

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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MINNEHAHA ACADEMY SCHOOL EXPLOSION *

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

* Accident No.: DCA17MP007

AUGUST 2, 2017

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Interview of: REGGIE METCALF

Fire Station #21
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Tuesday,
August 8, 2017

APPEARANCES:

ROGER EVANS, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

MICHAEL HOEPF, Chairman, Human Performance Group
National Transportation Safety Board

DANA SANZO, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

ANDREW BUCKLIN, Accident Investigator
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EDWARD KENDALL, Attorney
National Transportation Safety Board

SYLVIA SCHWARZ, Senior Engineer
Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety

DANIEL BOWLES, Executive Director of Finance &
Operations
Minnehaha Academy

SHANE JONES, Area Manager
CenterPoint Energy

BEVERLY MELCHISEDECH, Vice President of Operations
Support
CenterPoint Energy

DAVID SCHULTZ, Chief Executive Officer
Master Mechanics

THOMAS TOBIN, Esq.
Wilson Elser
(On behalf of Mr. Metcalf)

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:33 a.m.)

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2
3 MR. EVANS: Good morning. It is now 11:33. My name is Roger
4 Evans. I'm the investigator in charge with the National
5 Transportation Board out of Washington, D.C. We are at the
6 Minneapolis Fire Precinct 21 station, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
7 This interview is being conducted as part of the investigation
8 into the Minnehaha Academy school explosion that occurred on
9 August 2nd. This case number is DCA17MP007¹.

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

13 Reggie Metcalf, you are permitted to have one other person
14 present during the interview. This is a person of your choice --
15 supervisor, friend, family member, or nobody at all. Please give
16 us your name and spelling and state for the record who you have
17 selected to be present during the interview.

18 MR. METCALF: Reggie Metcalf, R-e-g-g-i-e, M-e-t-c-a-l-f,
19 Thomas Tobin for the interview.

20 MR. EVANS: Okay. And, Mr. Tobin, can you please introduce
21 yourself and spell the name of your practice?

22 MR. TOBIN: Sure. Thomas Tobin, T-o-b-i-n. I'm with the
23 Wilson Elser law firm, E-l-s-e-r.

24 MR. EVANS: Thank you. I'd like to go around, starting to my

¹ Corrected accident number

1 left, and have everyone introduce themselves with name, spelling
2 of the name, title, and affiliation.

3 MR. KENDALL: Edward Kendall, K-e-n-d-a-l-l, attorney, NTSB.

4 MR. SANZO: Dana Sanzo, S-a-n-z-o, investigator with NTSB.

5 MR. BUCKLIN: Andrew Bucklin, B-u-c-k-l-i-n, NTSB.

6 MR. SCHULTZ: David Schultz, S-c-h-u-l-t-z, CEO, Master
7 Mechanical.

8 MS. MELCHISEDECH: Beverly Melchisedech, M-e-l-c-h-i-s-e-d-e-
9 c-h, Vice President of Operations Support for CenterPoint Energy.

10 MR. BOWLES: Dan Bowles, B-o-w-l-e-s, Executive Director of
11 Finance & Operations at Minnehaha Academy.

12 MS. SCHWARZ: Sylvia Schwarz, senior engineer, Minnesota
13 Office of Pipeline Safety.

14 MR. JONES: Shane, S-h-a-n-e, Jones, Area Manager,
15 CenterPoint Energy.

16 MR. HOEPF: Mike Hoepf, H-o-e-p-f, NTSB, human performance.

17 MR. EVANS: Thank you.

18 Thank you, Reggie, for agreeing to speak with us today. It's
19 very important that we, you know, have witnesses volunteer to
20 speak with us for cases like this, and we really appreciate it.

21 INTERVIEW OF REGGIE METCALF

22 BY MR. EVANS:

23 Q. So, before we begin the questioning, we would like to have
24 you give us a little bit of background information: how long
25 you've been with the firm, where you worked previously to joining

1 CenterPoint, the job titles and positions you've held with
2 CenterPoint through your career, your training, and any schooling
3 level that you have, high school up through college, whatever,
4 trade school. And if you can, let's just go ahead and start with
5 that.

6 A. With the college, I had the -- I started out in radio and TV
7 broadcasting but that didn't last very long, and then I ended up
8 going to welding school for 18 months at St. Paul Tech. And I had
9 a couple of welding jobs in Minneapolis. And after the welding
10 jobs, I acquired a job for CenterPoint, and I've been here for
11 just over 16 years.

12 Q. Okay. And your job title with CenterPoint through the years,
13 these 16 years, can you kind of give us a thumbnail sketch of what
14 positions you've held and how long you held those positions?

15 A. I started out as a helper in the beginning, in various
16 stages. You start out as helper and then go through the ranks,
17 and that was probably about a 5-year process. And then you move
18 up into the next position, fitter, fitter position, and that was
19 probably another, oh, 7 years. I think I've been a foreman for
20 about 3 years.

21 Q. And as far as workers that report to you, how many workers,
22 in your current position, report to you?

23 A. Generally, one, maybe two, on a daily basis. Well, at least
24 one, generally Jeff, but sometime there's more than one, a helper.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Or maybe several other -- could be several other, depending
2 upon the job, but usually it's not that big of a job.

3 Q. Okay. So I didn't explain this, but whenever you give a
4 name, we need the last name.

5 A. I'm sorry.

6 Q. If it's not a recognizable name, we would need you to spell
7 it.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. Like if you say Joe Smith versus Joe Smithwaddy, whatever,
10 you know, we would need to know the spelling. So that, and then
11 the other part about the interview, we would like you to make sure
12 that you give us timestamps, if you know them. You know, we left
13 here at this time, we arrived at this time, that type of thing.
14 So just so you know that. So the person that you just described,
15 Jeff --

16 A. Jeff Van Haaften.

17 Q. Okay. And who would be the other person that would work with
18 you?

19 A. Different helpers throughout the company. I mean, there's a
20 few that get put with our crew once in a while, not every day, but
21 sometimes -- it depends on our job. It just so happened to be
22 Matthew Norman on the day of the incident. So he was with -- he's
23 with us once in a while.

