

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

MERRIMACK VALLEY RESIDENTIAL GAS *
FIRES AND EXPLOSIONS *
SEPTEMBER 13, 2018 *

* Accident No.: PLD18MR003

* * * * *

Interview of: KEVIN LOUGHLIN, Deputy Chief
Lawrence Fire Department

Lawrence Fire Department
Lawrence, Massachusetts

Saturday,
September 15, 2018

APPEARANCES:

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National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

(1:25 p.m.)

1
2
3 MR. CURRIE: Good afternoon. It's September 15th, 2018, and
4 we're in Lawrence, Massachusetts at -- Station 9?

5 MR. LOUGHLIN: Engine 9.

6 MR. CURRIE: Engine 9, in reference to case PLD18MR003. It's
7 natural gas explosions in the city of Lawrence, Andover and North
8 Andover.

9 My name is Shawn, S-h-a-w-n, Currie, C-u-r-r-i-e. I'm an
10 investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board.

11 And with me is?

12 MS. GUNARATNAM: Rachael Gunaratnam, R-a-c-h-a-e-l, G-u-n-a-
13 r-a-t-n-a-m, NTSB hazmat investigator.

14 MS. HALLIDAY: And Julie Halliday, J-u-l-i-e, H-a-l-l-i-d-a-
15 y, Office of Pipeline Safety, USDOT.

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

18 MR. LOUGHLIN: Kevin Loughlin, Lawrence Fire Department,
19 deputy chief. Kevin, L-o-u-g-h-l-i-n.

20 DET. LT. ZIPPER: Paul Zipper, Mass State Police, Z-i-p-p-e-
21 o.

22 MR. RUIZ: Pasqual Ruiz, Lawrence Fire Department, fire
23 investigator, R-u-i-z.

24 MR. CURRIE: Thank you.

25 INTERVIEW OF KEVIN LOUGHLIN

1 BY MR. CURRIE:

2 Q. Chief, I'd like to thank you for coming in to talk to us
3 today. You were the fire chief on duty on the 13th?

4 A. That is correct.

5 Q. Okay. Can you tell us what happened with the incident?

6 A. Approximately around 1600 hours, we received a phone call for
7 a working fire at -- on Phillips Street. It was a high -- maybe
8 75 Phillips Street. I can't remember the exact address.

9 And so we were getting in our vehicles to dispatch for this
10 alarm and at that time we received several more calls. I believe
11 it was four in all: another one on Phillips Street and another
12 one on Andover Street, and I can't recall the fourth one.

13 So I get on the -- I was on the air in my vehicle. I got on
14 the air and said, give me the exact -- give me the correct
15 address. And I'm like, why am -- I'm thinking why am I getting
16 four different addresses? And they said that is the correct
17 address; we have report of four working fires.

18 Okay. So now I had some inkling of what I'm dealing with. I
19 take a right on to Phillips Street, and Phillips Street is right
20 over here, the next street over. And as I was going up Phillips
21 Street -- they go from low to high -- there's people in front of
22 buildings waving us down. Because usually the person that calls
23 you is going to be out in front of the house. We see this all the
24 way down the street.

25 And Engine 9 was responding out of here. They were the first

1 through company. They were on scene, and -- I don't remember what
2 the timeline, but as I was coming up the street I told everybody
3 proceed to the call we're going to. And I told fire alarm we're
4 getting multiple calls around here, we're going to need more
5 personnel.

6 So Engine 9 got on scene and they said we have a small gas
7 fire whatever address it was; we can handle it. So once I heard
8 they could handle it -- the rescue company was following behind
9 me. I said, you know, we are going to stop and start taking some
10 of these calls. And it turned out, gas fire, gas fire, gas fire.
11 So now, we know the nature of the call and what's going on here;
12 we have some kind of pressurization problem.

13 And I dispatched Ladder 4. They had something around the
14 corner on Andover Street, directly around the corner from Phillips
15 Street. And as far as -- while I was there we were receiving more
16 calls, and a fire alarm came over the air and said we have an
17 explosion on Chickering Road. I don't recall the address.

18 So I left that scene, and I recall that Engine 9 was going
19 around to the abutters and turning off their gas. And I said, all
20 right, we're going to this call of reported explosion. And we get
21 there and it was confirmed an explosion. We get up to the scene.
22 My guys were already there before me. The rescue was already at
23 the motor vehicle that the chimney had collapsed on. And so they
24 were working to get this, I don't know, 3,000-pound chimney off
25 this young man. And it didn't look good for him. There was other

1 injuries, people that were in the house. I'm getting all kind of
2 conflicting information.

3 They managed to get this chimney off of him, freed him up.
4 And Lawrence General paramedics were on scene, pulled him out.
5 And also BLS was on the scene and they started working the young
6 man.

7 And so then, from there, I had a brief conversation with
8 Chief Vask (ph.) from the police department and, ironically enough
9 I was going -- we had another call for a house fire a block away
10 on Colonial Road. I don't recall the address. And I also talked
11 to Katy Riley, who is the chief's -- I mean the mayor's aide, and
12 she said -- she says, I just got off the phone with my father,
13 who's a retired firefighter, and his house is on fire on -- what's
14 the one off South Street? I'm drawing a blank.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Which one?

16 MR. LOUGHLIN: You know the little street, the loop off of
17 South Street? We had two fires there.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. Wedgewood? No --

19 MR. LOUGHLIN: Wedgewood, Wedgewood Road. So I told him, I
20 says call him back, tell him to call 911.

21 So we went up to the fire -- and this is all within -- it's
22 all within like 10 minutes this all happened. So we get up to
23 Wedgewood, Engine 9, this company here, this group of guys,
24 they're on scene and there's two fires at Wedgewood. There's one
25 -- there's a condo development with a cluster of four townhouses

1 together. So they had two lines working on a fire that was fully
2 involved. It was the D exposure, so it's the extreme right of the
3 building. And the rescue, who doesn't carry water on it, they
4 tied into a yard hydrant in the complex and they have a line into
5 a smaller fire on the second floor.

6 So I called for a ladder. We ended up getting Salem's
7 ladder, and -- Salem, New Hampshire's ladder. It took them
8 probably about 10 minutes to get there because South Street was
9 all congested. They couldn't even get up the street. So PD was
10 on the scene and they assisted getting the ladder to this
11 location.

12 So I -- the fire was in the process of being knocked down.
13 We were going defensive on it because we didn't have any manpower
14 to really go offensive on this one because it was too far
15 advanced. So Salem tower cut a hole into the townhouse next to it
16 because I thought that these attics were adjoined. So I didn't
17 want it rolling through the building. So we cut it to cut it off,
18 and only smoke came out so we knew we had knocked down all the
19 fire.

20 So, from there, I had Salem just bend their ladder and say
21 you're going with me to the next one, and Engine 9 and the rescue
22 were just mopping up. And there was a representative from the gas
23 company there. I think he was off duty. I don't remember his
24 name. I think he might have even lived in the complex. And he
25 was going around shutting off the gas in the back of these

1 buildings. All of the meters were in the back, which is kind of
2 unusual. Usually they're in the front. But, anyway, I had my
3 guys and the rescue, they had to break some stockade fences and
4 locks to get to these shutoffs.

5 So, from there, I proceeded over -- we had a reported
6 explosion on Jefferson Street. I believe it was 60 Jefferson
7 Street. So I went with Salem, New Hampshire's tower, and that was
8 fully involved. And we went directly -- I had the first feeder
9 put into the ladder company. We went defensive operations on that
10 one.

11 We got a hand line off, once we had water, to protect the B
12 exposure, which is on the left side. And I don't recall -- I had
13 some out-of-town chief there. I don't remember where he was from.
14 I turned it over to him at that point because we had other calls
15 to go on. And it was pretty much surround and drown. It wasn't
16 going to go anywhere. The house was a total loss.

17 Let's see. From there, I'm trying to think where I went.
18 From there we had a -- as I recall -- I think the timeline's
19 right. I'm not positive on -- everything else I'm positive on.
20 We had a working fire on the corner of South Bowdoin and
21 Brookfield also in South Lawrence. These are all within probably
22 a quarter mile from each other. And there was Lawrence personnel
23 along with Boston Fire, along with a deputy chief from Boston.
24 And the fire looked like it was all knocked down. So I reported
25 to Level 1 staging, which was behind the old Showcase Cinema off

1 of 114, and by that time we had a second alarm deputy respond to
2 the central station, which was John McGinnis.

3 So the way we set this up is he was going to handle, along
4 with the North Lawrence companies, they were going to handle all
5 the calls on the north side and we were going to respond from the
6 south side from the staging area that we had set up on -- it's
7 actually Chickering Road right there behind the old Denny's.

