

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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THE EXPLOSION OF APARTMENT
BUILDING 8701 OF FLOWER BRANCH
APARTMENTS IN SILVER SPRING,
MARYLAND ON AUGUST 10, 2016

Accident No.: DCA16FP003

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Interview of: DAVID MANDEL

NTSB Headquarters
Washington, D.C.

Monday,
August 29, 2016

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: RAVI CHHATRE
Investigator-in-Charge

APPEARANCES:

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. CHHATRE: Good afternoon. Today is Monday,
3 August 29, 2016. We are currently at the NTSB headquarters
4 located at 490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W., Washington D.C. We are
5 meeting regarding the investigation of explosion of Building 8701
6 Flower Branch Apartments, Silver Spring, Maryland that occurred on
7 August 10, 2016.

8 My name is Ravi Chhatre. I'm with National Transportation
9 Safety Board located in Washington D.C. and I'm the Investigator-
10 in-Charge of this accident. The NTSB investigation number for
11 this accident is DCA16FP003.

12 I would like to start by notifying everyone present in this
13 room that we are recording this interview and we may transcribe it
14 at a later date. Transcripts will be provided directly to the
15 interviewee for review and identifying any typographical errors.
16 The transcripts may be posted in NTSB's public docket.

17 Also, I would like to inform Mr. David Mandel that you are
18 permitted to have one other person present with you during the
19 interview. This is a person of your choice -- your supervisor,
20 friend, family member -- or, if you choose, no one at all.

21 Please state for the record, your full name, spelling off
22 your name, organization you work for, your title, business,
23 contact information, such as mailing address, and whom you have
24 chosen to be present with you during your interview.

25 MR. MANDEL: My name is David A. Mandel; D-a-v-i-d, A is for

1 Aaron, A-a-r-o-n, M-a-n-d-e-l. The name of my company is Alarm
2 Systems Testing and Inspection Incorporated, ASTI is for short.
3 My business address is 9009 Wildberry, that's one word, W-i-l-d-b-
4 e-r-r-y Court in Boonsboro, B-o-o-n-s-b-o-r-o, Maryland 21713. I
5 am here by myself today.

6 MR. CHHATRE: Thank you for that. And I'd like to go around
7 the room and have each person introduce themselves. Please state
8 your name, spelling of your name, your title, and the organization
9 that you represent, and your business contact information,
10 starting from my left.

11 MR. EMEABA: Kalu Kelly Emeaba, K-a-l-u, K-e-l-l-y, E-m-e-a-
12 b-a. I'm an NTSB investigator. My phone number is (██████████-
13 ████████).

14 MR. AMROLIWALA: My name is Rashmikant Amroliwala; R-a-s-h-m-
15 i-k-a-n-t, my last name is A-m-r-o-l-i-w-a-l-a. I'm working with
16 the State of Maryland Public Service Commission, Gas Pipeline
17 Safety. My number is ██████████.

18 LT. OLIN: Lieutenant William Olin, fire and explosives
19 investigator for Montgomery County, Maryland. My phone number is
20 ██████████. My email: ██████████.

21 MR. PRICE: Hi, I'm Steve Price, division head system
22 operations, Washington Gas. My telephone number is (██████████-
23 ████████). And my email is ██████████.

24 MR. CHHATRE: Thank you very much.

25 INTERVIEW OF DAVID MANDEL

1 BY MR. CHHATRE:

2 Q. Mr. Mandel, for the record, tell us what your company does in
3 general and your involvement with building 8701 in the Flower
4 Branch Apartment, or Kay Management.

5 A. My company was established in 2003, specifically for testing
6 and inspection of fire and sprinkler systems. Kay Management has
7 been a client since the time that I started. And I inspect the
8 building fire alarm systems at Flower Branch Apartments as well as
9 the rest of the Kay portfolio on an annual basis.

10 Q. And do you also do sprinkler inspections in Flower Branch?

11 A. There are no sprinkler systems in Flower Branch Apartments.

12 Q. Okay. Now, do you install these systems?

13 A. No, sir. I do not. I act as a contract manager when systems
14 are installed or for upgrades to the community's properties. Try
15 to act as an owner's agent in making sure that they -- I provide
16 their expertise on fire alarm to the company.