24 Q. Okay. Let's talk a little bit about the equipment in your
25 truck. Okay. So -- can we go through the work order process,

1 since you're a foreman, and, you know, how those work orders
2 appear on your radar and how you execute these work orders, talk
3 about the paper flow, if there's hard copy, who gets copies when
4 you're finished? That whole process, can we just go through a
5 typical day when a work order comes in to you, if it's on a truck
6 screen, if it's at your home, if it's at an office? Kind of give
7 us the rundown on that.

8 A. Okay. Most of the time, I get a order from Charlie McCoy, a
9 paper copy, and then I take that paper copy, generally, to my crew
10 truck. And I will call one of the two dispatchers, whether it be
11 Chuck Clay or Julie Heider (ph.), and have them put that on my
12 route. That's one way I get the order. Otherwise, either Chuck
13 Clay or Julie Heider will put that on my route and that will
14 appear on my computer, and then I can go to the job and check it
15 out.

16 Q. And can you get these through the telephone, just right off
17 your cell phone, or some sort of a company cell phone, where they
18 say, hey, we want you to do this, or do you have to go through
19 this system here?

20 A. Sometimes there's a -- it's verbal to say, hey, I need this,
21 go to this address, with this SAP number, and have that SAP number
22 put on your route.

23 Q. Okay. So you use the Enterprise Management System SAP in
24 your corporation, I guess?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. That's what you're talking about?

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Okay. When you do work, are you always required to have a
4 piece of paper to do the work?

5 A. Not generally, no. I mean, we don't always have that piece
6 of paper. It's just a work order that has the address, SAP
7 number, a general description of what work we're going to be
8 doing.

9 Q. Let me rephrase that. Do you always have to have a work
10 order number that has --

11 A. Oh, yes.

12 Q. -- a number on it before you can actually address the work?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. I wanted to make sure.

15 A. Yeah. It's on the computer. It goes on under timestamp.
16 So, yes, we have to -- we need something to track that time -- or
17 the job.

18 Q. Okay. So let's go back to July -- excuse me -- August 1st,
19 okay? August 1st, can you go through your day and tell us what
20 type of work orders appeared that relate to this school?

21 A. We had a work order that -- to go and hand dig at the
22 building for Master Mechanical to run the new piping, the new
23 customer piping. And when we got out there -- I don't know if I'm
24 jumping ahead, but --

25 Q. Go ahead.

1 A. When we got to the jobsite, Master Mechanical said they
2 needed a 3-foot-by-4-foot-by-5-foot deep hole. And I said, well,
3 we're not going to hand dig that, you know, can we come back
4 tomorrow with a vac truck and do this? And they're like, yeah,
5 that's fine. And so we left it at that, that I would set up to
6 get the vac truck, and the Minnehaha Academy supervisor, grounds
7 supervisor, I believe -- I'm not sure of his name -- but he was
8 going to move the bushes so we could pull that vac truck right up
9 to the building and vac our 5-foot deep hole.

10 Q. I see. And what happened after that?

11 A. Well, we were -- there wasn't anything left for us to do that
12 day, August 1st, because -- otherwise, we would have done it
13 that -- we could have done it that day if the vac trucks were
14 available, we would have done it, but they weren't available. So
15 we left and we set it up for the next day, August 2nd.

16 Q. Okay. So when you went on August 1st to the school, who did
17 you meet with?

18 A. What was his name? It's a grounds supervisor, I believe, or
19 a maintenance supervisor.

20 Q. And was he the only person you met with?

21 A. One of the Master Mechanical guys. Two guys.

22 Q. Two guys?

23 A. Two guys.

24 Q. Names?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Were the faces familiar, you had met these people before?

2 A. I hadn't met the -- no, not those two, no.

3 Q. Okay. Okay. So then when you can't do a job because of lack
4 of equipment, then does that go back to dispatch and they get it
5 rescheduled, or do you use the same work order?

6 A. Generally, I keep it. Generally, I'll keep it, you know,
7 unless something happens or I can't be there. Maybe I already had
8 another job set up for the next day. But generally, I keep it.
9 If it's a job that's my job, I should be able to do it.

10 Q. Would you consider that like a backlog project that now -- so
11 you couldn't do it that day, so you sort of keep that job. Is
12 there any notification back to management or anybody at all that
13 that job was not executed and it's going to be done the next day?

14 A. Charlie McCoy, he's the one that I report to, so he was -- I
15 told him. I don't believe I told him that day. I believe I told
16 him the next morning, August 2nd, that we were going back there.
17 And so he was -- and he was fine with that.

18 Q. Okay. So as far as notification, that's a requirement, that
19 you would talk to Charlie before you --

20 A. Yeah, well, I mean, because sometimes he might have another
21 job. He'd be like, hey, I've got this other job, and I'd be like,
22 I've already got this one set up. Oh, okay, well, here's -- I'll
23 give this to somebody else and you go out and do that one then.
24 You stay on that one and go ahead.

25 Q. Is that procedural requirement or a courtesy-type thing,

1 would you consider that?

2 A. Courtesy.

3 Q. Okay. Okay. Thank you for that.

4 So you were going to be digging, or doing a hand-dig, large,
5 rather large excavation, didn't want to do it by hand so you
6 decided to do it with the vac truck. The vac truck wasn't
7 available, delayed to the next day. Okay, let's go from there.
8 What happened from that point?