8 So from there we went to, I'm trying to think, various calls.
9 And a lot of these calls -- I want to say it was probably like 6,
10 7 o'clock the calls started to slow down. And I just do want to
11 mention that I did make a couple phone calls to our dispatch and
12 it was frustrating because we have only one fire ground channel.
13 So we had multiple units in here and everybody's on the radio, and
14 our guy up there, Larry Foote, was saying, look, I don't want to
15 know when you cleared. I don't -- he was just trying to keep the
16 chatter to an absolute minimum. It made it very difficult and
17 frustrating to get any kind of message across, so everything was
18 pretty much face-to-face.

19 But as I recall, everything started to slow down. We were
20 still getting calls, gas calls, and we got a lot of odor of gas,
21 we think I smell gas, can you shut my gas off? People were pretty
22 panicked and they just wanted -- people were just calling just to
23 have their gas shut off.

24 And then at that time I had other people -- I had Captain
25 Martin and I had Captain Zahn at the command post. And when I

1 said we're going to start rotating calls, because obviously I
2 couldn't go to every single call on the south side. I needed more
3 incident command there. And we basically rotated the calls. And
4 later on in the evening, there was nothing really consequential,
5 you know, compared to what we had just been through. We did get a
6 rekindle at Glenwood Ave. I mean -- what's the name of that
7 street?

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Greenfield.

9 MR. LOUGHLIN: No. I'm having trouble with the street.
10 What's the second fire we went to? Wedgewood?

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, Wedgewood, yeah.

12 MR. LOUGHLIN: Wedgewood. So we had a rekindle at Wedgewood.
13 I know -- like I told you before, there were two separate fires.
14 I recall 5 Wedgewood being the smaller of the two fires. I don't
15 know the address of the other one, but that rekindled. So we
16 responded with three pumps, a ladder, and we -- all out of town
17 companies we had unbelievable amount of manpower at that point.
18 And we were there maybe half hour, tops, doing a more thorough
19 overhaul process like we normally would. And I didn't use all the
20 companies. I had a big hole in the floor, so I kept it to a
21 minimum, the amount of personnel in that building.

22 And we were rotating -- all the working companies, we were
23 rotating them to Level 2 staging. So, once they had their call,
24 they went to Level 2 staging and everybody just bumped up.

25 And the other call of consequence that I went to was later,

1 much later on, probably 2 a.m., around 2 a.m., we had a rekindle
2 at Springfield Street, number 4 Springfield Street, as I recall.
3 Chief Moriarty went to that -- they had a working fire there
4 earlier in the day right around the time this all happened
5 initially, within the first half hour of me going to Phillips
6 Street. He had a rekindle there. I was working with some, again,
7 out of town companies. I had Lowell's ladder, Lowell's pump, and
8 Newburyport's pump. We were there for about an hour basically
9 going in and overhauling that.

10 And then everything was being broken up at Level 1 staging.
11 They had made the decision -- the chief made the decision that
12 they were going to come back in the morning because they held a
13 lot of companies. I think at the time we had at least 70 out-of-
14 town companies there with 50 or more EMS vehicles. And they were
15 in the EOC deciding whether they were going to start going house
16 to house at that point or not, but I wasn't in those meetings so I
17 don't really know what happened.

18 So, at around 4 o'clock, 4 a.m. I went back to the central
19 station, relieved the second alarm deputy, McGinnis. And I had
20 two other calls at that point. They were -- I don't even recall
21 where I went, but they were just minor calls. No fire. No gas
22 leak. And then I was relieved at around 7 o'clock by Deputy
23 Wilson, who is now the on-duty deputy relieving me.

24 So that's a *Reader's Digest* version of basically what
25 happened that night.

1 Q. A lot going on.

2 A. A lot going on, yeah. And there's a lot of things that I
3 don't even recall and I wasn't even -- you know, for the on-duty
4 deputy not to even be at certain fires is just -- it's not usual.

5 (Off the record.)

6 (On the record.)

7 MR. CURRIE: We just took a short timeout. They dispatched
8 the fire engine that's in this station.

9 BY MR. CURRIE:

10 Q. So go ahead, Chief.

11 A. I omitted one thing, and I don't remember the timeline. We
12 also responded back to Jefferson Street, 60 Jefferson for a
13 rekindle. I got there. Captain Zahn at that point was on a
14 ladder company. We put the spare ladder and pump into service.
15 And it was basically the building had collapsed on itself. The
16 roof was in the basement at that point. So there was hidden fire.
17 So we had adequate personnel there with apparatus, so I turned it
18 over to Captain Zahn and I returned back to the Level 1 staging.
19 But I forgot that rekindle too.

20 Q. Okay. I got to change the channel a little bit here. Can
21 you go over your -- obviously, you are an experienced firefighter.
22 Can you go over your experience, time on the job, and --

23 A. I'm on the job 24 years now. I have been a company officer
24 for like 17 years, probably 4 years a lieutenant and 13 years as a
25 captain. I've been deputy chief about 2½ years now.

1 And, you know, Lawrence is a fairly busy city. You see a lot
2 and been to many structure fires over the years and various calls.
3 Never really experienced anything like this as far as the rapid
4 fire and just the scale of something like this. We've gone to big
5 mill fires, but to go to so many incidents at one time was -- it
6 overwhelmed the department. We don't have obviously the on-duty
7 resources to respond to something like this.

8 And never really experienced a communication problem that we
9 did. We were just basically overwhelmed as far as just basic
10 communication and span of control. Not knowing where my guys
11 were. They were in different locations. There's no incident
12 command. There's no supervision. There's nobody -- I don't know
13 if they're getting water from a source, because at that point it
14 was just all face-to-face and I had never experienced anything
15 like it.

16 Q. And you said you only have one fire ground channel in the
17 city?

18 A. We have a main channel. We have a backup channel. We have
19 availability -- our channel is number 1 that we operate on. We
20 have channel 16, which is on to other end of the dial, that the
21 chief is trying to get to use as our backup channel but it hasn't
22 been implemented yet -- it's in the works -- so we're all on one
23 channel.

24 Q. Is there any -- obviously, you said you had 70 out-of-town
25 companies in and --

1 A. That's what I was told. What I was told, 48 pumps and 17
2 ladders. That's what I was told.

3 Q. You said -- I heard Newburyport, Boston, Woburn -- Woburn is
4 obviously close, or Lowell. But Newburyport's like 40, 50 miles
5 away.

6 A. About 30 miles away. It's right on the coast.

7 Q. So what communication do you have with them? Are they on
8 your channels? Do you have --

9 A. They have the ability to get on our channel. So when we were
10 going to the rekindles, I was able to talk. So now we had one
11 incident at a time, more normal, where I could communicate
12 directly with them. They just went to their Lawrence channel on
13 their radio and we were able to communicate.

14 Q. Okay. Training. Do you have any or has there been any
15 specific natural gas training?

16 A. We train, as I recall Bart Maderios from the gas company
17 comes in and does a training once a year. And he's very
18 consistent. Bart is the best. He is the go-to guy as far as I'm
19 concerned as far as any problems in the city. And matter of fact,
20 I called for him specifically because any -- you know, I -- when
21 he's telling me something, I know I can rely on that information.
22 I don't question anything he tells me. He's there. He's been at
23 many of our calls. And as advisory and to tell us, you know, this
24 is what you have, and he boils it down and there's no BS with
25 Bart; this is what you have. And if you do -- and then I'll say,

1 what do you think -- I'll even say what do you think, you know,
2 because the nature of the call. And we are still -- it's still
3 our call, but I wouldn't hesitate to ask for his opinion on
4 anything.

5 And so, we train constantly, you know, like formal training
6 once a year. We go to gas calls, you know, on fairly regular
7 basis. Usually it involves carbon monoxide more so than probably
8 gas leaks. So we deal -- gas calls and carbon monoxide calls are
9 pretty routine for us, and in all of them we obviously call the
10 gas company. So we work hand-in-hand with the gas company all the
11 time.

12 Q. Okay. So you said you called him for this incident?

13 A. I called -- obviously we called for the gas company and I
14 wanted specifically Bart Maderios. I wanted him at the command
15 post because I wasn't getting the information that I needed. I
16 was at least 2 hours into the fire, and I specifically asked
17 operator Larry Foote what is the update from the gas company?
18 Because I'm thinking is this going to just go on all night or are
19 we going to put a stop to this? You know, so I know we had
20 overpressurization. That was obvious, because the reports I was
21 getting from the firefighters is that they were going into these
22 cellars where the furnaces were and it was like a blow torch
23 coming out of it. People that had something on the stove, stove
24 top, and all of a sudden they got flames 3 feet high. So they
25 just shut them off. So we knew what we were dealing with.