17 Q. Okay. Now, you said you inspect the fire alarms then on a
18 yearly basis?

19 A. Yes, sir. Yearly.

20 Q. Okay. And what is it that you do in the inspection?

21 A. I follow NFPA 72 guidelines in the inspection of these
22 systems. At the Flower Branch Apartments, the systems are very
23 limited. The existing fire alarm systems are just what's commonly
24 referred to as ring and run. It is simply a pull station, which
25 acts as a switch and a bell within the unit, within the common

1 area, or two, depending upon the building.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. My inspection would consist of -- from start to finish would
4 you like to know?

5 Q. Yes.

6 A. Certainly. I'll first reach out to the community to schedule
7 the work and to provide them with a notification letter that they
8 can provide to the residents of the community. They'll then post
9 to the buildings and notify all the residents of the upcoming
10 test. On the day of the test, we'll swing in in the morning and
11 post the buildings further with notification that testing is in
12 progress to try to prevent people from panicking or calling in to
13 Montgomery County Fire Rescue Service.

14 I'll then contact Montgomery County communication center, the
15 emergency communication center, provide them the addresses of the
16 buildings that I'm about to test, and they provide me reference
17 numbers. Typically, one reference number per building. Sometimes
18 they'll group them together on a street.

19 Following that, I will begin testing. In this particular
20 property, it's a very simple process. I will -- I have a test
21 record that I have produced before I begin. I will go inside and
22 functionally test the manually fire alarm box, the pull station
23 located typically near the front door, by -- these are -- typical
24 scenario, I will open the box, remove the witness rod, or whatever
25 there is there to try to show that the box has been activated,

1 close it back up, functionally test it. I will then record the
2 decibels of the bells at the bell.

3 So I will go to each bell location. There's one downstairs,
4 I scurry downstairs. One upstairs, I scurry upstairs, take a
5 decibel reading. Reset the system by restoring the pull station.
6 There is no fire alarm control alarm panels in any of these
7 buildings, backup batteries, backup power. It's just 110 volts
8 with a manual fire alarm box as a switch. I'll then go over and
9 take a look at the fuse location and make sure that the fuse is
10 appropriately set for the system, and record my stuff manually on
11 paper, turn it into a written report, send it over to the
12 management company.

13 If there's deficiencies during my test, for example, a fire
14 alarm pull station that doesn't operate, I'll typically replace
15 that as I go. If there's a wiring problem, I'll typically get an
16 electrician involved with the repair, and advise the property at
17 that time of whatever necessary action they need to take, like get
18 it fixed now or go on fire watch, et cetera.

19 So when I leave a property, it is my goal that that entire
20 property is in full compliance. And compliance in this particular
21 place, at Flower Branch apartments, means in basic terms, that the
22 fire alarm system is functioning as it was designed when the
23 building was built in the '60s or some point.

24 Q. Okay. So when you say pull, it means it literally makes the
25 noise? It will start the fire alarm by itself, when you say you

1 pull the rod or --

2 A. You remove the witness rod. On these -- the typical pull
3 station employed there is a model Edwards 270.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Which has a glass rod in the front. If I just operated that,
6 I'd break the rod. So I open the unit, remove the rod, close the
7 unit, and functionally test the unit. Then reinstall the glass
8 rod that was there, rather than waste them every time I go
9 through.

10 Q. Okay. So you don't have to break the glass is what you're --

11 A. Basically, yes, sir.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And a pull station is a generic term for -- a technical term
14 of a manual fire alarm box.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Which is a device designed to be manually operated to
17 generate an alarm.

18 Q. Okay. And do you recall how many pull stations were there in
19 Building 8701?

20 A. Recall, no. But I can certainly look at my testing records.
21 I believe there was just one.

22 Q. Okay. Now --

23 A. At the entrance as you came in.

24 Q. Okay. What about the other alarms, like CO2, carbon
25 monoxide?

1 A. I'm not --

2 Q. So that is not your --

3 A. Not in my purview. No, sir.

4 Q. Okay. So besides --

5 A. I was --

6 Q. Go ahead.

7 A. I'm occasionally requested to provide information about what
8 it takes for compliance, but I don't do any work inside the
9 apartments. And if there are carbon monoxide detectors present
10 there or smoke alarms present there, I'm not involved in their
11 testing, maintenance, or operation.

12 Q. Okay. All right. What about the natural gas alarms, does
13 your company handle those also, in case they are present, not in
14 individual apartments, but in the property?

15 A. If there were natural gas alarms -- my portfolio includes
16 about 25,000 apartments. I'm not aware of any of them utilizing
17 natural gas alarms.