9 A. So August 2nd, we show up about 8:30. And we didn't go up to
10 the building. I was waiting for confirmation for the vac truck to
11 call me, because he -- when I had called him the previous day,
12 August 1st, he said he had another job already, and so he was
13 going to call me when he gets done with his first job. And so we
14 waited in our crew truck on 32nd Street until he called, and he
15 called at -- I have a timestamp on my phone that I've looked at
16 and it was at 10:02, is when he called.

17 Q. Okay. That's good.

18 A. And he told me that he was done with his first job and that
19 he was going to be heading my way.

20 Q. Okay. Great. Just for the record, when you said that -- you
21 said the word we. Can you please state for the record the other
22 person that was with you?

23 A. Jeff Van Haaften.

24 Q. Okay. Thank you. Okay. So what happened from that point
25 forward?

1 A. After he called me, I got out of the truck and I went up to
2 the building and I talked to the two gentlemen that were from
3 Master Mechanical. And they were on break, I'm assuming. They
4 were eating break food and they were sitting on the grass. And I
5 was there -- just myself walked up to these two. Jeff Van Haaften
6 and Matt Norman, they stayed back.

7 And anyway, I talked to them and I told them that it was
8 going to be about an hour before our vac truck showed up. And
9 they said that's fine, we're doing other work; we're doing other
10 prep work; we're getting other things done. And I said you guys
11 got any -- you guys aren't waiting for us? And they said no,
12 we're not waiting for you, we're doing other stuff. And I said,
13 okay, well, it'll be about an hour. Okay. So I walked back to
14 the crew truck and I sat in the crew truck.

15 And then the explosion. And I jump out of my truck after I
16 heard it, and I seen it over my -- I seen the plume of smoke come
17 up. And I jumped out of the truck and I walked up the sidewalk
18 and I was calling 911. And they put me on hold, and I was like,
19 well, I don't know how long I'm going to be on hold for, so on my
20 personal phone, I went into it and I called my supervisor, Nate
21 Toedter. And so I was talking to 911 and I was talking to Nate
22 Toedter at the same time, telling them that there was an explosion
23 at this address. And Nate Toedter said that he was on his way.

24 Q. So do you happen to have the cell phones with you?

25 A. I do.

1 Q. Can you give us the 911 stamp, timestamp for that call?

2 A. It doesn't show up.

3 Q. Okay. How about the Nate Toedter, does that --

4 A. Yes, that does show up.

5 Q. What was that time?

6 A. 10:24.

7 Q. 10:24?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. Thank you. And the spelling of Nate Toedter's name?

10 A. T-o-e-d-t-e-r.

11 Q. That's one of those ones we'd like to have you spell.

12 (Laughter)

13 That's not a Smith.

14 A. No.

15 Q. Okay. Thank you. So I guess after that you walked up to the
16 scene; is that correct?

17 A. I did. I walked up to the scene. I wanted to check and --
18 because from the previous day I noticed that there was a fire
19 valve in the yard, and I wanted to verify that I could get to
20 that. And it was covered with a brick wall, so we -- I just
21 abandoned the idea of trying to access that and I -- between Jeff
22 Van Haaften and Matthew Norman, we went to try another access
23 point, which is to squeeze the plastic in the boulevard.

24 Q. Okay. And what happened next?

25 A. The vac truck showed up. We got the machine off, our

1 backhoe, and we started digging for the service that was running
2 out the boulevard. And it was horribly rocky soil and we didn't
3 have -- I called for -- we did not have clearance until later in
4 the day, and so we were being very careful to dig, but yeah, we
5 were on an emergency.

6 So we dug a little bit, and it was horrible rocky soil and we
7 decided that we should probably wait for the vac truck because he
8 was on his way. And he showed up and he got out and he come to
9 the site and we were able to vac on where we believed the main
10 was.

11 Q. Okay. When you say you had horribly rocky soil, I understand
12 that to be you were hand digging; is that correct?

13 A. Well, yeah, we were trying to hand dig and the soil was
14 horribly rocky and hard. And even the vac truck was having
15 trouble vac'ing down on that because it was pulling out boulders.

16 Q. Boulders, right.

17 A. And so that was an issue to slow us down, but we did get down
18 to the plastic and we were about to squeeze it off.

19 Q. And did you squeeze it off?

20 A. We got about halfway and then another foreman had gotten the
21 fire valve turned down.

22 Q. And the name of that foreman is?

23 A. Jason Carlton.

24 Q. Okay. And how did he arrive on the scene?

25 A. He was called by dispatch to come and assist.

1 Q. I see.

2 A. And so when he showed up, you know, he had seen what was
3 going on and he had looked on the maps and he had found that fire
4 valve, and so he was -- he went for the fire valve. Fortunately,
5 the fire department was there at the time. We didn't have -- when
6 I was there and I wanted to go for the fire valve, there was no
7 fire department or anybody there.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. But he had a fireman to back him up with everything, so he
10 went for the fire valve to hopefully -- because we hadn't found
11 the gas line yet.

12 Q. I see.

13 A. So he was going for that, and in the meantime we were going
14 for the plastic, to squeeze that off. And we got about halfway
15 squeezed off and he had shut the valve off.

16 Q. Okay. So when you were doing your dig, were you getting heat
17 from the flames and all that coming up on your --

18 A. Not where we were out on the boulevard. I mean, we were --

19 Q. Pretty far away from it?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. So you felt safe?

22 A. Very safe.

23 Q. Okay. So once the line had been squeezed off, what happened
24 then? I mean the line had been -- the valve had been actuated.

25 What happened then?

1 A. The flames in the building went down. And we stood by for
2 more orders, waited for the -- you know, to find out what we
3 needed, what else we needed to do. We ended up having to cut the
4 service off and cap it in the parking lot.

5 Q. Right. Okay.

6 MR. EVANS: Okay, that's all I have for right now. Thank
7 you.

8 MR. HOEPF: Maybe we can go to Dana for the first --

9 MS. SANZO: You can go ahead.

10 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Hi, this is Mike Hoepf, transcriptionist.