1 I had been to -- 2 years ago there was a specific incident up
2 in Prospect Hill, which is very close to where the gas substation
3 is up there. And we were getting calls for odor of gas, odor of
4 gas, odor of gas, strong odors and they were all legit calls. It
5 was similar in the sense that we got many, many calls at the same
6 time but no fire associated with it. There were zero fires at the
7 time, and it was in the middle of the day. And Bart responded,
8 and whatever he did -- he went back to the substation. He figured
9 out what was wrong. And what we did was we basically -- we
10 coordinated with him, and I said, all right, I want fire trucks
11 and every call we go on is going to be Lawrence fire and gas
12 company going to respond at the same time so we can -- we don't
13 have -- because our protocol is we wait for the gas company. We
14 don't just leave. So I said I don't want to tie up all our trucks
15 waiting for you guys, so let's just respond together and just put
16 an end to it.

17 So that's one example of, you know, bigger scale incident
18 with the gas company and it worked effectively. So I have a lot
19 of confidence with Bart.

20 Q. Okay. So -- great example. Thank you. But Thursday, that's
21 when all this happened --

22 A. Yep.

23 Q. You said you were 2 hours into it and you hadn't got feedback
24 from --

25 A. I hadn't got any response from our fire alarm, and I know the

1 chief was -- I don't know, I can't say if he heard my
2 communication, because it was fast and furious. But there was no
3 -- nothing from the chief saying, hey, we've -- we have
4 overpressurization, which we all knew but we didn't know if it was
5 being addressed. We didn't know how far along they were, and I
6 was -- I was a little frustrated at that point because it just --
7 I'm like, well, let's fix this problem. And --

8 Q. At what point did you end up with representatives from the
9 gas company, or did you?

10 A. I think that was -- I don't know. I saw -- you know, I
11 didn't see any like managers, higher up people in the gas company.
12 I was dealing with the guys that respond out to the location. So
13 I don't know if they're at the EOC. I would assume they were, but
14 I don't know because I wasn't at those meetings. So I just kind
15 of put two and two together when all our calls started subsiding,
16 I figured they got a handle on it, or we'll just keep getting more
17 of them.

18 Q. Okay. And when you say EOC, the emergency operations center,
19 is it a city one or was it --

20 A. It was at Level 1 staging. They were in a separate vehicle.

21 Q. Okay. And who was they?

22 A. I don't know if it was state police. I don't know --

23 Q. Do you know who was running it?

24 A. Well, it would be Chief Moriarty. It's our call. We had a
25 unified command. So we had representatives from the gas company,

1 Lawrence police, state police. I know that MEMA was there. And
2 I'm sure I'm leaving somebody out, but all the local players were
3 there, even MEMA is, you know --

4 Q. Now, obviously, you're doing the operational side of it so
5 you were busy. Do you know if they developed any incident action
6 plans or anything like that, or it was just --

7 A. I'm sure they did. I was talking to the chief at one point.
8 I want to say this was probably around 7, 8 o'clock at night, and
9 he had a map in his office and -- a very large map of the city of
10 Lawrence that he wanted brought to the scene or made sure that was
11 brought to the scene. And I don't know if it was through MEMA or
12 some fire department personnel that he had called to the scene,
13 they were going to put coordinates on this map, and I believe the
14 purpose of it was -- is to not have duplication of efforts in
15 shutting off gas. So I know that was done fairly early on at the
16 EOC.

17 Q. Like -- fairly early on, like?

18 A. Within, I would say within 3 hours.

19 Q. Okay. So, 7 o'clock at night?

20 A. It was around 7 o'clock at night. And I know that happened
21 because was standing there. They had the map on the ground and
22 everybody was around and they were kind of -- they weren't at
23 their formal EOC meeting because I think that was at 9:15, as I
24 recall. So that's what they were -- one of the things that they
25 were going to cover at this meeting.

1 Q. Okay. Do you guys have any canned plans for gas issues or is
2 it just you're relying upon your training and experience?

3 A. Every situation is different. Something like this, I don't
4 know -- I mean, sometimes we train worst-case scenario with our
5 mutual aid, you know. But I don't believe -- well, certainly in
6 the 24 years I have been here, we've never had anything on this
7 scale. I can say that for certain.

8 And the only thing you can really do is -- we try not to
9 reinvent the wheel, so we treat -- if we can -- and this is part
10 of the incident command. So what we do, whether it's a big fire
11 or big gas call, big power, whatever we have, we just expand our
12 mutual aid response. We bring in people, incident commanders, and
13 we try to break it up to make it manageable.

14 So, like I said, Deputy McGinnis had the north side of town,
15 I had the south side of town. Because you need to expand your
16 scope of operations and just assign people different tasks just
17 like we would at a big fire. So we -- and that's the way we
18 approach everything, no matter what the incident is.

19 MR. CURRIE: That's all the questions I have, I believe.

20 Rachael?

21 Thank you.

22 MS. GUNARATNAM: Thank you.

23 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

24 Q. This was very comprehensive. So I just wanted to go over
25 when you were talking about -- so when you first responded at 1600

1 hours there was a working fire on Phillips Street. I'm just going
2 to kind of run through just to make sure I got it right.

3 A. Uh-huh.

4 Q. And then soon after, you received the four in total within
5 that hour?

6 A. Within the first couple minutes.

7 Q. Oh, couple minutes. Okay.

8 A. It was all -- when I was dispatched to Phillips Street, I was
9 getting calls for these other locations.

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. In addition to people waiving me down on Phillips Street and
12 saying I got a fire in my basement.

13 Q. Okay. So that basement fire was Phillips Street?

14 A. That -- we had, you know, at least two to three basement
15 fires. When I say basement fires, we had some with -- and I'm not
16 even sure, we had some with just a fire coming from the furnace.
17 We call it a structure fire once it gets into the structure of the
18 building.

19 Q. Um-hum.

20 A. But we are able to put all these fires out by shutting the
21 gas off and then using water cans to knock down any residual fire.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. So, it was pretty quick. We didn't set up a whole fire
24 ground operation. It was --

25 Q. Oh, okay.

1 A. We shut it down, wet it down, went to the next one.

2 Q. Oh, okay. So before you approached the house, you knew it
3 was a gas fire because the --

4 A. From people. A lot of people were around. People in front
5 of the house, you know, they were -- I read in the paper that some
6 people even went down with a garden hose and put fires out in
7 their basement --

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. -- because we couldn't respond to all of these calls.

10 Q. So the first thing you did was turn off the meter?

11 A. No. We shut it off -- I don't know individually what they
12 did. I think some of them just got close enough to turn off the
13 gas cock down there in the basement. And then eventually -- we
14 put the fire out and then shut it off at the meter.

15 Q. Okay. So, after Phillips --

16 A. Oh, and just some -- just so you know. Some of these -- a
17 lot of the modern houses they have meters outside. A lot of the
18 houses in Lawrence, the meters are still in the basement. So that
19 made our operations tougher because it made it harder to shut the
20 gas off.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. You had to get into the basement where the gas leak was and
23 the fire was to shut it off.

24 Q. Okay. And the ones in the inside are those older?

25 A. They're older, correct. And I know that there's a program

1 going on that's trying to get them all on the outside of the
2 house.

3 Q. Okay. Thank you.

4 A. But it's obvious you can't do it overnight.

5 Q. Right. Okay. So after Phillips, when you got those other
6 four you responded to those or did you have --

7 A. I didn't. I only responded to one call on Phillips Street.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I did dispatch our apparatus to various locations right
10 within, say, a 2-block area.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. Then I got the call for the explosion on Chickering.

13 Q. Got it. Chickering.

14 A. And that's when I left there and I -- I had -- and I know I
15 had our apparatus responding to this.

16 Q. Okay. So on Chickering, did you know about the man, the boy
17 in the car already?

18 A. Not until I got there.

19 Q. Okay. So just going back to Chickering then. You arrived
20 and they removed the chimney from -- they were in the process of
21 removing the chimney.

22 A. They were in the process of trying to get it off the young
23 guy --

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. -- and we used the extrication tools because it was just so

1 heavy we couldn't get it off even with several guys. And the jaws
2 opened up and we were pushing this off of him.

3 Q. Um-hum.

4 A. And then the jaws actually failed, which I had never seen
5 before. They just cut out and stopped working, and these things
6 are rated for move thousands of pounds of PSI. And we managed to
7 get the --

8 Q. Chimney.

9 A. -- chimney, the half -- part of a chimney off of him. And so
10 they pulled him out and then immediately the paramedics started
11 working him, CPR, and I know they transported him. I don't --
12 they were getting no pulse at the time and I thought they -- I'm
13 only hearing this second-handed. They brought him back and then
14 he later died at a Boston hospital.

