on. My concern was stop the gas from getting in the system and shut it down.

Q. Did you feel at this time that -- I mean, was it kind of like on your shoulders of trying to figure out what's going on? I mean, was anybody calling you to say like --

A. Oh, my phone was ringing off the hook. I had people texting me because they're seeing it on the news. I had people, I mean -- the phone was --

Q. Yeah. Did you feel like there was someone back in the office in charge kind of running what was going on?

A. I had Veena in there. She was helping me with identifying and shutting down the system.

Q. So was it pretty much you and Veena?

A. We were on the phone almost constantly. I think she may have had some people in the office helping her, but she and I were in contact.

Q. I mean, it was kind of you guys making the decisions as to close this down?

A. Well, I -- when I saw the 2½ pounds, I went to Dana Argo, and I said, we got 2½ pounds on that riser. I said, should we -- we should probably bring the system down. And he said, you think we should take the system down? I said, we got 2½ pounds on that riser. I said, there's fires, there's explosions. I said, we need to bring it down. He said, okay. I called Veena. I said, give me valves; we're shutting it down.

Q. When you were stopped by the police officer, did you tell him that there's an overpressurization?

A. We never even got out of the cars. He literally cut in front of me. He goes, you --

Q. Follow me.

A. -- and away we went.

Q. Yeah. When you got there and you see the fires, did you tell him --

A. He was in front of one building, said I'm going here. Pointed to me, and I went there.

Q. There.

A. And then we, we were running around just getting people back, getting people back, getting people back. He said, what's going on? I said, I'm trying to get over to South Union and Salem, I said, but it appears as though there could be an overpressurization, but I still don't know yet.

Q. Okay. And at this point you've called in to dispatch or someone to tell them there's an overpressure?

A. I hadn't confirmed anything. I'm trying to get to that location, and all I see is fires and fires and fires. I haven't confirmed anything yet. So I'm just driving there.
Q. Do you guys have the GIS in the techs' cars?
A. On their MDTs.
Q. Okay. MDTs.
A. Their mobile --
Q. Data terminals.
A. Data Termals. A lot of acronyms. I'm still getting caught up on them.
Q. And on those -- in the GIS, do they -- can they see the isolation valves, critical valves?
A. Critical valves. Yes, I believe they're identified as like a red circle.
Q. Okay. But they went to get the list back at the operations center of which --
A. No. She had email it to me.
Q. Emailed. Okay.
A. So she emailed it to me out at Salem and South Union. So I had it on my phone.
Q. And that's when you directed the --
A. I called her, and I field verified that what I had here is what she sent me. We went through the list. And I said, Broadway and Boyd. She said, yes. I said, what do I have for a valve? She said, 4-inch steel regulator pits will have -- could have

multiple valves. I wanted to make sure that I'm getting the right valve.

Q. Turning off the one -- sure.

A. And we went through the list step by step by step.

Q. Okay. And then -- I'm sorry. You said this. I can review it, but -- how then did you get the pipefitters to go close that? How did you get that location to them?

A. I had them all come and stand in front of me, and I said, you, go to Broadway and Boyd. There's a 4-inch steel valve. Get out there, locate, clear it. Call engineering, verify that that is in fact the valve. I said once engineering says okay, shut it off, call me so I can capture the time.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. Typically do you communicate with dispatch when you're trying to communicate things back to the office? Did you talk through dispatch?

A. Did I talk to dispatch? I think they called me, said that they're getting -- wait a minute. I don't want to -- it's been a long couple days.

Q. Yeah.

A. That first day I left, I'm driving there -- I don't think. Because, like I said, I wasn't even supposed to be working.

Q. Be there, yeah.

A. And I wasn't on call.

Q. Were you in your company car?
A. I was.
Q. Okay.
A. I don't think I was supposed to -- I was -- it was after hours. So, if anything, they would have contacted the on call. I'm trying to think. I mean, they call me all the time though even when I'm not around. I don't know. I -- yeah, it was a lot; there was a million phone calls.
Q. Right. It didn't seem like there was a command center though immediately set up with dispatch of overseeing what's going on. It sounds like it was kind of you and Veena working to shut the system down.
A. Right. I mean, it all happened so quick. By the time I got out there, and by the time I saw it, I mean, until I actually got there and could see, we still didn't know if it was an overpressurization. It could have been anything. It gave the appearance of one, but until I confirm it -- so by the time I confirmed it, I got the valves, I had the guys, you know --
MS. HALLIDAY: Did you already request the grading criteria and procedure?
MS. DOIRON: No, I -- we talked about the classification. I'm not sure if we --
MS. GUNARATNAM: Operations will.
MS. HALLIDAY: Yeah.
MS. GUNARATNAM: I know they will.

MS. HALLIDAY: Yeah. Okay.

MS. GUNARATNAM: They'll ask for that.

