UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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

Interview of: CURTIS GRAY, JR.

NTSB Headquarters
Washington, D.C.

Tuesday,
January 21, 2017

APPEARANCES:

RAVI CHHATRE, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

ROGER EVANS, Senior Pipeline Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

KALU KELLY EMEABA, Pipeline Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

DOUG STAEBLER, Senior Vice President Operations
Washington Gas

STEVEN PRICE, Assistant Vice President for
System Operations
Washington Gas

SPENCER NICHOLS, Associate General Counsel
Washington Gas

LT. WILLIAM OLIN, Fire and Explosives Investigator
Montgomery County, Maryland

JOHN CLEMENTSON, Assistant Chief Engineer
Public Service Commission of Maryland

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

MR. CHHATRE: On the record. Good morning.

MR. GRAY: Good morning.

MR. CHHATRE: Today is Tuesday, January 21, 2017. We are currently at the NTSB headquarters located at 490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W., Washington, D.C. We are meeting regarding the investigation of explosion of building 8701 Flower Branch Apartments, Silver Spring, Maryland, that occurred on August 10, 2016.

My name is Ravi Chhatre. I am with the National Transportation Safety Board located in Washington, D.C., and I am investigator in charge of this accident. The NTSB investigation number for this accident is DCA16FP003.

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

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

Please state for the record your full name, spelling of your name, organization you work for, and your title, business contact information such as mailing address or email address, and whom you

have chosen to represent with you during your interview.

MR. GRAY: Okay. My name is Curtis Gray, Jr., C-u-r-t-i-s, G-r-a-y, Jr. I live at [redacted]. At the current time I am unemployed.

MR. CHHATRE: And whom have you chosen to be with you?

MR. GRAY: I -- Mr. DiCarlo from former CNN could not be here today. He had to go out of country, so --

MR. CHHATRE: So --

MR. GRAY: He had to cancel. So I'll be here by myself.

MR. CHHATRE: And you are okay with that?

MR. GRAY: I'm fine.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Now I would like to go around the room and have each person introduce themselves. Please state your name, spelling of your name, your title and the organization that you represent, your business -- and your business contact information. We will start from my left and go around the room

MR. EMEABA: My name is Kalu Kelly Emeaba, K-a-l-u, K-e-l-l-y, E-m-e-a-b-a. I am an NTSB investigator.

MR. PRICE: My name's Steven Price, Assistant Vice President System Operations, Washington Gas Light Company, Springfield, Virginia. Telephone number is [redacted].

MR. STAEBLER: Douglas Staebler, Senior Vice President of Operations, Washington Gas in Springfield, Virginia. Phone number is [redacted].

LT. OLIN: William Olin, fire and explosive investigator for

Montgomery County, Maryland. Phone number [redacted]. My email William -- [redacted] -- @[redacted].

MR. CLEMENTSON: John Clementson, Public Service Commission of Maryland, Assistant Chief Engineer, [redacted].

MR. CHHATRE: Thank you for that. Let me call Roger because he's not --

(Phone dialing.)

MR. CHHATRE: Do you have the teleconference number handy?

Off the record.

(Off the record.)

(On the record.)

MR. CHHATRE: Back on the record. Please introduce yourself.

MR. EVANS: This is Roger Evans, senior investigator, the NTSB, R-o-g-e-r, E-v-a-n-s.

MR. CHHATRE: Thank you.

INTERVIEW OF CURTIS GRAY

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. So, Mr. Gray, please tell us for the record any formal education, training, experience that you have in the past?

A. I was a police officer initially in 1984 for the Maryland State Police. I left that organization and I worked for several other agencies. And I contracted for former French Colonies in Africa during the Rwanda and Burundi Moquatics (ph.) Mission, also in Somalia.

Q. Okay. And what's your experience with the natural gas pipelines, regulators?
A. I learned to work on this equipment after I left my former career, I started working for Washington Gas. And when I first worked there, we received a lot of training. I'm going to say that I absorbed this training and -- like I would anything else, and so when I was told something or I read something in our manual I went according to the manual company procedures. And actually what I was told -- the additional things I was told as far as the behavior of natural gas, but you're only going to learn from experience and dealing with people who've had those experience and have showed you these things.
Q. And how long did you work for Washington Gas?
A. I worked as a contractor initially from 1998 until I became an employee of Washington Gas in 2000. And I was fired I believe it was 2009.
Q. Okay. And what were your duties at Washington Gas?
A. I worked almost all the field aspects and jobs with Washington Gas from being a Grade 4. I started as a helper on trucks, digging, repairing pipe, just tools. Then I got a promotion to Grade 5 where I was checking for gas leaks, which I had done before as a contractor. Then after that I was promoted to Grade 6A where I was making repairs and also flame packing. I was in charge of many secured areas. I was given the job inspecting the gas at the White House, Langley, and a couple other

secure facilities.
Q. Okay. And did any of these responsibilities involve regulators on single family or multifamily dwellings?
A. All of these, up including commercial buildings. And if it was something that I found there was a problem that was above my grade, I would call Washington Gas and they would send another higher grade employee to come and take over.
Q. So specifically tell us your involvement or responsibilities involving natural gas regulators in single family dwellings, you know, shutting down the meter, starting the meter or doing any repairs?
A. It's been a few years, but I have done all of the above. My experience in the field, we had regulators. We found some regulators that were -- we used spring regulators. Some different springs, depending on what they were regulating, how many meters or multi-meters or a single family home or what. And then we had others that were very old in the system where they were mercury regulators.
Q. Okay.
A. Now, we -- there's a procedure that -- turning off these old mercury regulators was a little bit more difficult, a little bit more tricky than using -- turning on and off these spring regulators. If you turned on -- off a mercury regulator and you turned it on too fast, it would push the regulator or the mercury out of a vent and then it would just leave gas flowing wide open,

preferably going out of the building, right? But sometimes that didn't happen, especially with contractors who weren't used to dealing with that kind of a regulator.

The spring regulators were a lot easier to use and from my experience we had less failures with them, but then they were new. Some of these regulators we took out were probably from the '40s.

Q. Okay. And were you given any training by Washington Gas --

A. Yes.

Q. -- in turning on and off --

A. We got a lot of trainings.

Q. Can you elaborate what the trainings were?

A. I had a manual. I couldn't find it to bring it in, but as far as setting the regulators, turning them on and off, testing for leaks. We put a -- there was a gauge whether we had four -- most things that I've dealt with was we measured in water column or we also had 2-pound systems, which is mostly what I dealt with. Anything that was any larger we usually had another crew we called the rough-in crew, which took care of the larger facilities.