15 Q. Was there anyone else in the car?

16 A. Not that I know of. As far as what I heard, and I don't know
17 any of this. This is just speculation.

18 Q. Okay. Okay, well -- that's okay.

19 A. He was there picking somebody up.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And then I heard somebody might have been in the car with
22 him, but there was nobody in the car when I was there besides him.

23 Q. Right.

24 A. That's what I can tell you.

25 Q. Okay. Do you know if -- so when you saw the house, you saw

1 the chimney -- can you describe the house?

2 A. The house is a one and a half story wood frame house with an
3 attached one-car garage, as I recall. It might have been two, but
4 I know there was an attached garage. And it had what we call like
5 a typical explosion, where you had the pressure knock down the
6 front wall of the building and there was debris all over the place
7 into the street. So we knew we had a gas explosion, could smell
8 gas. The rescue was able to shut the gas off, which is a top
9 priority because, I mean, it's an ignition source. That's what we
10 train -- you know, we do train for that. If you have a class
11 building explosion you have to kill the gas. That's the main
12 priority because now everybody -- the scene is not secured. The
13 extrication is not secured. This thing could just blow up on --
14 just flare up on us. So that was priority.

15 So, I knew -- we knew what we were dealing with and we were a
16 hundred percent sure it was a gas explosion. And we had -- I
17 don't know if you know Lieutenant Amero, who lives right in that
18 neighborhood on Cabot Road, he was going around with a wrench
19 shutting off numerous houses in the neighborhood, probably three-
20 quarters of the neighborhood. And he was putting -- marking it
21 with tape on the front door so people would know that the gas --
22 he was shutting them off at the meter. And I don't know if they
23 were in the basement or outside, but I saw him myself shutting
24 these houses off at the meter.

25 And he came up to me at the fire at Cabot Road and he says,

1 you want me to respond? Because they put out a general recall for
2 everybody. And I says no, keep doing what you're doing. Just
3 keep shutting these places off.

4 Q. He was off duty?

5 A. He was off duty.

6 Q. Was there anyone in the house?

7 A. I heard that the woman that lost her leg or both legs was in
8 the house. She was in the house when it exploded.

9 Q. Who did you hear from?

10 A. I heard this from the rescue company that was there.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And she was being treated by Lawrence General Hospital. I
13 think it was BLS.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. But our focus was on the young man in the car. Everybody
16 else was being treated.

17 Q. Okay. Do you know about other people in the house?

18 A. I only heard that that woman, they said somebody else might
19 have been in there, but I don't know that.

20 Q. Okay. So you killed the gas, and was the house on fire when
21 you --

22 A. Was not on fire.

23 Q. Okay. So --

24 A. And that's typically what happens in an explosion. Because
25 when you have gas and if it's released, it'll flash. If it's

1 confined it's going to explode, just like, you know, any kind of
2 detonation, if it's confined, that's what's going to happen. So
3 you're going to have a lateral -- walls go out laterally. And
4 sometimes you're going to have the roof fall right in, just
5 pancake collapse. But we didn't -- it wasn't that severe. It
6 blew out one side of the -- I would call it the AD corner of the
7 front and right side of the building.

8 Q. Did you see any burn marks?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay. So after --

11 A. But I wasn't there long. I was there maybe 10 minutes tops.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. I wasn't there for a long time.

14 Q. Right. So, then you left to go to another house fire.

15 A. Right. Literally around the corner.

16 Q. At Colonial Road?

17 A. Yep.

18 Q. And then Wedgewood was the townhouse and the condo?

19 A. Yeah, the two different condos.

20 Q. That was after Colonial.

21 A. That was after Colonial.

22 Q. So at the townhouse and condos --

23 A. And they had Springfield Street going at the same time, but
24 the chief had command there.

25 Q. Okay. At the townhouse and condo, when you came up to it,

1 where did you see the fire?

2 A. Well, I mean, it's a little loop. There's South Street and
3 there's two different entrances on Wedgewood. I went in the north
4 side and saw Engine 9 there probably 100 yards in from the street,
5 and I saw that they were in defensive operations. They were
6 outside the building with two hand lines working the fire. And
7 oddly enough -- I didn't expect to see it, and I see another line
8 off the truck on the other side of the street and I have guys in
9 that building. So we had two fires working at the same time,
10 which is pretty unusual.

11 Q. So how far was the townhouse from the condo?

12 A. Well, I mean, the townhouse -- we have a cluster of four
13 townhouses all connected on one side of the street. And directly
14 across the street you have a cluster of four townhouses connected
15 on the other side of the street. And both fires oddly enough were
16 on the right end of the complex of the D side.

17 Q. In the condo?

18 A. In the condo. So these are townhouses. The condo is just --
19 they're townhouses. They're two floors, two and a half story.
20 They're condos because they're ownership; they're not rentals.
21 And so -- but there's four different units in that one cluster.

22 Q. Oh, but they're townhouse style?

23 A. Townhouse style as opposed to, say, garden style one story.

24 Q. Got it, okay. Thank you. And police department was already
25 on the scene for the townhouses?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. And that --

3 A. I had the firefighter that lived in the house -- one of them.
4 I had a retired firefighter that lived close by; he was helping,
5 and a firefighter's son that lived there that was helping. And it
6 was kind of --

7 Q. And that was the first time you saw the gas company
8 technician, at the condos?

9 A. Yes. He came up to me and identified himself.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And I asked him where the gas shutoffs were in the house and
12 he says they're all in the rear. He says I've shut this one off
13 to the fire building -- he shut the two fire buildings off first.
14 And I asked him, I said, do you need assistance? You know,
15 because we don't send -- if we send a tech in there to shut down
16 gas, we always send our guy with them and we check it for carbon
17 monoxide and -- because it's usually very early or right after the
18 fire scene's over we bring these guys down to make sure everything
19 is buttoned up and shut off correctly. So they assisted him, the
20 rescue company assisted him just gaining entry into the back of
21 these units. And so we -- I'm sure that all of them were shut
22 down before we left.

23 Q. And do you know if they started shutting down meters for that
24 whole block, did he say?

25 A. That I don't know.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. I was on to Jefferson Street by that time.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. I don't know this, but this guy was really like ready to do
5 anything he could for us. So I don't think he would have said
6 okay I'm done in this complex. I'm sure he was shutting other
7 stuff off while he was calling for instructions. Just by what he
8 did for us there, I don't think he just went home.

9 Q. Was he wearing Columbia Gas?

10 A. No. Just regular street clothes.

11 Q. Oh. So was he off duty?

12 A. I don't know because they don't wear uniforms.

13 Q. Oh, okay.

14 A. So I don't know.

15 Q. Okay. That's fine.

16 A. I don't know if he lived in the complex. His truck wasn't
17 there. You know, maybe he couldn't get his truck in on South
18 Street. But he told me he worked for the gas company; he wanted
19 to shut things down. I says, let's go.

20 Q. Okay. So then you went and responded to an explosion on
21 Jefferson Street?

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. And that was a fully involved house fire?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. We went defensive right immediately. There was no way we
2 were going to put anybody in there.

3 Q. But by then there was an out-of-town chief who was taking
4 care of that?

5 A. He responded right after me, as I recall. And so we had set
6 up -- we had it surrounded. I told him what my concerns were. I
7 had a primary line coming off their electrical line, their primary
8 going into that building was on fire on that side. I said I don't
9 want anybody on this side of the building. I don't want any
10 apparatus near it so it can fall on it. And I said I want a hand
11 line on this exposure. Other than, that this is pretty
12 straightforward. Just surround and drowned it, and I said, okay,
13 I'm -- after I communicated that to him, I was on to Brookfield
14 Street.

15 Q. All right. So once you got at Brookfield, do you know what
16 time this was when you got to Brookfield?

17 A. I would have to say this can all be -- they have the log up
18 at fire alarm. I want to guess between 5:30 and 6, or something
19 like that.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Maybe 5. I mean --

22 Q. What time did you -- do you remember finishing Brookfield
23 around what time?

24 A. I really -- I basically saw that we had adequate manpower in
25 incident command so I pretty much just went back to the Level 1

1 staging.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. I spent more time at Brookfield later because we did have --
4 did I tell you we had a rekindle at Brookfield later on that
5 night?

6 Q. So, at Brookfield was the meter turned off?

7 A. Like -- I don't know. I'm sure it was before we left.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. But I was there just momentarily at Brookfield Street the
10 first time.

11 Q. Okay. So when you say rekindle, it was just another fire?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. So let's just talk about Brookfield Street for one moment.