11 BY MR. HOEPF:

12 Q. So I think Roger covered the waterfront pretty well. I just
13 kind of want to pop into a little -- close a couple of doors. So
14 you say you got your work order from --

15 A. Charlie McCoy.

16 Q. Charlie McCoy. Okay. And what's your -- do you interact
17 with him pretty regularly?

18 A. Every morning.

19 Q. Every morning? Okay.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. So when you get your work order, what -- I mean, what
22 kind of -- is that about a page long, 20 pages long?

23 A. It's generally a page or two. I mean, there might be like a
24 cover sheet or something that has the address, general description
25 of the work, SAP number, and then there will probably be like a

1 ticket for locates, maybe he'll have the drawing from the original
2 service install, general information about what the original
3 service was.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. So it could be a couple, three, four pages.

6 Q. Okay. So you talked about you worked with contractors
7 sometimes, Master Mechanical occasionally?

8 A. Occasionally. Occasionally contractors. Generally, what --
9 myself and my crew, generally we're moving meters out of houses,
10 running service lines, but we are -- you know, we do, do, you
11 know, bigger stuff. I mean, we're qualified in whatever it takes.

12 Q. Okay. So you didn't know the people you met on August 1st
13 and August 2nd from Mechanical Contractors [sic]? I mean, you
14 don't -- you've never worked with them before? Or maybe you have,
15 but you don't remember their names?

16 A. We have seen the one gentleman on August 1st, we've seen him
17 before on a job downtown. Otherwise, with the two from
18 August 2nd, we had never seen them, no. And as far as their names
19 go, I wouldn't be able to tell you.

20 Q. Okay. So I'm just trying to get a little bit of an
21 understanding of how does -- so you get your work plan from
22 Charlie and, on there, is the contractor listed on that work
23 order?

24 A. Yeah. If it's Mechanical, Master Mechanical, yeah, that's --
25 sometimes a name would be on there, along with a phone number,

1 yeah.

2 Q. Okay. And is there a -- and we'll get this document later,
3 but just is there a description of what CenterPoint is going to do
4 and then what Master Mechanical's going to do?

5 A. Generally, just what CenterPoint does.

6 Q. Okay. Okay.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. So how aware were you of what Master Mechanical was going to
9 be doing?

10 A. Not very much at all, no.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. No, all we were told was vac down next to the building so
13 that Master Mechanical could get a core drill and they could run
14 the pipe through.

15 Q. Okay. So would it be a fair characterization to say you had
16 a very limited understanding of what Master Mechanical was going
17 to be doing?

18 A. Yeah. Yeah.

19 Q. Okay. Okay. Do you chat with Charlie about how this work
20 process is going to pan out, I mean, or does he just kind of give
21 you the form and it's pretty standard stuff?

22 A. It's pretty standard. It's pretty, you know, self-
23 explanatory. I mean, it's nothing that we haven't done before.
24 Once we get to the job, generally Master Mechanical will tell us
25 this is what we're going to do, you know, okay.

1 Q. Okay. So I don't mean to put you on the spot or anything,
2 but just what's the safety plan, you know, going into a given job?
3 You've got a work order. Who specifies and ensures that that work
4 is going to be conducted safely? Whose responsibility is that?

5 A. That would probably land on my shoulders in as far as on our
6 side and how we're going to do that. Make sure that, you know,
7 that, you know, if you're talking about a fire extinguisher, you
8 know, grounding the squeeze clamps, making sure that the hole is
9 safe to work in, what we're going to do is adequate to our safety
10 policy.

11 Q. So on August 2nd, you would be responsible for Jeff and Matt?

12 A. Matthew Norman, yes.

13 Q. Okay. So the work that they're doing, you'd be responsible
14 to make sure that they're being safe?

15 A. Yeah. I mean, if we're going to vac down on a hole and the
16 hole is 6-feet deep, you know, then -- I want to be 6-feet deep,
17 that's too deep. We've got to get it shored in there, perhaps,
18 you know, if that's -- that's the way we got to go. You know, I
19 mean, they may suggest it. They may say, you know, this is too
20 deep. How do you -- oh, yeah, that's too deep. It's too Katy
21 soil.

22 Q. Right. Right. So your purview is sort of your work crew and
23 what you're doing. So are you responsible for your contractors?

24 A. No.

25 Q. Okay. So they've got their own, you know --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. Is there any discussion with Charlie? Does he provide
3 some sort of system safety plan to integrate with those
4 contractors?

5 A. No. I would say no.

6 Q. Okay. All right. So I'm going to circle back to something
7 else, sort of a different topic here. Did you ever go inside the
8 school?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay. So you were never inside those walls?

11 A. When we went August 1st, it was purely just confrontational
12 with the one guy that was there, and then the other maintenance or
13 grounds supervisor. It was just, okay, this is what we've got to
14 do, this is what we're going to do and, you know, we'll do it
15 tomorrow.

16 But it wasn't -- you know, we don't have any reason to go in
17 there. There's no reason for us to go inside the building because
18 our line, you know, stops at the valve, and it just so happened
19 that that valve was inside the building. We weren't doing any gas
20 work until -- well, it would have been next week. You know,
21 that's when the service was going to get run, next week. So there
22 was no reason for us to go in August 1st or August 2nd to see
23 anything that's going on in there.

24 Q. Okay. So to your knowledge, at least, nobody from
25 CenterPoint entered the school?

1 A. Yeah. I know that there was a brand-new gas meter hung on
2 the side of the wall, but I personally don't know anything
3 about -- I don't do gas meters. We do the in-ground stuff. And
4 so as far as what they did with it, you know, I don't -- that's
5 not my department.