Q. Okay. So let's walk step-by-step here and let's just focus on multifamily dwellings for now.

A. Yes.

Q. So have you ever done any initial installation of the regulators at those facilities?

A. Initial as if it's in a new building?

Q. Right.

A. No.
Q. Okay.
A. That was done by our rough-in department.
Q. Okay. So what your responsibilities will involve with the multifamily dwelling units?
A. In these apartments -- I did -- I worked this area a lot. Okay? We did inside surveys. I did most of the walking the services outside of them because it was close to my residence. Okay? So we were given these and if there's a day where it was raining and we couldn't do what we call flame packing, it's flaming hydrogen ionizing testing, then we would work on inside surveys. So I did a lot of inside surveys in this area and I got into most of these buildings.
Q. When you say "this area," what area are you talking about?
A. The area is Piney Branch, New Hampshire Avenue. It was an area that I was familiar with. There was a large minority population and a lot of the other technicians didn't want to do there for whatever reason. I can only speculate. So I would go there. And when I went there, I didn't go there just to fill out paperwork and said I've been there. I actually did these surveys. And having done these surveys, I came up with a lot of deficiencies and leaks in this area.
Q. So let's take one at a time. You said lots -- a lot of leaks. What leaks we are talking about, regulator leaks? Or are we talking about --

A. I found --
Q. -- pipeline leaks?
A. We would call the regulators would be weeping, is a term that we used, weeping. I found a lot of underground leaks. I found leaks in the buildings, which many of them just as a technician I could repair, you know, on the scene. Just, okay, this is what we have to do and we'd just repair it and then you'd note it. But a lot of the underground leaks or leaks that required more work or were beyond my means or my equipment and training, I would call in.
Q. So underground leaks, those leaks were involving what?
A. Oh, my, there are a lot of underground --
Q. I'm talking about material pipe-wise? Is it pipe leaks or --
A. Most -- any of the ones going to the buildings in this area they were after -- these were wrapped steel, three-quarter inch or larger.
Q. Okay.
A. Many of them, the best I can remember, were the -- we had Buffalo valves in some of these areas which were defective and leaking, the company knew about it, and fire valves. But there was -- this area is so congested with pipes they -- for whatever reason, they used -- Washington Gas used a coupling called a NoMac coupling. And there was huge failures with the NoMac couplings. Now, keep this in mind. I'm speaking about what I saw from, you know, 2000 until the time that I left the company. But a lot of

these leaks with what I learned about from digging these holes and the leaks were old. There's a certain -- a little residue that will build up around the pipe where it's leaking. And especially we had this problem became exacerbated not just in this area but system-wide in pipe that was -- I'm going to -- I'm guessing because I don't remember the exact date, '69 -- from '69 up.

Q. So you are saying the leaks were --

A. They were rampant.

Q. -- in the valves or they're in the pipe?

A. They were in the pipe. They were -- now some of these services came into the building under the slab and would come up. Okay? So you have all this slab here and you have a piece of pipe here and all this pipe under there, which will leak. And gas follows the path of least resistance, so the gas is going to go wherever the easiest place, and it would build up. And I found several locations system-wide where this was a problem. And anytime that you have -- according to my training at Washington Gas, and I'm sure these gentlemen will testify to that, anytime you have gas getting in a building it's a Grade 1 leak, which was our most severe leak.

Many times it wasn't handled like that. You would call it in and I was a little -- I was stubborn and I followed our guidelines strictly. And for the simple reason I knew what could happen, I didn't want to be responsible for any damage or death. So I stayed there until I put that responsibility on someone of a

higher grade.

And many times Washington Gas would downgrade that leak. They'd say, well, that's not really what this is, but according to our guidelines any gas getting inside is a Grade 1 leak and needs to be dealt with immediately. But the company, for whatever reason, the culture changed and we didn't have crews to do this, and so they would downgrade it.

Q. Okay. So when you say several, can you maybe narrow that down a little bit? I mean, several can mean many different things to different people. If you recall, can you --

A. In one day I called in 300 leaks. Not all Grade 1's, but in one day, and not in this area but in Washington, and I was -- I was cornered by my supervisor and sent with three more experienced technicians and they found more than that with me. We all three walked together and they found it. I don't remember the road, but it was around Florida Avenue, N.W., and Washington Gas had a major project there after about 6 or 8 months to repair these. But I was told I wasn't telling the truth, and we found out that I was.

Q. Now, the several leaks you talked about, are they all Grade 1 or they are --

A. No.

Q. So tell us, tell us what different grades mean?

A. Grade 1 is the most serious leak, requires immediate attention by the gas company.

Q. Um-hum.

A. Then the gas company made up another leak called a Grade 2A, which you had to have someone do in 2 weeks. Grade -- no, it was 3 days for Grade 2A. Grade 2 was, I believe, 2 weeks. Grade 3 did not have to be repaired for a year or so. And then Washington Gas instituted a program where we monitored Grade 3's. We did what's called Grade 3 rechecks.

Q. Okay. So your several leaks, I guess 300 leaks that day, were they -- how many of those are Grade 1 and how many of those different grades?

A. I'm working on memory, maybe this one day four. That's the most that I had in this area. Now, this is in Washington, D.C., but the -- most of the pipe in all the same era is what was in -- on Piney Branch Road area. The most Grade 1 leaks I called in a day was six, and I was told to go to a lower leak area.

Q. All right. What does that mean?

A. That means go somewhere and mess around and don't do any more work because we don't have crews to make repairs. This is what my perception because --

Q. Okay. That's not what Washington Gas told you?

A. Well, yes, it was. I was told that. And another time I was pulled aside by a supervisor and I was said, "You're here to walk services, not to find leaks."