15 Q. Uh-huh.

16 A. The first time I was there briefly. Boston deputy chief was
17 there. Lawrence personnel and Boston, maybe somebody else, but it
18 was all knocked down at that time. And then I went back after --
19 it was after midnight for a rekindle. And the sequence, you know,
20 where that fell in, I'm not sure, but that information can be
21 found out through fire alarm.

22 Q. Sure. Okay. And then you said between 6 and 7 the calls
23 slowed down. You were getting more gas odor calls.

24 A. Yes. We were even getting smoke, people seeing smoke. We
25 get out there, it was nothing. So people were panicked.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. So they were just calling us, and then they were just saying,
3 hey, when you're here, can you just shut our gas off because they
4 -- somebody obviously didn't. We were sending like three pumps
5 and a ladder to these calls, but we had -- at that point we had
6 plenty of --

7 Q. So at this point you were working strictly with Lawrence?

8 A. I was working -- no. We -- they moved up so we -- once
9 somebody was dispatched, I made sure that there was IC, somebody
10 in charge going with these three trucks. So I made sure that the
11 guy from Lawrence, which was the pilot to show them where to go,
12 was in the first pump, the first two pumps. We pulled in a ladder
13 behind them, because what they were doing prior they were sending
14 the three pumps and the ladder would follow. And the way we
15 operate we want a ladder in front of the building. So I said,
16 look, how are we going to get a ladder in front of the building if
17 there's three pumps in front of him. So the ladder follows the
18 first two pumps and -- so we modified the way we were operating
19 pretty early on.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And so this was a hodgepodge of crews just in the order that
22 they moved up. So I could have three different pumps from three
23 different communities and a different ladder.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. So it was just next man up, next man up, next man up. That's

1 the way we operated.

2 Q. Got it. So when you say Level 1 staging, could you explain
3 that?

4 A. Level 1 staging is when we have a large incident and we have
5 called for mutual aid companies. We wouldn't have usually staging
6 for just something that just involved Lawrence because we only
7 have seven pieces of apparatus. But when you get into, you know,
8 5, 10, in this case 70, you cannot -- you have to stage these
9 pieces in a location. When you have a Level 1 or a staging
10 supervisor, and they make a list of who they have on scene and who
11 they are dispatching. And that's to make it manageable. And you
12 don't want to have 25 trucks around a building or around a block
13 and everyone in each other's way. So everybody that's called
14 there is dispatched for a reason.

15 So this particular night, they were going to various calls.
16 They weren't all going to the same call.

17 Q. And where was Level 1 staging?

18 A. That was at the old Showcase Cinema.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. The 7 through 14. There's two of them. One was just
21 demolished. That was the original Showcase Cinema 1 through 7 on
22 Winthrop Ave. This one is behind it, behind the old Denny's
23 because now it's not operational anymore, and that's -- so it's
24 probably one of the biggest parking lots that we have in South
25 Lawrence. So it's right off the highway, right off of 114. It's

1 a good place to stage.

2 Q. And when was that first organized?

3 A. The chief put out orders early on that he wanted -- because
4 dispatch was saying we're out of pumps and ladders to send. He
5 says -- I don't recall exactly what he said. But he said go
6 through -- because we have predetermined run cards. I know that
7 we have first alarm through tenth alarm set up in advance. So
8 every alarm that we call -- if I call for a second alarm, I'm
9 going to get additional three pumps and a ladder. And that's
10 predesignated which communities. I probably have one here that I
11 can show you, but it's all predetermined. So the fire alarm
12 operator simply just goes down the list and calls those companies
13 and they backfill it normally at the station. And then as they're
14 called, they go to the fire scene and then the mutual aid
15 companies -- the new mutual aid companies will fill in the central
16 station.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. But this was such a big scale we departed from that normal
19 operation and operated out of Level 1 staging at the Showcase, the
20 old Showcase. And then we had the scope expanded so much that we
21 had, like I said, 70 pieces of apparatus. It wasn't manageable at
22 that location, so we set up a Level 2 staging at Market Basket.
23 It's actually called the North Andover Mall where the Market
24 Basket is, on 114, probably half a mile away.

25 Q. Okay. And that's for -- and so Level 2 is when you start

1 bringing in more?

2 A. Start bringing in more. So what the plan was, every -- if we
3 dispatched three pumps and a ladder to a call, people would move
4 up. And then they'd call Level 2 staging, give me three pumps and
5 a ladder; they came in. And we had like a one-way operation
6 around the Showcase. And then once you did your call, all right,
7 you would go -- you wouldn't come back to Level 1 staging. You
8 would go to Level 2 staging for rehab. So that's our way to cycle
9 people around so the same guys wouldn't be going to the same --
10 that we're not beating up any one company.

11 Q. So Level 1 started around?

12 A. I would have to say within an hour, 5, 5:30 max. It was
13 pretty quick.

14 Q. Okay. And Level 2?

15 A. That was probably, I'm guessing, and anything I can say
16 can -- we have records of through dispatch, but I'm thinking it
17 was around 8 o'clock, 7 o'clock.

18 Q. Okay. All right. And then -- okay. So when did you call
19 the Columbia guy, Bart?

20 A. Bart Maderios. He's our contact person. I know people at
21 the gas company, but Bart is kind of our go-to guy.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. So he -- like I said, he's the training guy. He trains us
24 and I have known him for years.

25 Q. But what time did you call him when you weren't getting an

1 answer?

2 A. I was calling just for the gas -- I wasn't -- I didn't call
3 for the gas company specifically, you know, like have the gas
4 company respond to this location like I normally would. We knew
5 we had an overpressurization problem. The gas company was
6 notified. So I'm assuming they were just -- they respond quickly.
7 So I know they responded, and this is not just -- it's beyond the
8 scope of one truck coming to one place. So I'm sure they went
9 through their chain of command and tried to figure out what
10 exactly was going on. But I don't know how that all played out.

11 Q. That's fine. But you said --

12 A. But I knew they were working on it, but I wanted to get some
13 indication of what -- is this being resolved? Is it totally
14 uncontrolled? What exactly are we dealing with? And they --
15 dispatch said we still haven't heard back from them as far as, you
16 know, we've got it under control. And this may have happened.
17 I'm sure it happened at some point, but it wasn't communicated to
18 me.

19 Q. Right. And you --

20 A. I kind of just figured out that the calls started dropping.

21 Q. So you said within 2 hours you hadn't got enough information
22 so you called Bart?

23 A. I didn't call Bart directly.

24 Q. Oh, okay.

25 A. But I was -- nobody had called -- you got to remember that

1 there's so much traffic over the air, and I'm saying -- I just
2 thought for a moment; I said we still haven't heard is this under
3 control, what is the status of the overpressurization problem, and
4 I couldn't get an answer to it. But obviously they're working on
5 it and the pressure came down. And after that initial, you know,
6 five, six fires, whatever we had -- I mean, structure fires, the
7 only fires we had after that, as I recall, were rekindles. So I
8 didn't have any more gas explosions or I didn't have any
9 overpressurization after about 2 hours. So I assumed that they
10 have a handle on it.

11 Q. Okay. And then when did your shift start that day?

12 A. Officially at 0800, but we usually get there an hour early.
13 So I was there about 7 o'clock in the morning.

14 Q. Okay. And it's --

15 A. It's a 24-hour shift.

16 Q. Okay. And you were relieved at 7 a.m. the following --

17 A. Approximately. And then I probably left about 8, maybe even
18 9, because there was a lot to pass on to the incoming deputy.

19 Q. Okay. And with any of your calls did you also deal with
20 injuries at any of them?

21 A. We did have injuries. I know -- I can give you names, but I
22 know Firefighter Pat Driscoll was injured. He went down a flight
23 of stairs. He was -- I think this was at the Springfield Street
24 fire. I wasn't at that fire. He was taken to the hospital. I
25 know that. Captain Fleming, who is his officer, was taken to the

1 hospital. I don't know the nature of his injury or if it was heat
2 exhaustion. Somebody said it was heat exhaustion. I know Jose
3 Ortiz was at the Colonial Road fire.

4 Q. Is he a firefighter?

5 A. He's a firefighter. He was taken to the hospital for heat
6 exhaustion, I believe.

7 Q. So you listed three -- I'm sorry. Go ahead.

8 A. Three, and there's I believe one more, actually two more.
9 One was Gene, firefighter Gene Jimenez. He was -- I don't know
10 what fire he was at. He wasn't with me. He had chest pains and
11 due to smoke inhalation he was treated for carbon monoxide
12 poisoning at the hospital and -- because they ran out of tanks.
13 We carry only so many tanks on the trucks. Normally if the rescue
14 is with us we reload bottles, but they didn't have that luxury so
15 they were going in without tanks. And he had -- I know he had
16 chest pains. And he's only 25 years old so I didn't figure it was
17 a heart attack; I figured it was smoke related.