18 Q. Do you know that they exist?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. And do you install at other locations or none of the
21 apartments do that?

22 A. I'm not an installation company.

23 Q. I understand.

24 A. And if I'm involved in an installation as a consultant,
25 typically fire installation is going to deal with local laws and

1 ordinances, which are typically based on an NFPA 72.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. I'm not aware of any reference of fire alarm code to gas
4 alarms, other than carbon monoxide detection, in new
5 installations.

6 Q. So then how do you -- how are you aware of the natural gas
7 alarms if that is not something you do?

8 A. Trade Press publications.

9 Q. Publications.

10 A. Classes.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Yes, sir. Trade shows.

13 Q. And do you know how expensive they are?

14 A. Well, in a stand-alone environment or in a system
15 environment?

16 Q. In a system environment.

17 A. In a system environment --

18 Q. Like Flower Branch, you know, there are multiple buildings.

19 A. But there are no systems to attach them to, so they'd have to
20 be stand alone at a place like Flower Branch.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I think that there's some stand-alone gas alarms on the
23 marketplace at a wholesale place for about \$100.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. I think there's a company called Macurco that makes them.

1 Again, I have not been -- I have not --

2 Q. That's okay.

3 A. And I don't have expertise in the design or application of
4 the systems.

5 Q. Okay, just by association you know that they exist?

6 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

7 Q. So you have no information on them either?

8 A. At that property?

9 Q. No, not at that property.

10 A. In general, no, sir. I have no expertise.

11 MR. CHHATRE: Okay, good deal. Thank you very much. And
12 that's all I have. Kelly?

13 BY MR. EMEABA:

14 Q. Mr. Mandel, correct?

15 A. Yes, please call me David.

16 Q. Okay, David. Thank you. Just a quick question, if you can
17 take me through. When was the last time you worked on that 8701?

18 A. At 8701.

19 Q. Yes.

20 A. Okay. I didn't know if you wanted that or the last time I
21 was on the property. The last test was completed at Flower Branch
22 Apartments by my company on April 27, 2016. At that
23 time --

24 Q. Just to make sure -- what was the nature of the work on
25 April --

1 A. An annual fire alarm test for the property. 8701 is or was
2 8701 Arliss Street. I record that there is a bell located on the
3 entrance level, a bell located on a second floor, and one manual
4 fire alarm box at the entrance level. It was tested and worked as
5 designed at that time. No repairs were made.

6 Q. Can you lead me through how the tests are conducted?

7 A. Yes, sir. Should I repeat what I already shared or --

8 Q. No, just on this particular one.

9 A. I will enter the unit. I will open the manual fire alarm
10 box, remove the witness rod, close the box, and then functionally
11 test it. The bells will ring. I will walk downstairs and
12 upstairs with a decibel meter, record the decibel -- the highest
13 decibels with the bell, approximate. Meters aren't deadly
14 accurate.

15 And then record the ambient sound pressure located in this
16 building as well, write it down, close the fire alarm box, go down
17 to wherever the fuse or disconnect or power supply is for the
18 unit, double check the fuse, move on to the next building. I
19 probably am in the building for 5 minutes or less.

20 Q. Do you remember, where is the power to do the fire alarm,
21 where is that located?

22 A. Remember? Do you mind if I look?

23 Q. That's fine.

24 A. My records show that -- 8701. I'm sorry. There's a
25 disconnect located in the storage room on the lower level with a

1 slow blow S-15 fuse. And that fuse serviced just that building.
2 Each of the buildings at Flower Branch Apartments are individually
3 fused and not interconnected, so operating the alarm in one
4 building only operates the alarm in that building.

5 Q. Okay. If you can guide me through to your technical
6 experience, the fuse which is in the storage room, what could
7 happen to it, in terms of malfunctioning?

8 A. Malfunctioning?

9 Q. Yes.

10 A. I don't have an answer. I don't know how a fuse can
11 malfunction. A fuse is in place to power -- to allow electricity
12 to flow through it, and if the current exceeds the rating of the
13 fuse, the fuse, these are the old-style glass fuses, has small
14 piece of metal in it, it doesn't handle the current and it opens
15 the circuit. As far as malfunction, I don't know that I can
16 answer that.

17 Q. Okay. And let us go with the technical term you use, open
18 the circuit. Which circuit does it open, one of the fuse or at
19 the different location?