Q. Okay. Now going back to Piney Branch, have you worked in the Piney Branch area?

A. Yes.

Q. And what kind of work you did there?
A. I did -- we repaired gas mains. I installed meters. I started to turn people's gas on, did inside leak survey. I did flame packing, which is walking with a flame hydrogen ionizer. I did the high pressure cast iron project, mains on structures. I did everything safety related just about that involved Washington Gas.
Q. So on the Flower Branch Apartments, what kind of work you did in those apartments, if any?
A. Installed meters --
Q. Okay.
A. -- turned gas services on, checked for leaks, fire valve surveys, the transmission surveys.
Q. So any of that work involve adjusting, connecting, disconnecting, whatever, the regulators?
A. Yes.
Q. Tell me what will involve you to get involved with the regulators?
A. To replace regulators, we didn't have that much problems with them as I remember, but when I did that I did that as a helper helping a higher grade person, a guy we called rough-in, because apartment buildings you have your rough-in people because there's so much that can go wrong. These meter sets in these buildings were old. They're very old. We had problems where I found a meter once -- some of the meter sets are set up against concrete

and they're aluminum. Okay? You know what happens? You get a reaction between the chemicals in the concrete or the cinder block with the aluminum. Now it's sitting against a wall, so where this little contact is sometimes it'll just eat away at the meter and you'll get a leak and you'll not know where it is until sometimes -- this is just something that I've seen two or three times, there's a catastrophic failure then you just have gas blowing in there.

Also I've seen we had an issue that I'm -- since I was not there and I hadn't been privy to all the information that you have, so it's hard -- I'm only saying what I've seen happen, and from what -- the tape that I've seen of what happened there, what I believe could have happened. There is a regulator station for transmission lines. Before I left there --

Q. I'll tell you, before we go --

A. Yes.

Q. -- before we take that route, I just want to know right now --

A. I'm sorry.

Q. -- what your involvement in those Piney Branch apartments involved?

A. I surveyed most of them.

Q. Okay.

A. Almost that whole area.

Q. Using what?

A. On inside surveys we used a type of device that does not have a flame in it to test around the meters and the pipe inside the building and to make sure that there are no problems in the building.
Q. Okay.
A. I've also responded to leaks --
Q. What kind of meters do you use for that?
A. Oh, it wasn't -- it's a testing device, a SENSIT, is what it's called.
Q. Sense?
A. It's a SENSIT. Yeah.
Q. And do you know how it worked?
A. Yes, I do.
Q. Can you tell us?
A. You -- there was a wand on it. There was no burning in it. It's been a long time since I've used it. But what we would do we -- the SENSIT, there's a tip on the end of it and you would take and you'd go around the pipe and whatever material or even anywhere in the building or whatever to see if there were any indications of gas. It did not measure a specific amount of gas. It just says there's gas here or there isn't. But usually the louder the tick or the alarm in it was the higher the concentration of gas. When we got that, then we went to a CGI or another meter which gave us a percentage of gas and free air, we could get with that. And it would say, you know --

Q. And have you found any inside leaks --
A. Yes.
Q. -- in Piney Branch area?
A. Yes.
Q. What kind?
A. Inside leaks?
Q. Um-hum.
A. They were mostly on meters. Every once in a while you would find a regulator weeping. And when I say weeping that means that sometimes when there's a call for gas, the meter would just let gas outside of a vent.
Q. Okay.
A. But I've also had a problem where they failed.
Q. On a meter leaking, what grade that would be?
A. If it's in -- most of these were inside so it's a Grade 1 leak. But most of them were something that I could repair or I was qualified to repair.
Q. And how would you repair that?
A. Depending on what was leaking, lots of times -- the meters are the weak link, the weakest link in this gas system. Okay? You have little washers that go up to connect the meter to the meter bar and lots of times they would go bad. And that was mainly where we had problems where just the washers would just get old.
Q. And on these internal surveys, was it according to procedure

that you're required to do that?
A. Yes. You're required to do a survey, but you're only -- the company required us to make three attempts to get in. After three attempts, they would -- said it was done. But my experience with some of the technicians is that they were committing frauds by just going off somewhere and saying that they went in and they did not. This information I presented to Washington Gas on more than one occasion.
Q. Okay. And that's your opinion or --
A. No, that's a fact.
Q. Oh. And by what procedure are you required to go and conduct inside surveys? How often by procedure, if you recall?
A. A lot of this, like I said, I don't remember exactly.
Q. That's fine.
A. But there is, there is a certain -- for inside surveys I believe -- I've forgotten. I don't want to say what I don't remember.
Q. No, that's okay.
A. But there is a set time.
Q. If you don't know, you don't know.
A. The company -- and I actually believe that the NTSB requires us to get into these buildings, at least this is what I was told. And I don't remember the exact dates, but I've been to those apartments on more than one occasion to do -- or that whole area to do this occasionally between Prince George and Montgomery

County.
Q. Have you ever been to the building that exploded?
A. I've been in that area.
Q. Not area, the building?
A. I'm sure I have. I'm sure. I'm positive.
Q. Okay. Now why would you go to the meter? Will you go to the basement, will you smell the gas when you go to the meter or --
A. You can --
Q. -- you won't smell it and you had to use a wand?
A. No, I can smell it. And when I say that I have to -- when I say I've been there, I wasn't always the primary, okay? I worked night shift so I was there with other technicians and we would also go in, so I've been there many times. I know the area because, like I say, I live there. So I've been there many times. Usually I would smell the gas long before we would get there. You know, you can smell -- tertiary butyl mercaptan is very irritating to me, and so lots of times we would drive, we would drive looking for these leaks. But you'd get a call from dispatch, you know, there's odor of gas, unknown source, and we would drive around until we would find it and then we'd trace it down.

It took time, okay? It's something that you just, you learn to do and you kind of get a feeling of finesse for it. Not everybody would want to do that and it was quite easier to say, you know, fine, there's gas in this area -- and I've heard it go over the radio many times, there's gas in this area, you know, we

haven't found it, and they would leave. And we've had -- there are multiple -- in my experience, multiple calls would go out for these same leaks, and if you had a lazy technician or there weren't people to repair it, they wouldn't find the leak.

MR. CHHATRE: Off the record.

(Off the record.)

(On the record.)

MR. CHHATRE: Back on the record.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. So on the Piney Branch, do you work there as helper at that time? The information you are giving us --

A. No.

Q. -- as helper or you worked there as technician?

A. Technician.

Q. Or both?

A. Both, actually both.

Q. Okay. Now if you go to, I guess, reconnect the meter or cut the meter off for whatever reason, customer not paying bill or whatever the reason may be, will you ever have to touch the regulator?

A. Did I ever touch a regulator? On a system like that no, because you have one regulator for multiple meters. Okay? So no. No.