6 Q. So just to be a fair characterization, you're not sure if
7 anybody from CenterPoint went in the school.

8 A. No.

9 Q. You just know that you personally didn't go in the school?

10 A. Right.

11 Q. Okay. Okay. And you'll have to forgive me. I'm not very
12 knowledgeable about pipeline operations. How do you decide where
13 gas is going to be closed off at for a given operation? I mean,
14 whether it's --

15 A. Well, for this instance, there was 26 feet of steel coming
16 out of the building, and then the rest was plastic going out to
17 the street. So somebody's job was to replace that steel. So it
18 was going to get dug up where it was plastic, and they'd replace
19 the rest with plastic, and then go to the new outside riser. And
20 if it's on a house, residential, say, there's a meter inside,
21 sometimes it's all plastic but it's encased in steel. And so
22 there may be a street, a boulevard, a sidewalk, a large hill, and
23 then a yard, and then the house. And generally, we're going to go
24 in the boulevard because that's where it's flat, that's where it's
25 shallow, and then we're going to shoot it up across the sidewalk,

1 up the hill, into the house. It's a general -- you know, we just
2 take a look at it and the best place possible is where we're going
3 to put it.

4 With the Minnehaha Academy, it was pretty cut and dried
5 because there was already plastic coming in and the meter was
6 right there. So that's where it was going to go.

7 Q. Okay. So just so I'm understanding, so is it up to you to
8 decide where to cut the gas off, or is it up to your boss to
9 decide where to cut the gas off?

10 A. More than likely, it's up to me. I kind of say, you know,
11 unless it's in a really weird situation. You know, there wasn't
12 much choice with Minnehaha Academy. We were going to replace it
13 with a piece of steel. That's why we were there. That's what we
14 were going to do, and so -- but, I mean, on a residential house,
15 you just replace it to where it's easiest. You know, you aren't
16 going to dig -- if it's in a big hill, you aren't going to dig 7
17 feet down to get to that carrier; you're going to dig it out at
18 the boulevard and you're going to shoot it from Point A to Point B
19 with a gopher shot.

20 Q. Oh, okay. So it has to do with ease of access of the valve,
21 to some extent?

22 A. Right.

23 Q. As well as where the work is being performed?

24 A. Right.

25 Q. Okay. You took no exception to the fact that the gas wasn't

1 shut off for the entire school? That would have seemed
2 unnecessary?

3 A. Yeah, we were to do no gas work that day, either day, at all.
4 We were told they were going to remain online.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Because that's not why we were there. We were only to help
7 facilitate the vac truck.

8 Q. Okay. So, yeah, you guys were just doing the vac truck.

9 A. Right.

10 Q. You guys weren't going to touch the gas line?

11 A. No. We didn't want to see the gas. We didn't have any
12 reason to, no, touch that steel line outside.

13 Q. Okay. Did you realize -- did you know what the Master
14 Mechanical contractors were going to be doing? Did you know if
15 they were going to be working on gas lines?

16 A. No. No. I mean, they were going to be doing the customer
17 piping. They were going to be doing the prep work and getting
18 that taken care of, you know. We were just to run the new -- the
19 hole, and then they were going to core drill.

20 Q. Okay. So were you expecting the mechanical contractors,
21 Master Mechanical, to -- were you expecting them to be
22 manipulating valves that day, to turn the gas on or off?

23 A. No. No.

24 Q. Okay. So that was kind of a surprise that they --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. If you learned that they were trying to change -- manipulate
2 a valve, that would have been unbeknownst to you?

3 A. Yes. Yes, because it was -- you know, as far as we were --
4 you know, from what we were told, they were to remain online.

5 Q. Okay. Okay. Thank you so much. That's great.

6 MR. HOEPF: I'm going to give these other guys a chance to
7 answer some questions. I'm sorry, ask some questions.

8 BY MR. JONES:

9 Q. This is Shane Jones. I just have a couple of questions. You
10 talked about documentation and paper you receive. Let's pretend a
11 situation like the Academy, where you've got a chunk of the
12 service that you're going to replace, commercial service. The
13 paperwork that you get, you already stated that you get a copy of
14 what's existing out there. When you're done with the job and,
15 say, you replace the chunk of steel that you're talking about,
16 what paperwork do you complete and submit when you're done with
17 that job?

18 A. It's all computerized. It's all on the computer. And we
19 complete a drawing and an order that is on the computer. The hard
20 copy, the paper copy that I have, that I received in the morning,
21 generally that goes in the trash. Everything that I've done has
22 been recorded on a computer and a drawing has been made for the
23 record. So whatever I had, I don't necessarily need anymore.

24 Q. What's included on that drawing?

25 A. Measurements, what we replaced, what's new, the building

1 location in accordance with the streets, any valves that we may
2 have put in. I would guess that's about it.

3 Q. And on the order itself there's all sorts of categories
4 you've got to fill out before you complete it?

5 A. Several categories as far as length of plastic, type of
6 plastic. There would be -- in the remarks there will be a
7 description of what we did and how we replaced it and method of
8 replacing and things like that, so -- yes. Try to make it as
9 detailed as possible so they know, the next people down the road
10 know what happened, what we did.

11 Q. Okay. So let's say you did that job and a month later you've
12 got a job that comes back with work in that general vicinity. Do
13 you have access to records to be able to tell what's there?

14 A. I can look up my drawing. Yes, I can look up my drawing. As
15 far as anything more than that, I don't know that I have ever
16 looked at that.

17 Q. Do you have access to maps that show service lines or gas
18 mains or anything like that, that you can do some pre-work for a
19 job?

20 A. Maps of original service lines, yes. Because we have -- it's
21 a FileNet access, or original service lines is on a mapping system
22 so we can look at what's in the ground now, what was put
23 underground original. And there may be a couple of different
24 services. They may have started with one type of service, updated
25 it, put another one in, and all that's generally in there that we

1 can find.