18 Q. So four that you know of?

19 A. And then Lieutenant Maglio went -- put his leg through a
20 floor. I think it was at Wedgewood. But I don't think he went to
21 the hospital. That's all that I can recall.

22 Q. Okay. So officially, if you can give me a list of all the
23 firefighters that have been injured?

24 A. Certainly.

25 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. So that's all I have.

1 MR. CURRIE: I have one quick question.

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, sure.

3 BY MR. CURRIE:

4 Q. How many firemen -- you said you only have seven pieces of
5 apparatus in the city.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. How many firemen do you have on duty on a normal truck?

8 A. We run with a minimum of 22, and maximum would be 28.

9 Q. How many did you have that night?

10 A. Twenty-two. We were at the minimum that particular day when
11 the calls first started coming in.

12 MS. GUNARATNAM: And you are a volunteer or --

13 MR. LOUGHLIN: No, a paid professional.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Paid. Okay.

15 MR. LOUGHLIN: I give those volunteers credit.

16 MS. GUNARATNAM: So I'll go around the room.

17 BY MS. HALLIDAY:

18 Q. For the rekindles, can you describe what causes it to
19 rekindle if the gas is off?

20 A. Typically, in this city anything built before World War II is
21 balloon frame construction. So many times the fire is hidden in
22 walls and ceilings, and we do the best we can opening up. We use
23 axes and hooks to pull plaster ceilings and walls to expose the
24 fire and then put it out. And we have thermal energy cameras that
25 detect heat, and we can scan buildings and rooms and walls so as

1 not to do unnecessary damage. If we see a wall is cold we are not
2 going to pull that wall and do damage unnecessarily.

3 So rekindles are common. We try obviously to keep -- a
4 rekindle is something that if we say a fire is out we want the
5 fire to be out. We don't want to go back and it makes us look
6 bad. It's like, well, how could you leave the scene and it's on
7 fire again.

8 What happened that day and the reason there was more
9 rekindles, it was -- the gas was shutoff, the power was shutoff to
10 these buildings, so there was no ignition source in these
11 buildings. So they rekindled because of hidden fire and the
12 inability for us to do what I would call a normal overhaul
13 process, so -- because as I recall it wasn't windy that day. When
14 you get a windy day you kind of get more rekindles because of
15 oxygen being reintroduced into the building.

16 Q. And it was windy?

17 A. It was not.

18 Q. Not windy.

19 A. So every fire that I went to, with the exception of
20 Chickering Road, we had a rekindle because of the hasty nature of
21 what we were doing. I would attribute to that. Not through, you
22 know, any incompetence or lack of being thorough, it was just --

23 Q. Or gas migrating from somewhere else?

24 A. No. It had nothing to do with any exposure -- I mean any
25 ignition sources. That was not the cause of it. Because when we

1 pulled up to them, they were all in the walls. They were just
2 something you wouldn't see with your eyes. You can detect it with
3 thermal imaging camera. Every single one, with the exception
4 of -- Springfield Street was in the walls. Brookfield Street was
5 in the walls. Wedgewood was a 2 by 4 that was exposed, not in the
6 walls. And Jefferson Street basically pancake collapse so you had
7 hidden fire and we couldn't put personnel in there. It was too
8 dangerous to put somebody in there, so you couldn't see all the
9 fire.

10 And normally we would've had somebody on the scene and a lot
11 of times we'll have a fire watch. We'll have a pump dedicated to
12 stay there all night and we will have investigators there. So we
13 usually don't leave a fire scene until several hours after it's
14 out. We couldn't do that that night. And Springfield Street --
15 some of these came in like several hours after we had already left
16 the scene.

17 Q. So the shutoff valves, did you have any problems with getting
18 a hundred percent shut off?

19 A. Not that I know of. Nobody said they -- nobody told me they
20 couldn't shut the gas off. We didn't have any mechanical
21 problems.

22 Q. And were they all shut off at the house or did you use any
23 curb valves?

24 A. Most of the ones -- we don't have a tool for the curb valves.
25 We call the gas company for that. So everything we shut off was

1 either in the basement or out at the -- the ones that had meters
2 outside the building, we shut them off outside the building or
3 both. We might have initially shut it off in the basement and
4 once the fire was under control, then they shut it off for good
5 measure at the meter.

6 Q. What's your typical -- so if you have a gas fire, what's the
7 typical procedure for houses like on either side or --

8 A. What our procedure is, we normally are going to respond to
9 any gas emergency with three pumps a ladder and a rescue company
10 along with deputy chief. And if we get a call, we know we're
11 coming -- let's say we have a strong odor of gas or reported
12 strong odor of gas, we're going to do an initial investigation.
13 The rescue company's first responsibility is to shut down the gas.
14 So we have a dedicated company to shut the gas down and then we go
15 in with our -- it all depends if the building is occupied or not
16 occupied, if it's on fire or not. So we will do different things
17 based on what we have in front of us.

18 But we have meters that will meter the LEL what we have
19 for -- if we are in explosive range or not. Because sometimes you
20 could have a building full of gas and if you ventilate it you can
21 bring it back into the explosive range and cause an explosion. So
22 we basically respond based on what our situation is. Being aware
23 that, you know, gas is lighter than air, we want to vent, but
24 sometimes by venting you could cause an explosion if you don't
25 control the ignition sources.

1 Q. So is there any procedure of you have a gas to look to see
2 where that gas may have migrated or if it's in houses next to it?

3 A. Generally no. The only time we'll do -- look for migration
4 within the ground is if somebody hits a gas line in the street.
5 That gas, if it doesn't -- if it can't permeate through the
6 ground, it can get into adjacent houses, particularly if it's a
7 field stone foundation versus a concrete foundation. And so,
8 typically what the gas company will do, they will vent that.

9 So if somebody hits a gas line, they want that gas to
10 release. So they immediately vent that. And the more that vents
11 up away from the incident, the less chance you have of this
12 migration going through the ground.

13 So that's the only time we really check for migration through
14 the ground, when it's in the ground initially. But on a gas call
15 where it's a pipe above, we don't have to worry about it traveling
16 in the ground for the most part. I mean, it could go through a
17 pipe, but that would be very unusual.

18 Q. For the leak calls that you got, what -- did you have
19 adequate people then to respond to it? You still did the three
20 pumps and ladder for leak calls after that?

21 A. Eventually. Once we had the personnel and we had Level 1
22 staging set up. But initially these were just one piece of
23 apparatus going to this by themselves. It was just what we had.
24 We just didn't have the manpower at that point and the second
25 alarm companies that respond quickly from out of town weren't on

1 the scene yet.

2 MS. HALLIDAY: Okay. That will be all my questions for now.
3 Thank you.

4 MR. LOUGHLIN: Thank you.

5 MS. GUNARATNAM: Sheila.

6 BY MS. DOIRON:

7 Q. When we talked about where the gas guy came back and he was
8 shutting off -- I think this was the condo you were talking about.

9 A. Yeah, the -- Wedgewood. That was Wedgewood. Yeah.

10 Q. Yeah. He came up and he ID'd himself.

11 A. Yep.

12 Q. And then he was shutting off the stuff.

13 A. And I did ask him, I said do you know what's going on? Do
14 you have any idea if it's being mitigated or what the status was?
15 I knew it was being mitigated but I didn't know what the status
16 was. And he said I have no idea.

17 Q. Yeah. Okay. So just on -- of course, this was a different
18 situation, things were happening one after another. But normally
19 you would call -- if you thought there was gas involved, you would
20 call when you report to a fire --

21 A. Right.

22 Q. -- if you think gas is involved. But he just showed up? Or
23 how --

24 A. Yeah. He was just there. All of a sudden he's there.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And identified himself. Because there was a lot of people
2 there. So he just came out of crowd and he came up to me and told
3 -- I'm sure he told me his name but I don't remember what, I
4 mean --

5 Q. So were there -- I mean, I don't know the geography. So were
6 there -- so you got this condo unit and this guy just showed up,
7 and you said there was a lot of other people there. Was that
8 because -- was there other activity going on, other stuff?

9 A. No. There was just people at home. There were people home
10 and there was just people around them.

11 Q. Oh, okay.

12 A. South Street was blocked, basically congested. It wasn't
13 moving. There was just -- we had retired firemen there, you know,
14 dragging hose line. It was just -- it just happened to be -- the
15 police were on scene, but they were blocking things off so
16 vehicles wouldn't come in and get in our way.

17 Q. Yep.

18 A. I wouldn't call it chaotic scene but there was -- it was
19 people around and there was a fluid situation, you know.