BY MS. HALLIDAY:

Q. Do most of the inside meters have curb valves?

A. Do most of the inside meters have curb valves? Low pressure ones?

Q. Yeah. Like is it faster to go inside and shut it off or turn it off at the curb? Or have most of the curb valves been overgrown with grass?

A. Well, the old bare steel ones they can be 1906, 19- -- a lot of those only have curb valves, the pre-code stuff. Now if we are to leave the service back inside because it's a historical home, there is a curb valve.

Q. When you guys do tie-ins, do you have a routine that you guys write? We used to call them routines.

A. There is a tie-in procedure.

Q. Is it just a generic procedure or is it specific, set --

A. It's specific to the --

Q. -- set gauge A, purge to 100 percent gas --

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay.

A. That would, but that would -- yes, there is tie-in procedures. But as far as the specificity, maybe you want to check with engineering.

Q. And I think that's probably the operations group anyway.

A. Yeah. I don't think they're boilerplate. I think they're specific.
Q. Okay. And I think these questions are probably for the operations group as well. But, I guess, in the emergency response there wasn't anybody who was -- right, we did this tie-in. There's smoke or fire coming out of the chimneys, maybe we should undo it? Or was there, like, any --
A. There was a contractor there.
Q. Yeah.
A. I was on the other -- I was in the next town over.
Q. Right, right.
A. I don't know what happened when that happened.
Q. That's Dana.
A. I don't think Dana was even there.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That was Veena.
MR. McCABE: I don't think Veena was even there.
MS. HALLIDAY: Veena was in the --
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She got the call about the smoke.
MS. HALLIDAY: Yeah.
MR. McCABE: Yeah.
BY MS. HALLIDAY:
Q. But she wouldn't have recognized, or I don't think she would know, right, that that's when the tie-in was happening.
A. Yeah. Well, at that point, I mean, in order to prompt a call, it would've had to have already been done. So --

Q. Yeah.
A. And, again, you're just on a phone call. You don't really know and see what's what, what they're talking about. They could describe one thing and really mean something different, and then you're trying to interpret their description as to what's happening. I don't want to speculate as to --
Q. Yeah. Sure.
A. -- what the conversation took place, but --
Q. Do you know, was there a call from the contractor crew to anybody when -- after their tie-in? Did they --
A. That's who Veena received the call from.
Q. Oh, okay. From the -- directly from the contractor crew, they had Veena's --
A. I believe it was the tie-in crew. Yeah.
Q. -- contact information.
A. Either tie-in crew or the inspector or -- it was someone from, I believe, that jobsite.
Q. Okay. And she relayed to you?
A. I overheard them talking.
Q. You overheard them talking. Okay.
A. I mean, I was there when Lexington happened. So a lot of this is familiar.
Q. Yeah.
MS. HALLIDAY: Are we going to be talking to Veena?
MS. GUNARATNAM: Is Veena part of the list for us?

MS. DOIRON: Emergency response?

MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. Is she being interviewed by operations?

MS. DOIRON: I don't know.

MS. GUNARATNAM: Can you follow up to see who Veena's -- I'm assuming she's probably going to be interviewed, but --

MS. HALLIDAY: So would the operations group be asking what did you do when you got the call and find -- do you know? Okay.

MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

MS. HALLIDAY: Okay.

MS. GUNARATNAM: They're going to be asking what did you (indiscernible). Yeah. But just to make sure she's on the list, you know, just follow up --

BY MS. HALLIDAY:

Q. Do you guys have your district valves in your GIS system?

A. Our?

Q. Distribution. I'm sorry.

A. Valves?

Q. Yeah.

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. What system is your GIS? Is it Smallworld or --

A. ArcReader. I believe.

Q. ArcReader? Or ArcView, Esri type --

A. ArcView. Yeah. GIS ArcReader or ArcView. Yeah.

Q. In your emergency plan does it cover overpressurization?

A. Yeah. There's tabs for explosions, outage, overpressurizations. There's a bunch of tabs for a bunch of different scenarios.
Q. Do you recall what it says to do for overpressurization?
A. Not off of the top of my head. I usually flip it open on the back of my truck. I keep it in the truck. I just flip. If there was a third-party damage or a hit line, I'd open up, and I'd have the hit line there. Or outage, go to the outage tab and --
Q. I'm guessing you didn't have time to flip open overpressurization?
A. I ran out of a building on fire. I drove by a couple. I get there --
Q. Yeah, exactly.
A. What do we have?
Q. That's great if you have the time.
A. Okay. I'm like, I'm like, okay, why do I have a pressure? Is there something I don't want to see? Okay. It's -- looks like it's 2½ pounds. I got to shut it down. I --
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All in a matter of how many minutes, do you imagine?
MR. McCABE: From the time I actually got there or the time that I --
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible) all of that picture --
MR. McCABE: It wasn't long. It was a quick conversation with the tie-in crew. I grabbed the -- I checked the riser. Look

at the pressure. I went to my OCM. I said, this is what we got; we got to shut it down. He said, okay, shut it down. I said, give me the valves. We got the valves. Half of guys were already standing there. I said, go, go, go. Call, confirm, verify, shut if off, call me so I can capture the time that it's off, and --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right. Thank you.