2 Q. And that's available to you in your truck?

3 A. Yes. Yes.

4 Q. Besides FileNet, is there also mapping available?

5 A. Yes. GIS, yes.

6 Q. Okay. And with GIS you can see what?

7 A. You can get a very good knowledge of where the service is.

8 You can get measurements. You can see maybe who put it in. You

9 can see the date of when it was put in.

10 Q. Does it also help you determine one- or two-way feed?

11 A. Absolutely. One- or two-way feed, type of plastic in the

12 ground, type of main in the ground, as far as that -- main --

13 service, main.

14 Q. Can you also see regulation stations?

15 A. Yes.

16 MR. JONES: Okay, no further questions.

17 BY MS. SCHWARZ:

18 Q. Reggie, I think -- this is Sylvia Schwarz with MNOPS. I

19 think I misunderstood something that you said before. I wrote

20 down that you -- now I can't find it -- that you were there to

21 move the meter. Was any of your work was going to be moving the

22 meter?

23 A. No, we weren't going to be moving the meter. Are you

24 specifically talking about August 2nd? August 2nd we were there

25 purely to vac a hole for Master Mechanical. This coming week was

1 to move the service, replace the service. The meter was already
2 hung on the side of the wall, the new meter. The original meter
3 was still inside. From what we know, there was no gas work.

4 Q. Okay. And the surface of the hole that you were going to be
5 digging, was that just topsoil or was it concrete or what?

6 A. Topsoil, yes.

7 Q. So do you normally take that out and remove the topsoil
8 before you vac, or do you need to do that?

9 A. Well, no, we were going to take out the whole section, I
10 mean, the whole 3-foot-by-4-foot-by-5-foot piece, you know, vac it
11 with the vac truck.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. The whole distance.

14 Q. Okay, I think that's all I have. Yeah. Thank you.

15 MR. BOWLES: Reggie, I'm Dan Bowles from Minnehaha Academy,
16 and my questions are just to maybe identify the Minnehaha
17 employees you spoke with.

18 If that would be helpful?

19 MR. EVANS: That's fine. Thank you.

20 BY MR. BOWLES:

21 Q. You were there 2 days?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. August 1 and August 2?

24 A. Right.

25 Q. And I think I heard you say you spoke with two Minnehaha

1 employees on August 1?

2 A. I think so. I'm not sure if they were Minnehaha employees or
3 they were Master Mechanical. They were probably Minnehaha, I'm
4 thinking.

5 Q. I thought I heard you say that one was maybe a facilities
6 person and another might have been a grounds person, about --

7 A. Well, I'm not sure.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I think it was probably just facilities. But there was -- I
10 believe the one, he was going to remove the bushes on the one side
11 of the sidewalk.

12 Q. Right. So might it have been Don Dubois?

13 A. Don. Don. I know the name. Don.

14 Q. There you go.

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Did you speak at any point on the 1st with Curt Bjorlin?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Did you speak with anyone else from Minnehaha on August 1?

19 A. I really don't think so.

20 Q. Maybe a Paul who worked on grounds?

21 A. I don't remember. I don't remember.

22 Q. Sure. And on August 2, did you speak with someone from
23 Minnehaha?

24 A. Yeah, probably just Don, yeah.

25 MR. BOWLES: All right, that's all I got.

1 BY MS. MELCHISEDECH:

2 Q. Yeah, this is Beverly Melchisedech. I just have a question
3 on your telephone timestamps that you gave. You said you arrived
4 at 8:30, you stayed in the truck on 32nd, and the vac truck called
5 at 10:32?

6 A. 10:02.

7 Q. Oh, 10:02. Okay, that helps. That clarifies that, because
8 you called -- the other timestamp when you called Nate Toedter was
9 10:24. Okay. Thank you.

10 A. And I'm more than happy to show -- I mean, if you guys need
11 to look at times or anything.

12 MR. EVANS: Okay.

13 MR. METCALF: I mean, I don't --

14 BY MS. MELCHISEDECH:

15 Q. So one other question is when -- I think it's kind of maybe a
16 CenterPoint terminology, to Sylvia's question when you were saying
17 you were there to do a meter move-out. That's like the overall
18 job, but your portion is the service line?

19 A. Just the service.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And the meter department does --

23 A. Meter department does -- our meter department, yes.

24 Q. It's just terminology.

25 A. Yeah.

1 MS. MELCHISEDECH: Okay. Thank you. That's all.

2 MS. SANZO: I don't have any questions. Thank you very much.

3 BY MR. KENDALL:

4 Q. Ed Kendall, NTSB. I just have a few questions. For your
5 truck that day, you had the backhoe? You were towing the backhoe?

6 A. Um-hum.

7 Q. And the backhoe was there for other jobs, though?

8 A. Right.

9 Q. Okay. So you had a second job planned for that afternoon?

10 A. No, not that afternoon. But we always pull our backhoe
11 because we never know what we're going to get ourselves into. I
12 mean literally. You know, it's just part of our equipment. We
13 have wire on there for when we run a service. If we don't have
14 our trailer, we don't have the wire unless we put it in the back
15 of the truck. We have plywood that we put dirt on. So the
16 trailer isn't only for the backhoe but it's also for, you know,
17 other things -- garbage cans, diesel fuel on there. So there's
18 several uses. But yeah, the backhoe, I mean, we could be going to
19 Lakeville for a little job that we don't need the backhoe and then
20 end up in Minneapolis for a backhoe job, so --

21 Q. Sure. And do you have a specific region you operate within?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And what is that region?

24 A. Well, it's from Nicollet to the river, east, and then from 94
25 south to Lakeville.

1 Q. Okay. And when you arrived on August 1st, you said the work
2 order had been for a hand dig; is that correct?

3 A. Yeah, initially for a hand dig August 1st, yes.

4 Q. And so, therefore, there had been no locates done of the gas
5 line at that time?

6 A. Right. The locates had expired.

7 Q. Okay. And what do you mean by they had expired?

8 A. They only last for 2 weeks.

9 Q. Right.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. And on August 2nd, the same thing, no locates had been done
12 at that time?