20 A. The fuse would open the circuit that provides the 110 volt AC
21 to the bell.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And the pull station.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Or manual fire alarm box. It's just one circuit. If you --

1 I guess the easiest way I could describe it is if you considered
2 the manual fire alarm box a light switch and the bell a light,
3 this is all that we're doing, on and off. If that's a good
4 analogy.

5 Q. Okay. Could that switch be affected by a surge or lightning
6 or whatever?

7 A. The switch?

8 Q. Yes.

9 A. Or the fuse?

10 Q. The fuse at the storage room. Can it be affected by a surge,
11 power surge or lightning?

12 A. I don't have the expertise to answer that. Although I have
13 seen fuses blow following lightning storms.

14 Q. Of a similar kind of fire alarm system?

15 A. Yes, sir. Rarely. But --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. No, I can't say that. I'm sorry. I need to correct myself.

18 Q. Okay, go ahead.

19 A. I can't make a correlation between a lightning storm and a
20 fuse blown, because I'm not there, I'm not present.

21 Q. And you've never seen that before?

22 A. I have not seen a lightning storm affect a fuse and have it
23 blow. No, sir. In my home, during a lightning storm, I have had
24 a circuit breaker pop. I'm not an electrical engineer. I assume
25 that's caused by a surge, because there's no signs of moisture or

1 other things that might cause a fuse to pop.

2 Q. Yes, it's of great interest for me to learn. I mean -- this
3 is Kalu Kelly Emeaba. I heard a garage door opener that could --
4 I lost it because of surge.

5 A. But that's hearsay. That's somebody's --

6 Q. Correct.

7 A. And I don't want to present myself as an expert on lightning
8 or electrical surges. It's not my expertise.

9 Q. Okay. You did also mention why you answered the question,
10 because on the pull box, pull station --

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. And you also mention they have to open it and remove a metal
13 bar.

14 A. No, a glass bar.

15 Q. A glass bar.

16 A. It's referred to a witness rod in the trade. And the purpose
17 of it is so that if a manual fire alarm box is operated by
18 somebody, it's easy for the fire department to determine which one
19 was operated. So it's a small glass rod that sits inside the
20 unit. And when you operate the unit, it breaks it. So that when
21 you go and look for the cause of the alarm, you can see that this
22 unit has a broken rod in it and that's what was pulled, in case
23 somebody pulls it and restores it.

24 Q. Okay. I see. So have there been incident from your other
25 inspections that it was found that somebody accidentally operated

1 the pull station?

2 A. During my last inspection in April 27, 2016? I do record
3 when I replace missing witness rods. I also record whether or not
4 the system was functionally when I came to the building and what
5 the condition was when I left. In this particular test, the last
6 time I was there, I did not show any repairs or any glass rods
7 being installed, or any notes that anything was out of service
8 when I got there.

9 Q. Okay. But in --

10 A. It just worked exactly as it was intended.

11 Q. Okay. In the previous day, years, have you had any situation
12 that was --

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. -- abnormal?

15 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Please --

17 A. Not abnormal. But it is not uncommon. The reason these
18 systems are tested is to make that they're functional and to try
19 to break them. That's what I look at as my job. I have come into
20 a building and operated the manual fire alarm box and nothing, no
21 alarm, nothing. First thing I do is check the fuse, and sometimes
22 fuses are removed, sometimes fuses are loose, at which point, I'll
23 tighten, put it back in service, or a manual fire alarm box has
24 gone bad, or a bell has gone bad. I keep them with me, so that
25 I'm prepared to do a repair.

1 Q. Okay. After 8701 Arliss Street, in your previous
2 inspections, were there a situation you have found that showed
3 that, you know, that a pull station had been operated or somebody
4 tried to --

5 A. I brought with me today the testing record, as you requested,
6 any documents that I had from my -- I was actually -- I was called
7 out to the property on August 14th.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. But not for 8701, obviously. The building across from 8701,
10 the alarm had been activated. I don't -- I believe it was by the
11 fire department or a police officer that had responded to help to
12 evacuate the building. They called me out on August 14th to put
13 that system back in service. So I was there on
14 August 14th. April 27, 2016, no notes for Arliss. May 29, 2015,
15 8701, no notes for Arliss. June 24, 2014, no comments for Arliss.
16 May 17, 2013, no comments for Arliss.

17 And I brought the first -- I didn't know how far to go. I
18 brought the first record of the first inspection I did, which was
19 in 2005 on that property. And 8701 Arliss was in service, but the
20 witness rod was missing, as well as it was missing in many, many
21 units, because I don't think previous inspections had been -- I
22 don't know when the last previous inspection was. In 2005, there
23 wasn't a lot of enforcement going on in this community.