Q. Now, what -- I guess what complaint or what repair work will involve touching the regulator?

A. Touching the regulator?
Q. Meaning doing something to the regulator, turning it on, turning it off, disconnecting it?
A. It gets -- to turn off below the regulator if it's -- let's say this is outside, below the regulator is a shutoff. To shut it back on you're supposed to hook up a gauge and check it to make sure that you're -- that the flow, that the amount of gas is right and all that, and lots of times that didn't get done.
Q. And that was a single family dwelling or multifamily dwelling?
A. No, multiple family dwellings that didn't get done. There are actually systems that we have that are new that there's nothing in the engineering manual to be able to do that. There's not -- I mean, I couldn't -- we're supposed to have vents for these, and I remember looking for these vents and I couldn't find them. And I called the supervisor there. This is a different situation, but they're -- but there was nothing in the engineer's manual said that this should be built like this.
Q. So elaborate more on when you said it will require you to turn the valve off in the basement or that's all -- everything is outside --
A. If we found --
Q. -- outside the meter?
A. If the only time that I would ever turn off the whole building is if there was a leak inside that I couldn't find. And

it was -- that was the only way you could stop the gas. It's the only -- or we were doing some other work, which I didn't do as a 6A technician. But we would turn that off. But to turn it on you'd have to have a big group of technicians because you'd have to go in and put test on the line to make sure there's nothing leaking and everything's holding and then you have to relight. So that was never done just by one technician.

Q. So for disconnecting the meters or re-hooking the meter back or doing anything to the meter, you wouldn't have touched the regulator in a multifamily dwellings?

A. No, not usually. It had to be some really odd circumstances. It had to have been something wrong with the regulator for them to do that.

Q. So how will you know if the regulator is failing?

A. If it was weeping. From my experience, not the right amount of gas, and then at that point I would call someone with more experience and have them help me with it. One of the --

Q. But how would you know that there's a problem with the regulator?

A. Not getting enough gas. Sometimes regulators would make noise. They would pulsate or they would just continually pass gas. That's what I've had to deal with.

Q. And again, we are focusing on multifamily dwellings.

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. So if you go into the basement will you hear the noise

if the regulator is failing?
A. You can. I've heard regulators pulsate. They just vibrate. There's a little piece of rubber on a disk and it would do that. Or I've seen them fail or had to test on other projects where there was a failure in the pressure system and too much pressure was put -- transmission pressure was put on distribution pipe and the regulators, you had to check them to make sure they weren't failed because they're not made to take that. They not security regulators. I've seen that happen.

Matter of fact, we had a few instances of that and -- now I'm speaking from experience and what I saw. I spoke to a foreman who was in charge of the transmission and he said something and he -- I told him what had happened and he said he would bring that to the attention of whoever. And he says, "Thank you, Curtis," and then he got fired.

Q. Now, is it again multifamily dwellings?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. So how often you have replaced the regulators because there's a problem with the regulator?
A. Not very often. The time we were replacing regulators they -- there was a program to get rid of these mercury regulators, which in these older buildings were in series and they were just causing a lot of problems, more with contractors that didn't know how to turn them on and off and then you'd have a mercury spill. And so we started replacing them. We were told whenever you do

your surveys note where the mercury regulators are, and we did. And then after a couple weeks we were told don't worry about it, so we stopped doing it.

Q. So what happens if there is no mercury or not enough mercury in the regulator? What could happen?

A. The regulators don't work and they just blow gas.

Q. Okay.

A. Now, if they -- if it's inside through a vent -- most of the ones that I've seen have been inside and that's just system-wide, they've been inside. Now, if that -- the pipe that's used to vent these gases is clogged or whatever, where is the gas going to go? It stays inside. And if it overpressure -- I've seen a couple instances where we've had gas in a building because the regulator wasn't working correctly. Actually I believe twice.

Q. Okay. And both were multifamily dwellings again?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And what happens when the no mercury regulators now, what did you say, weeping? What is that term you used?

A. Actually if there's not enough mercury in there to do its job, the gas blows.

Q. Blows?

A. Blows.

Q. Through the vent line?

A. It's supposed to go through the vent line, but if the vent line is clogged, and a lot of this stuff is 60, 70 years old, then

it's going to go somewhere else.
Q. Okay. Now if that happens, will the customer get enough gas or they will not?
A. They'll get too much gas. Well, if it's -- like I say, it depends. The gas is going to go somewhere. If it overpressurizes the system they're going to get a lot of gas. They're going to get too much gas. It's not going to be at what the industry says and Washington Gas has told us is at safe pressures. It overpressurizes the system. It puts more pressure -- this is what I've observed -- more pressure -- and told by people who have a lot more experience. It puts pressure on that shouldn't be there. And so it goes -- gas goes where it's going to go and if there's something really weak, guess what? It's going to find somewhere to go, whether it's out of the pipe or --
Q. Tell me.
A. It's going to go and find a way to escape and it's going to escape. And then whether it escapes, it's going to build up. If the -- if there's somewhere else for it to go and it doesn't build up to a level between 4 and 14 percent, it's not dangerous but there's still gas there. As soon as it gets 4 and 14 percent -- if it's below the 4 percent, it's there but it's not -- it's not at the explosive level. Between 4 and 14 percent you get a point of ignition and then it explodes.
Q. Tell me again, if the vent line is blocked you are saying that -- you are asking me where will the gas go. Tell me where

the gas goes.
A. Gas is going to go and find and take the path of least resistance.
Q. Well, tell me, from your experience.
A. It's going to get -- it goes -- it'll go into a building.
Q. I have a regulator in the multifamily dwelling and my vent line is blocked and --
A. It's going to go into the building.
Q. -- there is no mercury so how -- where -- how will the gas go from my regulator now? Where will it go?
A. It's not going to be able to go where it's supposed to go and it's going to go inside a building.
Q. How will it go inside the building?
A. It can go in a building through the pipe that's piped throughout the building. It'll go in through a stove --
Q. So --
A. There's regulator on a stove, a gas valve on a stove. If it's not capable of holding that pressure back, it's going to go through and it's going to fill the --
Q. And so what happens to the customers, I mean, the --
A. Well, they're going to -- anybody that can smell anything is going to smell that mercaptan, that tertiary butyl mercaptan. They're going to smell it, and it's put there -- it's not something that's naturally occurring in natural gas. It's put there as a safety measure for people who don't know gas to say,

hey, I smell something and I need to call the gas company or the fire department and tell them this is here.