13 A. No. And I did end up calling for them on the 2nd.

14 Q. After the accident?

15 A. After the accident.

16 Q. Okay. Who informed you that the gas would remain online
17 during your --

18 A. Charlie McCoy.

19 Q. Okay. And that conversation, you think, was on August 2nd?

20 A. The 1st.

21 Q. August 1st. Okay. So you had a conversation August 1st with
22 Charlie regarding the work order?

23 A. Right.

24 Q. Okay. And then you said you had a conversation with Charlie
25 on August 2nd, with Charlie McCoy regarding you were still at the

1 site because you needed the vacuum truck?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Was there anything else that took place during that
4 conversation?

5 A. No. I mean, just telling him that we were going to use the
6 vac truck versus hand dig because we didn't want to hand dig that
7 deep, and that they were going to -- Master Mechanical was going
8 to be out there and -- no.

9 Q. Okay. So it was a pretty basic conversation?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. This is what we're doing today?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. In the prior interview, Jeff had mentioned your crew may have
14 done work on 32nd Street in the spring?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay. And what did that work involve?

17 A. There was a wire that was shorting out our steel and we
18 needed to cut that wire so that that wasn't happening anymore.
19 And so we needed to vac down on that line and just cut the wire.

20 Q. And in the course of that job did you have to look at the
21 maps for the gas into Minnehaha Academy?

22 A. Yes. Yes, we did.

23 Q. Okay. So you had looked at it in the spring, and then you
24 looked at it again on August 1st or August 2nd, in general, or no,
25 because you weren't going to be doing any gas work at that time?

1 A. You know, it was -- we were sitting with some downtime and we
2 were looking at the maps on August 2nd.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Yes.

5 MR. KENDALL: Great. I think that's all the questions I have
6 for now.

7 MR. EVANS: No other questions.

8 BY MR. HOEPF:

9 Q. Okay. Yeah, this is Mike Hoepf. I just want to touch up a
10 couple of quick points here. I'm sorry, I'm just kind of beating
11 some of these issues to death; I really am.

12 Okay. So for the August 2nd, you guys are, you're waiting
13 for the vacuum truck and you're kind of -- so you were sitting at
14 your truck, in your truck, just kind of chatting?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Listening to the radio?

17 A. Right.

18 Q. And just, you can't do anything; you're waiting. Okay. And
19 what was your understanding of -- and again, I'm sorry I'm being
20 repetitive here. What is your understanding of what the
21 mechanical contractors are doing inside at that time?

22 A. To my knowledge, we didn't know what they were doing. We
23 didn't -- we hadn't even actually approached them until after I
24 had talked with the vac truck at 10:02.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Because I had talked to them the previous day and we told
2 them that we were going to be there in the morning and that we
3 were -- I didn't know when the vac truck was going to be there,
4 but we will be there in the morning with the vac truck, to vac
5 this hole out.

6 Q. Gotcha. Gotcha. And I don't want you to speculate on this
7 or anything, but so you've got no idea what they're doing inside?
8 I mean, you're probably not -- okay, I don't want to lead you
9 here. So you're not thinking at all about what they're doing
10 inside. You don't know and it's not really on your mind. You're
11 just sitting in the truck, waiting for the vac truck to show up.
12 Is that a fair characterization of the situation?

13 A. Right. Right. Right.

14 Q. Okay. And again, I'm sorry, I know you already went over
15 this, but on the work order for August 2nd, is that work order
16 specific to August 2nd or is that part of the overall process of
17 the meter moving?

18 A. It's part of the overall process. I mean, it didn't have to
19 be -- I mean, they wanted to have that done before this coming
20 Friday because -- the school, but it got put off because the vac
21 trucks weren't available. If the vac truck was available the 1st,
22 we would have done it the 1st. But they weren't available,
23 neither one of them, so we just moved it. I moved it to the 2nd,
24 when there were more available.

25 Q. Okay. Okay. And the scope of their work overall, in your

1 mind, you didn't know what they were doing at the time, but the
2 scope overall of their work, how did you understand what they
3 would be doing? Are they working downstream of the meter? Are
4 they working upstream of the meter?

5 A. Just drilling a hole. You know, just drilling a hole through
6 the building for the new customer piping.

7 Q. Okay. And again, I know I'm just beating this to death here.
8 This is going to be my last question for you. So you would not
9 have expected that they would be needing to turn gas on or off?

10 A. No, because we were told that they were to remain online.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. That was another part of that conversation, was why don't we
13 just replace the gas line the 2nd, from the building out. And I
14 forgot about that when he was asking about that. And Charlie
15 McCoy had said that we are to remain -- leave those online until
16 the following week.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. So that's when that come up, to leave them online. So don't
19 replace the gas -- because it seemed like a simple enough thing to
20 squeeze the plastic; we're going to have the vac truck there and
21 vac it all out, and then along with the hole at the building.

22 Q. Right.

23 A. No, don't do that, leave them online.

24 Q. Okay. So the gas is on at the street. And again, please,
25 you know, forgive my lack of knowledge here. There's also valves

1 inside so you can shut the gas off?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And inside valves, would you have expected them to be turning
4 those on and off?

5 A. Well, no, because there was -- to our knowledge, they weren't
6 to be -- you know, I didn't know what they were going to do, but I
7 didn't know that they were -- you know, there was no reason for
8 them to turn them off, as far as I -- from my job point.

9 Q. Right. Oh, yeah, yeah. No, I understand. Yeah.

10 A. I mean, I'm not telling them what to do. I'm not saying that
11 I know what they're doing, but I'm just saying, you know, they
12 were to remain online, that's all I was told.