24 Q. Yeah. One more question. Could the operation of a pull
25 station create an extensive heat at that location itself or at the

1 fuse location?

2 A. No, sir. These are very low current draw systems, so I would
3 associate heat with current. So I -- my answer would be no, sir.

4 Q. Okay, I know you mentioned --

5 A. But again, not an electrical engineer.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. But I do test current draws on fire alarms.

8 Q. Okay. You mentioned the fact that these -- the switch or the
9 fuse down at the storage room has a 120 volt AC --

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. -- connected to it. Is it a direct connection, or is it a
12 step down?

13 A. It is 120 volts, so it is directly connected. This is a
14 disconnect.

15 Q. Yes.

16 A. Which is on a branch circuit off the power in the building.
17 It is not -- there's no transformers associated with it.

18 Q. Okay. So what goes direct feeding the alarm is direct 120
19 volt.

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Or 118. It's referred to differently.

23 Q. 118.

24 A. Single-phase electric. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Correct. All right. Thank you. That's it for now.

1 A. You're very welcome, sir.

2 BY MR. AMROLIWALA:

3 Q. Rashmikant Amroliwala, Maryland Public Service Commission.

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. What is the testing frequency, testing all calibers and
6 frequency of fire alarms?

7 A. There are -- the frequencies of testing are laid out by,
8 again, the NFPA publication 72. There are different testing
9 frequencies for different types of systems. There is a table
10 within that document that lays them out. The authority having
11 jurisdiction in this case being Montgomery County Fire Rescue
12 Service, and different organizations within Montgomery County Fire
13 Rescue Service requires an annual test of the system and that's
14 what I provide.

15 Q. Okay. The (indiscernible) NFPA 704 [sic], did you say that
16 they're --

17 A. 72. 7-2.

18 Q. 72?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. So there's a table that the frequency is needed for each
21 alarm is a different frequency?

22 A. Depends on the type of systems employed and the --

23 Q. Let's talk about 8701 Branch, Flower Branch Apartments? What
24 was the frequency for testing for that fire alarm?

25 A. That fire alarm is actually -- these "ring and run" systems

1 are not directly referenced in NFPA 72 because they precede that
2 publication. They were designed and installed before the
3 publication was in print. So they are not specifically
4 referenced.

5 Q. How many fire alarms do you need in one building like 8701?
6 How many needed?

7 A. How many needed?

8 Q. Yeah. Instead of one fire alarm in the basement --

9 A. According to code --

10 Q. -- one in the hallway, one in the upstairs, how many needed
11 (indiscernible)?

12 A. You're talking about manual fire alarm boxes or smoke
13 detectors or --

14 Q. Fire alarms. Right now, fire alarms. Is that just the one?

15 A. Fire alarm is not an appropriate term. I'm sorry. I don't
16 mean to be argumentative.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. There is the code, the applicable regulations, and the laws
19 allow the system, as configured, to continue in operation as long
20 as that is approved by an authority having jurisdiction. The
21 authority having jurisdiction, Montgomery County, has not
22 required, and they have inspected this property, any type of
23 upgrade. So what is there is what was installed, and it functions
24 exactly as it did when it was installed when the building was
25 built.

1 There were not -- NFPA 72 didn't exist. There were small
2 pamphlet publication guides for designing fire alarm systems back
3 then, but it's very inconsistent. And the application of the --
4 you can go into one building and there's three manual fire alarm
5 boxes. You can go into another building and there's one manual
6 fire alarm box at the exit.

7 If that building was built today, there isn't even a
8 requirement for any manual activation because if that building was
9 built today it would be a fully sprinklered [sic] building.

10 BY LT. OLIN:

11 Q. Bill Olin, Montgomery County.

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. So it's fair to say that this is like the most basic fire
14 alarm system that's pretty much out there.

15 A. Yeah, I don't even know if we'd call it a fire alarm system.
16 Yes, sir.

17 Q. And then just for these --

18 A. It's a bell and a manual fire alarm box.

19 Q. And so for these guys, that system isn't monitored by anyone.

20 A. No, sir.

21 Q. It doesn't go anywhere.

22 A. It is a local only.

23 Q. Yeah, so that alarm doesn't go to ECC or an alarm company or
24 anything like that.

25 A. Correct. There are -- there's a small placard next to each

1 manual fire alarm box that directs residents that this is a local
2 alarm, leave the building, call 911.