Q. So people are going to smell the gas --

A. Yes.

Q. -- inside the building?

A. They're going to smell the mercaptan that's in the gas, yes.

Q. Even if the range is not on or the stove is not on?

A. If there's a leak they're going to smell it.

Q. Okay. Now going back to again the Piney Branch and the building that blew up, the apartment complex, have you ever smelled gas in the basement? You said you went there quite often.

A. Almost always. Anytime you did an inside leak survey of the area or you were outside in this area on Piney Branch Road, on New Hampshire Avenue, that whole area, you always smelled gas from somewhere.

Q. And what will you do then? Or what did you do?

A. Oh, you're talking about gas -- if I smelled -- if I was in a building doing an inside leak survey and if it was in my, you know, skill set, I repaired it myself. If I had a problem, I would call dispatch or I'd call another technician and he would meet me there, or they'd call rough-in. If it was a leak that I found that was underground, then I would call dispatch and -- if it was a Grade 1, and they would come out. Otherwise I would take and write -- back then we had a paper system. I'd write up what's called a UWO, a unified work order. Only for -- you don't write

those up for Grade 1's, but 2's, 2A's and 3's, you'd write that up and you'd turn that in at the end of the day. But if it was -- but you could not drive in this area without smelling mercaptan. There --

Q. When you say the area, meaning the Piney Branch?

A. The Piney Branch area. I'm sorry. I should have -- the Piney Branch, you could not. It was an old system. They weren't all leaks that we would call Grade 1's, but still you don't know that until you look. But many times we would start finding these leaks it would overwhelm the system and I was told to go to a low leak area.

Q. And do what?

A. Not find leaks.

Q. Can you have --

A. Don't you have any plastic to do? This is what I was told. Do you have any plastic, which means plastic pipe which is a lot newer. And so I'm like -- and they would say new plastic because we have black plastic and, I mean, that's failing everywhere or at least it was then. I can't say what it's been the last few years, but you'd go somewhere else.

Q. So tell me, going back to work assignment, how is your assignment given to you?

A. You would go and see your supervisor back then. My last supervisor was Joel and I forget his last name, but he would give you your projects to do. Then he would tell me to organize them

and to go and just do it. And it was set up because, you know, a lot of it depended on weather. You weren't supposed to flame pack, which is the outside work, when it's windy or if it's raining and snowing, which we did often anyhow. And you'd get it and then you had a certain amount of time to get, like, your inside projects done and things like that or your transmission lines done, and then you'd just turn in the paperwork to the supervisor. If you found something, depending on the severity, you would call it in immediately.

Q. So if they are giving you assignment, why would they ask you to go and look somewhere else?

A. Because they don't --

Q. I'm just confused.

A. -- have crews to repair these leaks.

Q. Well, other than leaks, if they are giving you an assignment, then why would they ask you to --

A. They don't have crews to repair the leaks. So if they -- if you -- if I call in two Grade 1 leaks, which I have often, they have to send two crews to repair these leaks. And because I did these surveys I found leaks, and I didn't go out there just to walk or to sit in the truck and -- we had a map and you'd color in where you went and if you have a leak here and it's a Grade 2, you'd circle it and write down where it is and the readings that you got and the like. Now I did this, and when I found these leaks people weren't very happy because they did not -- I'm

telling you what they told me -- because they don't have crews to repair it so go somewhere else.

Q. Okay.

A. This happened all the time. I was also, when I found Grade 1 leaks on more than one occasion, was told to downgrade it and I wouldn't do that. And they would send -- they finally just started sending a higher grade person out there to downgrade it and just say this is what it is, even when you'd have gas blowing in a structure. And one instance particularly in Southeast Washington, the technicians didn't want to go down to this area and we had gas, low pressure gas blowing in a sewer. And I wouldn't leave it. They sent out another -- a Grade 7A employee down there, and I heard on the radio where he downgraded it to a Grade 2, and we have gas blowing and it's a Grade 2.

Q. So at Piney Branch, did you ever replace any regulators in any of the buildings?

A. I have assisted as a helper, yes, I have.

Q. So what the procedure requires you do or requires you to do once you replace the regulator? Are you required to tell why you are replacing it?

A. Are we required to tell?

Q. No, I'm asking you the procedure, why you do --

A. Oh, what -- as a helper I watched -- because like I said, in big stuff like this, you know, multifamily dwellings, you have a rough-in fellow because he has more tools, more equipment because

he might have to cut pipe and anything else.

There is a procedure we go through. We test the gas pressures because every -- they're all off. You turn off all the meters. You'd hook up your gauge to one side of it and then you'd run your test. Okay, it's working correctly, okay, well -- and then we'd have to go in each apartment, we'd turn on -- after we test the line to make sure they're not leaking, we put a leak test on it, and then we go and we relight the appliances, make sure everything is functioning and check everything for leaks and then that was it.

MR. CHHATRE: At this point I'm going to stop and let other people ask questions. I think I have -- Kelly, do you have any questions?

BY MR. EMEABA:

Q. This is Kalu Kelly Emeaba. I just want to go back to the last question he ask you and I'm not sure the question was kind of -- very clear to me. He did ask you a question that have you been involved in mercury regulator replacements?

A. Mercury regulator replacement, yes.

Q. Yes. Okay. And a follow-up question, you said that when you do the replacement do you not -- reason why you replace the regulator?

A. Do we not reason why we --

Q. Or do you note it? Do you put it down? Do you --

A. Yes.

Q. How is that documented?
A. It's actually -- the work was, when we had to replace those, was usually given to us via the computer or a work order that we had a program to replace mercury regulators. We replaced them because they were old and things wear out, so that's why you replace the mercury regulators. And they're also a hazard. It's not just because of the way they're functioning. When they were old, it's the spilling mercury became a problem.

We've had a few mercury spills, one in particular in Silver Spring, and gas started leaking and the Montgomery County Fire Department responded. And there's mercury all over the floor and we failed to follow procedure with the cleanup or the notification of the fire department personnel that they were walking in mercury.

Q. Okay. If I may ask you further question on that?
A. Yes.
Q. Beside the one you worked with somebody as a helper, if you can recall it, on your own, are there regulators you replaced at the Piney Branch apartments?
A. Have I replaced regulators there myself?
Q. Yes.
A. No, I did -- I have, I'm pretty sure, as a helper.
Q. Okay.
A. And I say this to the best of my recollection. This is many years ago, and we did a lot of work.