20 Q. Okay. And then just again so I understand from your end in
21 the field how things come to you. You said after a couple of
22 hours you saw things start slowing down so you presumed --

23 A. Right. I did presume that. Because I'd say, well, we're not
24 getting any more gas explosions, we're not getting any
25 overpressurization causing -- we did get gas leaks, people's --

1 odor of gas. But we didn't get any more fires that I recall after
2 that other than rekindles.

3 Q. Okay. And just normal procedure, if there were like
4 something going on or pressurization or something, normally would
5 -- it sounded like normally you thought you would've heard
6 something from your dispatch that something was clear or the gas
7 company called and said something?

8 A. Yeah, normally -- normally, other than that incident I had a
9 couple of years ago when we had probably a dozen houses involved,
10 we'll have the -- like we'll dispatch. I don't call, generally
11 call the gas company unless I have multiple calls of a punctured
12 gas line. Then I'm not going to wait. I'm going to say, get me
13 the gas company. Ordinarily under like an odor of gas in the
14 house, we wait till we get there, pretty much like bird-dog the
15 call. We're not going to -- in other words, we don't want the gas
16 company rolling unless we have a gas problem. We get there, it's
17 carbon monoxide or a gas leak, we call. First thing we do, get
18 the gas company rolling.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. That's our normal procedure.

21 Q. And do you ask your dispatch to call?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay. So the dispatch calls, okay.

24 A. So we'll call our dispatch: We've got a gas leak here or we
25 have a controlled gas leak; it was leaking from the stove. We tag

1 the stove. We call the gas company. I keep a pump on the scene
2 until the gas company shows up, and then we check it with our
3 meters. Generally when you get an odor of gas there's no carbon
4 monoxide because there's no combustion. We just check with our
5 meter anyway.

6 Q. Okay. And then this is just a general "how does it work
7 every day" question. If someone calls 911 and says I smell gas --

8 A. Right.

9 Q. -- do you know what your dispatch does besides telling you --

10 A. I know what they dispatch.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And sometimes there is confusion because just the word gas is
13 -- you talking about natural gas, talking about gasoline, are you
14 talking about fumes? But people tend to lump it all together and
15 say gas. And when somebody says gas to us, especially in a house,
16 we are not thinking gasoline. We're thinking natural gas. So
17 that leads to confusion sometimes.

18 So they're told to ask questions, probative -- natural gas,
19 gasoline, exhaust? You know, we're going to go there and do our
20 thing anyway, but it's nice to know, have good accurate
21 information before you get to the scene. So we have a lot of
22 experienced people up there and they are good at asking those
23 questions. Whether there's a written policy of what to ask, that
24 I don't know.

25 Q. Um-hum. But then, if it sounds like it's natural gas, then

1 your dispatch will call the gas company?

2 A. No. They won't call. They will not.

3 Q. Until you --

4 A. Until I tell them to call the gas company.

5 Q. Got it.

6 A. Because we'll go out and they say I smell gas and it's
7 gasoline. I smell gas, it's exhaust from a car. That's not gas;
8 that's exhaust. So I'm not going to -- we don't call the gas
9 company unless we think we need them.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. The only exception would be gas line in the street, multiple
12 calls strong odor of gas on Jackson Street; I'm calling the gas
13 company. I'm 99 percent sure I have something, so I'm going to
14 get them rolling.

15 MS. DOIRON: Okay. Good. Thank you.

16 DET. LT. ZIPPER: I got a couple questions, but I was
17 wondering --we've been at it for about 90 minutes. I was going to
18 ask you if you could get us a run card and maybe we could take a
19 quick break. Is that something we can do? I have a few
20 questions. Can we do that?

21 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

22 DET. LT. ZIPPER: Can you pause it? So you could you grab us
23 that run card so they can understand. You talked about a run card
24 --

25 (Off the record.)

1 (On the record.)

2 MR. CURRIE: Okay. We're back. We just took a quick break.
3 Captain, you have more?

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: All right. We're back.

5 DET. LT. ZIPPER: We're back rolling?

6 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yes.

7 BY DET. LT. ZIPPER:

8 Q. Hello. This is Paul Zipper. I've got some questions for the
9 deputy chief. The first question I had was: In your
10 descriptions, is there someone else that you would identify as
11 having -- being a good witness to some of the things you observed
12 during those time periods that would maybe know what you know and
13 know something that this group would be interested in finding out
14 about other than yourself?

15 A. Chief Moriarty, because whatever I wasn't at I'm pretty sure
16 he was at.

17 Q. Okay. Good. No, that's good. Next question is: You talked
18 a lot about this gentleman you described as a gas company
19 employee. I think you said you thought he lived in the
20 neighborhood?

21 A. No. He -- his name is Bart Maderios. I don't know where he
22 lives, but --

23 Q. No, no. The gentleman who was on scene --

24 A. Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

25 Q. Did you have a sense that that gentleman lived in the

1 neighborhood?

2 A. I did. I did.

3 Q. In one of the condos? One of those four?

4 A. I believe -- I don't recall, but he was not -- I don't
5 believe he was dispatched by the gas company.

6 Q. Right. Did you have a sense he was living in one of those
7 four units we talked about?

8 A. I did.

9 Q. What address was that or what street is that?

10 A. Wedgewood.

11 Q. Wedgewood. And we could drive by that and you could point
12 that out, right? I think that's something we may want to do. So
13 if we go to Wedgewood, you could point out the -- I guess you call
14 that a condo?

15 A. It's a condo development.

16 Q. All right. No, no, that may be helpful.

17 The next thing is, you discussed firefighter injuries. Do
18 you have an idea of how many civilians were injured? You know, I
19 know we discussed the collapse.

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. But any other injuries? And I know some woman you said maybe
22 had some leg injuries.

23 A. Right.

24 Q. But any other civilian injuries that you're aware of?

25 A. Not that I can recall.

1 Q. Okay. So you know of two.

2 A. I know about -- okay

3 Q. No, no, that's excellent. And then the other thing is, as
4 far as explosions go -- I'm not talking about some of the fires
5 you put out, but how many explosions you're aware of? I know we
6 had the main one I think on Chickering.

7 A. Yep.

8 Q. Any other explosions you can think of that --

9 A. I don't know. Jefferson Street may have been an explosion.
10 But like I said, usually when you have an explosion you don't have
11 a flash fire.

12 Q. Yep.

13 A. That was fully involved. I think that would have been just
14 an overpressurization that ignited.

15 Q. So maybe the better question is the major incidents would
16 have been Jefferson and Chickering? Are those the major ones?

17 A. Yeah, I would say so.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And not knowing what exactly happened at Springfield Street
20 initially.

21 Q. Okay. Springfield would be one that we look at. Okay. Next
22 question: You described a firefighters describing to you when
23 they arrived that there was a blow torch affect. Could you give
24 us the name of someone that might be able to -- you know, that
25 actually responded and saw that?

1 A. Yep. That would be Lieutenant Pat LaFrance.

2 Q. Pat LaFrance. And where --

3 A. He works out of the Central Station.

4 Q. Lieutenant Pat LaFrance. Central Station?

5 A. Central Station.

6 Q. Does someone -- who do we get his contact information from?

7 A. Right from -- fire alarm has his contact information.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Actually no, I have his --

10 Q. Yeah, that would be -- if you have it, that would be great.

11 A. I don't know where he lives, but --

12 Q. That's okay. We can track him down.

13 A. And Captain Driscoll too.

14 Q. Captain Driscoll. All right. Captain, that's Captain --

15 A. James Driscoll.

16 Q. James Driscoll.

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: Sorry. Who are these two people?

18 DET. LT. ZIPPER: These are folks that I asked about that
19 would have been able to describe the blow torch affect.

20 BY DET. LT. ZIPPER:

21 Q. So you talked about it --

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. -- but these are people who would have seen it. That may be
24 helpful to us, what they're -- actually see.