MR. McCABE: -- drove by -- to get in this location, I --

MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. Well, you had -- you were making the best decision you could in the situation.

MR. McCABE: I didn't want it to go any longer than it already was and make things worse. I seen enough. You look up, and there's black smoke all over the place, and I'm like let's shut it down.

MS. HALLIDAY: Thank you. That's all my questions.

BY MS. DOIRON:

Q. Rob, just a couple clarifications for folks that aren't familiar with the organizational structure.

A. Okay.

Q. You are a field operations --

A. Leader.

Q. -- leader?

A. Yeah.

Q. Which means you work in what functional area or concentration? You're in, we call operations.

A. Field ops. Okay.

Q. Right. Which is different than construction.
A. Construction. Oh, yeah.
Q. Okay. So just explain the difference between --
A. Oh, yeah.
Q. -- what construction or street or distribution --
A. Oh, okay.
Q. -- you know, so folks -- and M&R is a third, right?
A. Yeah. Oh, okay, yeah. So there's distribution. We're primarily customer requests, revos, leaks, grade 1's, grade 2's, aging leaks, third-party damage, emergency response. That's kind of our day-to-day.

Then there's the construction side. That's your main replacement projects, all like the AMR, PS (indiscernible) -- I don't know what they call it here.

Q. The G stuff, the --
A. G --
Q. Yeah, infrastructure replacement program.
A. Program stuff, and all like the larger scale scope.

And then there's the M&R group, and they're pretty much the pits and regulators and vaults and critical valves. In Lawrence it used to be M&R and L&G, and that recently changed to just M&R and just L&G.

There's a corrosion department. That's their own.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are they with the Integrity Management Group, the corrosion?

MR. McCABE: I would assume so, but I really don't know.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Maybe they're separate.

MR. McCABE: I'm assuming they chime in on the DIMP plan for active corrosion and whatnot.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

BY MS. DOIRON:

Q. Okay. And then just one other -- just another background thing for this group even though we know it's going to be provided in the -- in another investigation group for operations. The grades 1, 2, and 3 leak classifications, which are the basic requirements.

A. Correct.

Q. Explain the 2+. What does 2+ mean?

A. So a 2+ means it's not a 1. I guess, in layman's terms it's not a 1, but it's an -- but we're putting an accelerated time frame, repair time frame on it. So rather than the grade 2 has to be repaired within a year of discovery, our 2+'s, we put a timeframe of within 21 days. So it's not a 1, but we don't want to wait a year.

Q. Which is what the grade 2's?

A. Our grade 2 is --

Q. Grade 2's are --

A. -- within a year upon discovery. A 2+ --

Q. Twenty-one days.

A. Twenty-one days.

Q. So that's an enhancement that the company --
A. Correct. Above -- yeah.
Q. -- has imposed above and beyond what the requirements are?
A. Yeah. Um-hum.
MS. DOIRON: That's it.
MS. GUNARATNAM: I just had one or two follow-ups.
BY MS. GUNARATNAM:
Q. Something like this is very -- like you've never dealt with this kind of incident ever before?
A. I was part of Lexington National -- well, it's KeySpan. I mean, not like the guy who heard someone get the call, but --
Q. Yeah.
A. -- I think everyone got dragged into it.
Q. Yeah. But you've never dealt with such a situation before this?
A. No.
Q. Yeah.
A. Not boots on the ground.
Q. Yeah.
A. Guy who heard the call, no.
Q. Yeah. So I was just curious. Does the company provide any kind of "worst-case scenario this is what would happen" kind of training?
A. They have -- in fact they did. I went through it maybe 2 or 3 weeks before. They have emergency response training for

leaders. I don't know if I captured that title correctly. Down at our training facility in Shrewsbury. They do a lot of scenarios. They have a leak town, and they have role play and mocks, and they have things they can control the valve and CGIs that they can manually tell you what you're reading. So they do -- so they have a lot of different scenarios: explosions, damage, third-party damage, cross-bore, overpressurization.

Q. Yeah.

A. And they -- I had done that maybe a couple weeks before.

Q. So an -- okay. And that was in what location?

A. Our Shrewsbury training facility.

Q. Shrewsbury. So in the overpressurization scenario, could you describe what kind of training they went -- what the scenario was?