13 Q. Right.

14 A. And so any more than that, that's not --

15 Q. Right. Right.

16 A. Beyond the scope of --

17 Q. I'm sorry. Okay. Yeah.

18 A. No.

19 Q. I was just looking for a little bit of clarity because I'm
20 wondering, you know, was there a -- initially, I was thinking that
21 there would be some kind of coordination between, you know,
22 between what you're doing and the mechanical contractor, such that
23 maybe you're at the street and can access the valve to shut off to
24 the school if need be. But now my understanding is, and please
25 correct me if I'm wrong, you're more or less functioning

1 independently; you're not really aware of what they're doing?

2 A. Right.

3 Q. And you're not thinking that they're working on the gas at
4 all?

5 A. Not live.

6 Q. So there would be no reason for you to be anywhere near some
7 sort of gas valve because you're not expecting them to be working
8 on -- turning any valves or working on gas lines?

9 A. Right.

10 Q. Is that a fair characterization?

11 A. Yes. Yes.

12 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay. That answers all my questions.

13 MR. EVANS: Any other questions?

14 BY MR. KENDALL:

15 Q. I do. I do. Edward Kendall, NTSB. What was the name of the
16 vac truck operator on scene?

17 A. Darren Wingerson.

18 MR. EVANS: Can you spell that for us, please?

19 MR. METCALF: W-i-n-g-e-r-s-o-n.

20 MR. KENDALL: That was my only question.

21 BY MR. EVANS:

22 Q. This is Roger Evans. I have a couple more questions I just
23 thought of. So do you have experience with -- I mean, since you
24 have welded in the past, correct?

25 A. Um-hum.

1 Q. Have you done meter work in your career?

2 A. No. Well, I mean, not officially here, with CenterPoint. I
3 mean, we've hung little, small residential meters. We haven't
4 tied them in or, you know, it's not -- I haven't been in that
5 department, per se.

6 MR. EVANS: Okay. Off the record for just a moment.

7 (Off the record.)

8 (On the record.)

9 BY MR. EVANS:

10 Q. This is Roger Evans. I have a phone, iPhone in my hand and
11 that phone has a picture of a valve. It has a picture of the
12 valve that was being addressed at the time of the event, okay?

13 A. Okay.

14 Q. This valve is a quarter-turn gas valve and I'd like you to
15 take a look at that valve, please.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. Okay. When looking at the valve and the position of that
18 operator bar, would you conclude, based on your experience, that
19 that valve is open or closed?

20 A. I would say it's open.

21 Q. Okay. If someone were to take that bar and place it in the
22 90-degree wrong position, one could assume that that valve is
23 closed?

24 A. Right.

25 Q. And other than the indicator bar, is there any way to

1 determine if that valve is open or closed?

2 A. The stops.

3 Q. The stops on the --

4 A. On the base of the --

5 Q. On the nut?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Okay. So the stops on the base of the nut are going to be in
8 a certain position, correct?

9 A. Right.

10 Q. So a person with experience, if he doesn't have the hand bar
11 on it, he could lift up the bar and then he could determine where
12 the stop position was to make sure it's either open or closed,
13 correct?

14 A. Right.

15 Q. Okay.

16 MR. EVANS: The photograph we were looking at was supplied by
17 -- your name, please, Beverly? Can you --

18 MS. MELCHISEDECH: Beverly Melchisedech.

19 MR. EVANS: Yes. And this was a picture that was taken in
20 what year, this picture right here?

21 MS. MELCHISEDECH: It was either February of '16 or February
22 of '17. There were two sets of photos that were very similar.

23 MR. EVANS: Okay. And we will, for the record, make sure
24 that that photograph gets referenced for this interview later on,
25 okay.

1 BY MR. EVANS:

2 Q. So if someone were to look at that valve and they didn't
3 check the stops, and that bar were in the wrong position, and they
4 didn't look at it closely, they could assume that valve was open
5 instead of closed, correct?

6 A. Possibly, yes.

7 Q. Likelihood of that, in your own opinion? And forget about
8 this case. I'm just talking about in regular life. When someone
9 sees a valve like that and they see the valve handle, detachable
10 handle, is the training such that you would always look at the
11 notch, or would you look at the handle and say, oh, I'm going to
12 go for the handle?

13 A. If there's a handle missing, you're going to look at that and
14 maybe you're going to end up using a crescent wrench or something
15 and you're going to want to know how does that valve work. You're
16 going to want to know what stops that -- what position that is in
17 and how does it work. I mean, there's got to be a way to
18 determine which direction that is in, open or closed.

19 Q. Right. Okay. And have you, in your career, have you
20 actuated valves like that?

21 A. Not like that, no.

22 MR. EVANS: Okay, that's all I have. Does anyone else have
23 any questions?

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

25 MR. EVANS: Thank you very much for interviewing with us

1 today. We really appreciate it. It's been very good information.

2 MR. METCALF: Thank you.

3 MR. EVANS: Thank you so much.

4 MR. HOEPF: Yeah, thank you. We really appreciate it.

5 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

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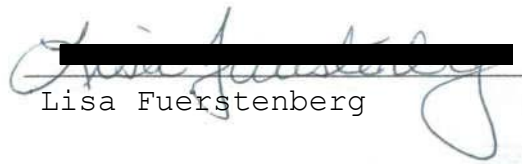
IN THE MATTER OF: MINNEHAHA ACADEMY SCHOOL EXPLOSION
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA
AUGUST 2, 2017
Interview of Reggie Metcalf

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA17MP007

PLACE: Minneapolis, Minnesota

DATE: August 8, 2017

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.


Lisa Fuerstenberg



National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C. 20594

Interviewee Name (please print): Reggie Metcalf

Organization: Center Point Energy

Date of Transcript Review: 10-24-2017

I have reviewed my transcript(s) from the above referenced accident and...

I have no comments to make.

My comments are submitted herewith.

My comments are marked on the attached copy.