25 A. Okay. LaFrance.

- 1 Q. All right. Go ahead.
- 2 A. 978.
- 3 Q. 978.
- 4 A. 682.
- 5 Q. 682.
- 6 A. 0142.
- 7 Q. And do you have Captain Driscoll's info?
- 8 A. I do. He works -- he is here and this is where he is
- 9 permanently assigned.
- 10 Q. Okay.
- 11 A. And cell phone 978.
- 12 Q. 978.
- 13 A. 420.
- 14 Q. 420.
- 15 A. 2141.
- 16 Q. All right. Thank you.
- 17 A. So they both work in Group 1. LaFrance may even be here
- 18 today. This is his normal day to work.
- 19 Q. Okay. Thank you. The other -- so I asked about the
- 20 explosion, the blow torch affect. You also mentioned a lieutenant
- 21 on your department who was actually off duty and shutting off gas.
- 22 A. Yes.
- 23 Q. I didn't catch that name.
- 24 A. Lieutenant Dave Amero.
- 25 Q. All right. Dave, and again --

- 1 A. Amero. Let me see if I have him.
- 2 Q. Dave Amero.
- 3 A. Dave Amero, 978.
- 4 Q. 978.
- 5 A. 835.
- 6 Q. 835.
- 7 A. 0471.
- 8 Q. So it's 835-0471?
- 9 A. Correct.
- 10 Q. All right. I just got a couple --
- 11 A. He's Group 2. He's scheduled -- well, he may be off
- 12 tomorrow, but his normal day to work would be tomorrow.
- 13 Q. All right. And then outside of those gentlemen, I have just
- 14 two more questions. One of them involves the -- regarding the
- 15 meters. In your memory, were the meters all inside meters that
- 16 we're talking about or were there any outside meters?
- 17 A. There were outside meters at Wedgewood.
- 18 Q. Wedgewood had outside meters.
- 19 A. That's newer construction within the last let's say 25 years.
- 20 Q. Perfect. All right. And so Wedgewood. Then the last
- 21 question I had is --
- 22 A. I think the meters were outside on Brookfield.
- 23 Q. Okay.
- 24 A. Meters were outside on Springfield Street.
- 25 Q. Uh-huh.

1 A. And I don't recall on Jefferson Street.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And what's the other one.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Chickering.

5 MR. LOUGHLIN: Chickering, I don't recall on Chickering.

6 BY DET. LT. ZIPPER:

7 Q. Okay. And my final question on that same chain is as far as
8 ignition sources in the basement that, you know, once we have a
9 gas leak. To your knowledge, on the inside meters that had some
10 type of a leak, what would the ignition sources have been in a
11 basement?

12 A. Oh, it could be a hot water heater.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. It could be a furnace in the wintertime.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. I mean, you do have some furnaces that will produce hot
17 water, like a boiler assist. So you -- normally furnaces are only
18 operational when it's cold out, but it depends on how their water
19 heater situation is, they could be operational. That's why we
20 shut the power off so we could control the ignition sources.

21 Q. And we are going to look for the run card. Where would we
22 track a run card down?

23 A. I can get you one at Central Station.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And fire alarm -- I mean, the easiest thing would be right at

1 Central Station.

2 Q. Perfect. And on that, and --

3 DET. LT. ZIPPER: I don't have any other questions. Thank
4 you.

5 MR. CURRIE: Anybody else have any questions?

6 MS. GUNARATNAM: I have one more.

7 MR. CURRIE: One more follow-up.

8 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

9 Q. Just with regard to hazardous materials, do you have guys
10 trained specifically for that?

11 A. We train to an awareness level. We do -- we used to have
12 people that were on the team but I mean we look at hazardous
13 materials -- I mean, we deal with hazardous materials all the
14 time, only we sometimes don't recognize it as to call it a
15 hazardous materials call. For instance, gas calls we deal with
16 all the time; it's a hazardous material. We deal with gasoline
17 spills; it's hazardous material. And if we need assistance on
18 that, we'll call for the regional hazmat team. We use that more
19 so for like chemical spills particularly inside of a building or
20 some kind of release that we need assistance, a higher level of
21 training for or something that's beyond the scope of what we can
22 do.

23 BY MR. CURRIE:

24 Q. So, you don't have a hazmat squad per se?

25 A. We do not.

1 Q. You have a regional one --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- and as far as you're aware, no one on your shift was a
4 hazmat technician or anything like that?

5 A. Well, Captain Martin was on duty. He has been a member of
6 the hazmat team for over 20 years, and he was assisting our
7 incident command that day.

8 MR. CURRIE: And a fire alarm --

9 (Off the record.)

10 (On the record.)

11 MR. CURRIE: Once again, we had to pause for a fire dispatch.

12 BY MR. CURRIE:

13 Q. You were saying the captain that was on your shift had over
14 20 years of experience in hazmat?

15 A. Yeah, 30 years on the job, over 20 years on the hazmat team.
16 And we were using him as a resource. He's also our training
17 officer, safety officer. He actually has 32 years.

18 Q. Excellent.

19 MR. CURRIE: Okay. Thank you.

20 Questions? Julie? Is it Julie?

21 MS. HALLIDAY: Yes.

22 MR. CURRIE: Okay.

23 BY MS. HALLIDAY:

24 Q. Do you guys do any like internet messaging when you have --
25 you talked about some of the communication challenges. Is that

1 part of your routine?

2 A. No. No.

3 Q. And the other one was, so when -- did you guys do the
4 evacuations to this area?

5 A. We were doing evacuations. I don't recall any situation that
6 I went to on Friday that we had to evacuate. They were all self-
7 evacuated.

8 Q. Okay. So is that a different interview of how the evacuation
9 happened?

10 A. But, I mean, when -- we didn't go block to block, house to
11 house evacuating people. We just concentrated on the calls that
12 we went to. And I wish we could have spent more time at these
13 calls to -- our normal procedure would be going to the neighbors
14 and we would be shutting off as many gas as we can. But we were
15 just overwhelmed. So,= we were going to the -- getting calls
16 house exploded, house fully involved, people are trapped. We get
17 the calls people are trapped, so that just -- we just go to that
18 call rather than stay at a house to shut off the house next door
19 that had a problem. That's what we were forced to do.

20 Q. And I'm not familiar with what the process was of when the
21 mandatory evacuation happened?

22 A. That I don't know. I don't know. That was determined by the
23 EOC and I don't know when that happened.

24 Q. So you guys weren't a part of making sure people had
25 evacuated?

1 A. We were just responding to emergency calls; that's it. And
2 then they transitioned around early -- what's today, Saturday?

3 Q. Yes.

4 A. Early Friday morning, so everybody at Level 1 staging
5 transitioned to working with the gas company and PD, the police,
6 to going around and shutting off gas. All right. Everybody that
7 was Lawrence Fire Department, we were responding to emergency
8 calls only. So we -- that's when we differentiated between
9 emergency calls and going to proactively shut off gas.

10 And we also hired a pump and a ladder, Engine 1, Engine 2;
11 they are spare pieces that we manned. So we're having them go to
12 every gas call or odor of gas, and they're going to run so we
13 don't deplete -- if we get a working fire we don't want to have --
14 chasing gas calls and then we don't have anybody to respond to a
15 fire. So that's the other thing we're doing till this is
16 resolved.

17 Q. Do you guys use any texting to communicate?

18 A. No.

19 Q. No.

20 A. Other than -- well, let me say this. We do text for
21 callbacks, but not on the fire ground. But, I mean, if we need
22 additional personnel or if I'm calling for overtime for the
23 following day or if somebody goes home sick or somebody gets hurt,
24 that's done through texting.

25 Q. Or to like the gas company, would that --

1 A. No.

2 Q. No. Or to --

3 A. Actually, I don't want to say no because I don't know what
4 they do at fire alarm. I'm assuming they have emergency numbers
5 that only we have, that the fire departments have. We don't call
6 the same number as the public does.

7 (Off the record.)

8 (On the record.)

9 MR. CURRIE: And we had another time out because another fire
10 dispatched. So we're back on.

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: Go ahead.

12 BY MS. HALLIDAY:

13 Q. So, the texting, that's not something that you have set up or
14 like some type of communication to the community through text, a
15 global text?

16 A. We don't have reverse 911. And we don't have a way -- like
17 some communities have to put out a message for, say, evacuation or
18 any kind of chemical spill, anything widespread.

19 Q. No broadcast message?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Anything that you post on your website or --

22 A. I don't know. But as far as communication between us and the
23 gas company, we have a number that I'm sure other fire
24 departments, police department have to call, a direct line --

25 Q. To their control room.

1 A. -- to their control room or however they dispatch. It's not
2 the same number that's given to the general public.

3 Q. Do you guys have any like -- and probably police, like mass,
4 you know, where you would drive through with the bull horn and
5 tell people to evacuate or?

6 A. That would be more on the PD side, yeah. They help us
7 evacuate buildings, block off streets, which they are doing now.
8 This is on a large scale, but it happens pretty routinely on a
9 small scale. Like fires, they're notified right away. They block
10 streets for us. They deny access. They can search, do a primary
11 search of adjacent buildings, which frees us up to put the fire
12 out. That's pretty routine.

13 MS. HALLIDAY: Thank you.

14 MR. CURRIE: All set?

15 DET. LT. ZIPPER: I'm all set. Thank you.

16 MR. CURRIE: All right. It's 1:45 and we're going to
17 conclude the interview. Thank you, Chief.

18 MR. LOUGHLIN: Thank you.

19 (Whereupon, at 1:45 the interview was concluded.)
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