A. I'm trying to think if we did that one. I know we did cross-bore. We did multiple leaks. I mean, it's just like role play. It's different scenarios. Did we do an overpressurization? I'm not sure if we did one. That was a couple of weeks ago. I mean, we did a whole bunch of stuff. It was -- and I think it was 2 days or 3 days. The first day they go through a lot of the standards. Actually, maybe that's where they went over the emergency manual.

Q. Oh, okay.

A. It was part of that. They do so much training, it's --

Q. Yeah.

A. It all kind of blends. They do a lot of training. Yeah.

Q. So how many -- you said how many days was it?
A. I want to say at least 2, maybe 3.
Q. Two or 3 days of training at the leak --
A. For the emergency -- well, that was for the emergency response for leaders. I forget what the title was, but it was focused towards leaders and emergency response.
Q. Okay. If there's an agenda from the training, can we get that from you?

So is overpressurization a module -- you said you didn't go over it, but do you -- is that part of it?
A. I believe it was in there, yeah.
Q. Okay. And we probably want to get a copy of that training.
A. I mean, it's a very new facility. I think they're still developing and trying to enhance it and make it better.
Q. Yeah. So did any -- when you went to that training, did any of it help you when this incident happened? Did it trigger back to what you learned?
A. So there was one -- so a lot of the scenarios all kind of focused on doing your area check, dealing with customers, dealing with the media. Can't gain access: What are you doing? Who are you making the calls to? What are you asking for?

There were -- and it's all role play. So everyone there has a role, and there were times that you got to get people out and they're irate. So running into a burning building, pounding on doors, trying to get -- there was instances there that, say you're

role playing you get -- they have a CGI that they can dictate what reading you get. So if you go up to the door, it'll say like 100 percent gas, and even though it's really not because it's computerized. Obviously you want to get people out. So obviously, when I was over at Inman, it kind of hit home that you got to get them out. Obviously the building's on fire. So pounding on doors. Not ringing it. Not -- just pounding, getting them out: Don't wait; don't go back; just grab the kids, grab family members, get out.

Q. So the evacuation procedures helped train you?

A. Yeah.

Q. So you did evacuate in Inman Street?

A. Yeah. Me and the officer.

Q. You and the police officer?

A. Exactly.

Q. Oh, okay. So you and the police officer went down Inman Street and started evacuating?

A. He went in one building. I went in the other.

Q. Okay. And that was --

A. And then we both kind of teamed up. Two other guys, locals, came over and they started helping us in getting people out.

Q. Okay. And that was both residential apartment buildings?

A. It's like a, it's like an apartment complex.

Q. Oh, it was an apartment complex. Okay. All right.

A. But, yeah, that training had a scenario of -- getting people

out, people who refused to leave, stuff like that.
Q. Did you turn off a meter in the apartment complex?
A. No.
Q. No. Okay. So you just helped evacuate?
A. That's it.
Q. That's it.
A. Life, then property.
Q. And then you went to the next, on -- back to your -- where you were planning to go --
A. My truck, and I started head --
Q. Back -- yeah.
A. -- backing out and try and get there.
Q. Okay. Was that the only evacuation that you did that day?
A. That's the only one I did.
Q. Okay. The only one you did. Okay.
MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. So that's all I have. Is there any last follow-up on emergency response? Sheila, anything?
MS. DOIRON: All set. Thank you.
MS. GUNARATNAM: Is there anything you'd like that we may have left out that you want to tell us about that day, how you felt it went? I mean --
MR. McCABE: No. It was --
MS. GUNARATNAM: That we should know about.
MR. McCABE: Wish it didn't happen.
MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. Of course, yeah.

MR. McCABE: Yeah. No, I probably should have just gone home after work, huh?

MS. GUNARATNAM: You would've been called right back.

MR. McCABE: I had my phone on.

MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

MR. McCABE: No. But no, it's -- it is what it is, but --

MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

MR. McCABE: -- we try and do the best we can and make the best decisions under the circumstances that you're in. Sometimes it's a plastic service with flow (indiscernible) and it's a pretty easy decision. Sometimes you're running out of buildings trying to get to a location to figure out what's going on. It's a different decision. It's quick. It's fast. You do the best you can with what you got.

MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. All right. Well, thank you very much for taking the time to come in.

I'm going to end the interview.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

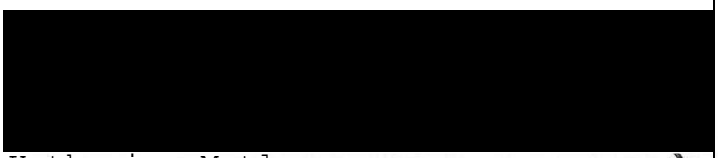
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	Merrimack Valley Residential Gas Fires and Explosions September 13, 2018 Interview of Robert McCabe
DOCKET NUMBER:	PLD18MR003
PLACE:	Lawrence, Massachusetts
DATE:	September 17, 2018

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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