Q. Okay. And I also want to tag back on a previous response you gave. I'm interested just to learn further. You mention that what you do -- let me put it this way. What do you mean by when you said, when we press the mercury regulator it may continue to release gas outside the unit?

A. Can you repeat that, please?

Q. What do you mean by this? You said when you press on -- mentioned during your normal activity, gas activities, and you mentioned that when you press the mercury regulator it continued to release gas outside the unit.

A. We're talking about pressure. Okay. It's supposed to -- the regulator, the job of the regulator is to keep the pressure to within what we call houseline pressure. It goes from transmission pressure from a regulator to distribution pressure, and it goes to the regulator that changes it to house pressure. Now what would happen is that on many, many occasions they would fail, and there is -- the regulator is made so that we don't overpressurize.

So if there's overpressurization, oh, this isn't supposed to be there, it shifts it outside to where it's safe until it can be repaired, if the vent line is open. If it's not open, pressure's going to build up and it's going to -- again, it's going to go where it wants to go or it's going follow that path of least resistance, which in this case if it's not going out, it's going to be going in.

Q. Okay. Does that -- is that what you mean by when you press

the regulator, mercury regulator, and it begin to release outside?
A. I don't remember saying anything about press. If I did, I'm -- I was --
Q. All right. I know you were responding to Ravi's question --
A. Yes. Yeah.
Q. -- when you mentioned that. I was wanting to tear it down --
A. Yes.
Q. -- just to learn more --
A. Yes, sir.
Q. -- about it. And you talked about work that you did, which did, of course, did not involve replacement of regulator mostly. But the other question I want to ask you, in part of your previous experience in the work you did, do you have work that involve connection or reconnection or disconnection of the vent pipe?
A. Yes.
Q. Can you explain for that work detail?
A. We -- when we would do surveys on inside services or houses or anywhere, we had old vents that we would -- that was part of the -- well, since we're there you need to see if the vent line is clear and you'd put up this new type of cap on the vent pipe because, you know, a wasp would get in there and spiders and clog it up so you started putting in new. So as part of the survey we would change those vent caps and we would check to make sure with pressure that the vent lines were flowing, and also they didn't have a certain number of elbows in it which reduced the pressure.

I don't remember all these things, you know, I'd have to look it up and I don't have this information anymore, to make sure they're working properly.
Q. Okay. Such action are they applicable to the multi-dwelling units?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay.
A. Now when I'm talking about these regulators, this regulator specifically, the one that I'm speaking about, is when the regulator is inside.
Q. Yes, for inside --
A. Yes.
Q. -- work.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Yeah. Okay. If -- you know, take me as a layman. If you can guide me step-by-step what actions do you have to take? Where do you have to disconnect and where do you have to reconnect the vent pipes in the process of this work?
A. You would -- the vent pipes from an inside regulator go outside. There is a pipe that screws, depending on the side of the regulator, of course, that pipe screws into the regulator and then it goes up and it goes through a wall to the outside atmosphere with a cap on it. To clean it you, what you do is you take it apart and there was a brush we'd run through it and then we'd put pressure on it to make sure it was clear.

Q. Is that -- do you use gas pressure or?
A. No. No. We just use air pressure. Some of the guys had their own little things that blow air through it. I just would -- at that time we were just using a brush to clean it out, you know, like you use for any vent, smaller size, you know, for your dryer or something like that, we used.
Q. Okay. Do you do that as part of meter replacement or turn on activity or turn off activity or if you are called, what conditions actually is this?
A. We were supposed to do it anytime we're in there doing any work. That was part of maintenance was to make sure that the vent lines were clear. Many times this is not the case. I've had to go back on jobs, especially ones the contractors were on, and procedure was not followed. It was not the same thing. Now maybe they had a different procedure given to them, but it was not the procedures that Washington Gas had laid down for its technicians. So many times we would go and make it right, or lots of times I'd just make a note and then, you know, where it went after that I don't know.
Q. Okay. And just to dig in further because -- we can say something that will be general.
A. Yes.
Q. When you say as part of maintenance, what kind of maintenance?
A. Just the general maintenance that it took to get the -- to

keep the gas flowing. Like, we would come across problems and things and one of the problems was that we were getting these mud wasps in the vent lines. So what do they do? You have to check and make sure they're clean and put this new type of vent on there, which was a smaller diameter screen that these, we call them mud wasps or mud daubers, couldn't get in.

Q. Okay. So if I may ask, because I don't know the procedure that Washington Gas follow on that. These nature of maintenance that would require a disconnection of the vent line and reconnecting them, is that a routine maintenance like yearly, annually, or biannually or something like that?

A. No. Then it just happened, if you were there, do this. If you're called there for a problem, do this. If you're going to replace this, do this. Or even as part of just survey for even when I was a Grade 5 -- that's before I was doing the meter work and like that as a 6A, we would go and the gas company would have us to change these caps on the vent lines.

Q. Okay. The caps on the vent lines?

A. Yes, sir. We would not go and clean out the pipe. Grade 5's weren't allowed to do that. We would just take and we would -- actually we'd paint meters and pipe and then we'd just replace that little cap. And that was all we were required to do as Grade 5's. That was just really, you know, something, all right, do this; this is new. Okay, we'll do it.

Q. Okay. From your best recollection, what does your procedure

require you to do both in the area of step-by-step of disconnecting the vent line and also making sure they are properly installed back after you've done any cleaning?
A. You would make sure -- step-by-step, you mean unscrewing the pipe and --
Q. Yeah. Does the procedure specify how this work should be carried out?
A. No. If it is, it was never shown to me. It was just, okay, Curtis, go and take this pipe apart and you know -- they would teach you how to buck the pipe and take it apart. So you'd take it apart, you'd clean the line and you'd put it back together. I'm sure that they're going to find something -- granted things change and I haven't been there for a few years, so I can only say what I was told and what I was shown, so -- but no, take this apart and clean this. Okay. And that was pretty much it.
Q. Okay. And how to assure that the vent pipe is reconnected in place?
A. You --
Q. I'm not a technician, ensure, make sure that the vent pipe is reconnected in place?
A. What you're supposed to do -- now, that's a pretty common-sense thing. You screw the pipe in. It wasn't -- a vent pipe was not required to be, this is what I was told, gas tight. You know, we put a lubricant on it. We would say sealant. Goes no, it's not sealant; it's a lubricant. We would just connect it and make

sure it was clear and that was it; just reassemble it, you know, in the opposite order that we took it apart.