3 Q. That's it. That's all I got. Thank you.

4 A. You're welcome, sir. Thank you for helping me clarify.

5 BY MR. PRICE:

6 Q. Steve Price with Washington Gas.

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Just to follow up on that. So the way a fire department
9 would get word that an alarm has been pulled would be because
10 somebody actually notified them having heard it?

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Correct. And that's the only way that they would know in
14 this case. There are a lot of different factors that come into
15 play in terms of whether or not a system is monitored.

16 Q. How do you -- how did you get access -- how do you get access
17 to the Flower Branch Apartments to conduct your tests?

18 A. I go to the rental office and request a set of keys to the
19 buildings and the storage rooms.

20 Q. And so that would be in 8701 or do you recall where the
21 rental office was?

22 A. Yeah, I believe it was in that building, but not on the front
23 entrance, on the back entrance. And I would go into the building.
24 And in previous years, I don't believe the front doors of those
25 buildings were locked or latched, although I think that in this

1 year's test they had recently added door locks. No, the buildings
2 had been locked for some time because I was involved with
3 Montgomery County Fire Rescue Service in installing Knox-Boxes on
4 this property, a fire department access box, which were located
5 throughout the property.

6 And each building had a sign on it indicating where the Knox-
7 Box was. Inside the Knox-Box, the fire department access box, was
8 a key to the building entrance, as well as the storage room. I do
9 not have access to those Knox-Box, only the fire department does.

10 Q. But you were involved in installing them?

11 A. The Montgomery County Fire Rescue Service, I believe it was
12 about 2010, told the property they required the property to add
13 Knox-Boxes. The initial request was to put Knox-Boxes on each
14 building. I think that this followed an ambulance response where
15 they had problem accessing the building. The fire department
16 never does, they just help themselves, let themselves in. But the
17 ambulance couldn't -- didn't -- wasn't able to get to a resident
18 that had requested service.

19 My involvement was I reached out to Montgomery County Fire
20 Rescue Service and designed or made a suggestion to them to allow
21 me to put Knox-Boxes on eight or ten buildings instead of all 25
22 or 30, and add signs to the other buildings indicating whether the
23 others were. So we did them by cluster. That was submitted to
24 Montgomery County Rescue Service, approved by them, and somebody
25 else supplied and installed them, mounted the Knox-Boxes for the

1 property.

2 Q. And --

3 A. So again, I was acting on behalf of the property to try to
4 keep them from having -- I thought it was silly to have 40 Knox-
5 Boxes on a property this small. So I just sort of reached out and
6 came to a compromise.

7 Q. And is a Knox-Box a combination lock or a key lock?

8 A. Key lock.

9 Q. Knox-Box is commonly used throughout the United States,
10 manufactured by a company Knox. Knox is where it gets its name.
11 And the process is that different keys are assigned to different
12 fire departments throughout the United States. Those are very
13 highly protected by each station. The Knox-Box would be shipped
14 to the property, whoever ordered it, without the locks. The locks
15 are shipped to the fire department. They're mounted by a
16 contractor, then the fire department has to come out, because you
17 can't install the lock without having the key and they are not to
18 be had.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. So it's just a way to provide fire department access and
21 they're common throughout the United States (indiscernible)
22 captured it.

23 Q. And at Flower Gardens [sic], it would have been access to the
24 building itself and the meter room?

25 A. Yes, sir. I believe that there was more than one key. I

1 don't know if it's a meter room or a storage room.

2 Q. Storage room.

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. Okay. I think I know the answer to this, but you didn't have
5 any involvement in the installation of access alarms at the Flower
6 Garden apartment, did you?

7 A. No, sir.

8 Q. That's all I have. Thanks.

9 A. Happy to help.

10 MR. CHHATRE: I have no more questions. Anybody else? If
11 not, thank you very much for coming. I appreciate your help.

12 MR. MANDEL: Yes, sir.

13 MR. CHHATRE: Off the record.

14 MR. MANDEL: Pleasure to be of service. And I hope something
15 I said helped.

16 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: THE EXPLOSION OF APARTMENT
BUILDING 8701 OF FLOWER BRANCH
APARTMENTS IN SILVER SPRING,
MARYLAND ON AUGUST 10, 2016
Interview of David Mandel

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA16FP003

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: August 29, 2016

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.

Katie Leach
Transcriber