Q. This is -- anyway, that's fine. Thank you.

A. Oh, no, if I can --

MR. EMEABA: Please.

BY MR. CLEMENTSON:

Q. John Clementson, Public Service Commission. I've got one quick question. A while back and you refereed to some of the valves as a fire valve?

A. Yeah.

Q. What is that?

A. A fire valve is a valve that's outside of a building in a -- usually in a galvanized pipe. I believe it's 2 inch, 2½ inch, and it has a cap on it and it's made to shut off the gas in the building if you don't have ready access to get in the building.

Q. Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's what we call a curb stop, too, I think, right?

MR. GRAY: No. These were different than a stopcock. Stopcocks weren't usually on top of the building and they were usually just in the ground with a top on it. These were -- there's a pipe that comes up and then there's a cap on it and then usually the valve is close to the top of the pipe. Stopcocks are way in the ground and usually a little bit harder to do that.

Mr. Clementson, I've got to ask you. I took you to a

transmission leak in Branch Avenue, didn't I?

BY MR. CLEMENTSON:

Q. Yeah, on Branch. Well --

A. Yes, it was.

Q. -- we traveled a couple places.

A. By Suitland Parkway.

Q. We traveled a couple of places.

A. Where we found that leak by that building that exploded. Yes.

MR. CLEMENTSON: I'm done.

MR. CHHATRE: You're done? Okay. Okay.

BY LT. OLIN:

Q. Bill Olin, Montgomery County. So you -- I think I heard you say that you worked on 2-pound systems? Is that what you said early on in your interview?

A. We had 2-pound systems and we also had some in buildings that were inches water column.

Q. Okay. Do you recall what the -- how much pressure was down there in the area of Piney Branch and Arliss? Is that a --

A. As far as what?

Q. At like out in the street coming into the building?

A. Out in the street I believe -- like I said, it's been a long time, but this was an odd part of the system so we used mechanical couplings on this system and I believe that the distribution system, I believe that's 55 pounds -- I'm not positive -- outside.

I don't -- inside the building, it was an older building, unless they changed it since I left, it was inches water column. It was not a 2-pound system.

Q. Okay. When a regulator was weeping is it possible that someone would call in a gas -- an odor of gas?

A. Yes.

Q. You come out and that gas -- that odor has dissipated? Is that, is that a possibility?

A. The wind blows the gas around, but it still -- any technician -- gas just doesn't go away. If it's leaking it's not going to stop by itself, and any good technician would look until he found it.

Q. Okay. This is just -- 300 leaks in one day. Can you sort of --

A. Sure.

Q. I mean --

A. Different areas, you know, you have places where they're old. We have gas pipe in the ground, I mean, how old is it, 1800s, we have gas piping? Yeah, we do. Some of it even on 17th and -- 17th Street -- 17th and K area was -- I believe that was 1874. So there are going to be leaks. We had a huge rash of leaks from what Washington Gas told us was from putting liquefied natural gas into the system and NoMac couplings were common. Are you familiar with the NoMac couplings? It's a pressure coupling that goes on mostly three-quarter-inch pipe and it's got two rubber seals in it

with springs on it and you -- my best description -- you tighten it up and it seals. We had a rash of them leaking. We also have -- recently Washington Gas has a problem in Woodbridge with these same kind of leaks. So they were everywhere.

In this area, Piney Branch, New Hampshire Avenue, Georgia Avenue, we still have in the ground -- excuse me -- we -- I don't work there anymore -- Washington Gas has plain unwrapped steel in the ground and there's a lot of copper services. There's a huge problem when I was there, at least from my observations, with these things leaking. And they're not all these Grade 1 leaks, but they can well become one because, as we know, gas follows the path of least resistance. And where these pipes are in the ground there's phone in the ground, there's power in the ground, and that -- wherever the ground has been disturbed or the ground is loose, that gas is going to follow it.

Case in point is in District Heights. We had that -- excuse me -- Washington Gas had that house explode where there was no gas to it. I was on that when we had gas blowing inside water boxes there. So, I mean, there's -- I've seen gas travel 3 or 4 blocks from where it originated because that was the only place it could come out was way, way down the street. And we'd spend a lot of time trying to find out where they were, because just because you're getting your indications here does not mean that's where the pipe is broken. But anywhere in that area you can smell, you know, tertiary butyl mercaptan just anywhere.

Q. Um-hum.
A. You know, it travels. It doesn't just -- and it's actually, it's strong, it's pungent. It travels.
Q. You, at your time at Washington Gas, where were you working out of, what office?
A. I worked system-wide.
Q. Okay.
A. I worked from West Virginia to Southern Maryland, just everywhere. When they had a problem -- when the company liked me before I started bringing up things to that, in my opinion, they didn't want to hear, I had wide range. They would send me where there was a problem or to get into secure locations or things. So I was everywhere.
Q. Okay. I think when I spoke to you on the phone you told me that you had found another leak that resulted in the explosion in --
A. I found several.
Q. -- in --
A. One was -- two were Forestville, one was District Heights. I was there.
Q. In Montgomery County. Rockville? Did --
A. Oh, that house off of -- up -- Rockville Pike?
Q. Yes.
A. I called in a leak there many years before.
Q. Okay. At that house?

A. Yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. What is that area there? I think that's it. It's been a long time.
Q. Okay.
A. But when I called it in, it was a 2A.
Q. So I just want to -- so that incident that you told me about on the phone, you didn't actually find the leak prior to the house -- I mean --
A. Oh, yeah.
Q. -- right subsequent to the house exploding?
A. No. It was just not repaired and the leaks don't fix themselves.
Q. All right.
A. And like the same thing with the one in Forestville.
Q. If you recall where that leak was?
A. It's been a long time.

LT. OLIN: Okay. Okay. I've got nothing else.

BY MR. PRICE:

Q. Mr. Gray, I understand --

MR. CHHATRE: Identify yourself.

MR. PRICE: Oh, sorry. Steven Price, Systems Operations, Washington Gas.

BY MR. PRICE:

Q. I understand from Mr. Olin's questions that you apparently

contacted Montgomery County after the incident on Arliss Street; is that correct?
A. Which one? Say it again, please?
Q. After the incident in Silver Spring, it is you who contacted Montgomery County?
A. Which one in Silver Spring?
Q. The one on Arliss Street. The incident that's being investigated here today.
A. Yeah.
Q. You contacted them?
A. I contacted them way before then, years before I called that office.
Q. Did you contact them after the incident on Arliss Street?
A. Yes. Before and after, yes.
Q. And you were interviewed by Montgomery County --
A. No.
Q. -- fire investigators?
A. No.
Q. Just the telephone --
A. You're going to have to say what you're quantifying as an interview. Did I speak to them on the phone and give them some information? Yes.
Q. Okay. And who did you speak with? Mr. Olin?
A. I don't remember.
Q. You indicated you're currently unemployed.

A. Yes.
Q. How long have you been unemployed?
A. Oh, about 7, 8 months.
Q. And where were you employed prior to that?
A. I worked for Le Vian Jewelers.
Q. For how long?
A. For a year.
Q. And prior to Le Vian Jewelers?
A. I worked for the West Virginia Department of Corrections.
Q. For how long?
A. For a year.
Q. Prior to that?
A. I worked for Washington Gas.
Q. You indicated that you were terminated from Washington Gas, correct?
A. Yeah, you know that.
Q. I'm asking you.
A. Yes.
Q. You were terminated in 2007, correct?
A. It was 2007 or 2008.
Q. If the termination letter said 2007, would you disagree with that?
A. No.
Q. So that's almost 10 years ago.
A. Yes.

Q. You've told me that you worked for the Department of Corrections for a year and the jeweler's for a year.
A. Yes.
Q. That still leaves about 7 years since the time you were terminated. Did you -- were you employed in those 7 years.
A. I was in a car accident and crippled.
Q. So you were unemployed that entire time until you --
A. Yes.
Q. -- began working for the corrections?
A. Yes. I was involved in a car accident and I broke both my hips.
Q. After you were terminated you filed a grievance against Washington Gas, correct?
A. Yes.
Q. And you were terminated for cause, correct?
A. They said it was for cause, but when -- if I can, when I -- I had nothing in my personnel file until I brought to the attention of Washington Gas, not outside the agency, but I let them know -- I let you all know about the problems we were having with fraud, with people not filling out their paperwork, with leaks that we weren't repairing, and I didn't want to be responsible for it. So I came to Washington Gas first.

After I came to Washington Gas and they refused to do this and I had other employees telling me that this wasn't happening, I became a shop steward for the Teamsters. Okay? After I became a

shop steward for the Teamsters, I started getting threats from some of the white guys in the company and the like. And when I wouldn't respond with -- I'm not stupid, all right? I was a policeman for many years. And no one's going to goad me into yelling or pushing or anything, but I was assaulted several times.

The Fairfax County Police Department investigated one assault from this union employee that was threatening to shoot all the immigrants because he didn't want to go down to this area on Piney Branch. Okay. His name is Greg Johnson. I have my notes in my bag from the union meetings. And then Greg started to threaten me. Mike Hampton assaulted me and I made a report with the State's Attorney's Office. And after that, Washington Gas decided that -- well, actually they compared me to the Virginia Tech shooter, okay? And then every time I turned around I was getting written up for something.

And but this only happened when I reported these incidents of the gas company failing to follow our own procedures. So they wanted me out. Now granted, for someone who's fired, they're trusting me to do the surveys at the White House and other secured buildings, so they decided, well, I'm violent and you're fired.

Q. When you spoke to Montgomery County did you tell them --

A. Which time?

Q. -- that you -- the last time after the incident?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you tell them you had been fired by --

A. Yes.
Q. -- Washington Gas?
A. Yes.
Q. Did you tell them the reason?
A. Yeah.
Q. And what was the reason you told them?
A. The reason I told them was because it was reporting incidents and you all didn't like it.
Q. What was the reason in your termination letter for your firing?
A. They said the last time that I spoke with them, they -- actually they changed the reason that I got fired several times -- was because I threatened Greg Johnson.
Q. So you were fired for threatening another employee?
A. Allegedly threatening Greg Johnson, but it was his word against mine and that was it. And Greg Johnson is someone that I had reported to Washington Gas and actually got a warrant for him the month before for threatening me at Northwest Station.
Q. So the reason that you were terminated in the letter was violation of the company's workplace violence policy, correct?
A. This is the reason that Washington Gas made, but they could not back that up because they had one person's word. And like I said when I started this meeting, I'm not here to bash Washington Gas but to only present facts. And I think we're getting off of the facts. And what we have to back up what I said and what I

showed a few police departments, the NTSB, is the incidents that we've had, and I think that that should be what we get back to.

I don't want to go back to work for Washington Gas. I don't even hold any -- I knew that they would fire me when -- or had a good feeling when I blew the whistle on them. So that's not even important to me. But what -- and I'm not angry with you. I had the greatest respect for all of you there, but I did not actually believe that you all knew what was going on in the field. So I took a chance to tell you and all I got was retaliation.

Q. So you believe your firing from Washington Gas was in retaliation for your raising legitimate issues about pipeline safety?

A. It was, and it's unfortunately, and I'm not happy about it, but it's proven itself to be true with the injury of a few people and the deaths of others, which I'll leave with you.

Q. So your objection to the termination, you actually filed a grievance in accordance with your labor agreement, correct?

A. Yes.

Q. Objecting to the termination and raising these very issues, correct?

A. Yes, but the issue that I raised initially is what caused the other problems.

Q. And in accordance with that grievance that case went to an arbitration proceeding, correct?

A. It went to an arbitration meeting that was -- this is a

separate issue than these explosions.
Q. Did it go to an arbitration?
A. Excuse me. This is --
MR. CHHATRE: Can we go off the record for a second?
(Off the record.)
(On the record.)
MR. CHHATRE: Anyways, back on the record.
MR. PRICE: There is one other point that I think is relevant to the motivation here and that is after the arbitrator denied Mr. Gray's grievance, he also filed an action in Fairfax County alleging the company was guilty of discriminating against him based on race, which was also dismissed. So I'll just leave it there, having established that.
MR. CHHATRE: Okay.
MR. PRICE: Okay?
BY MR. PRICE:
Q. Mr. Gray, going to Building 8701, what is your -- were you ever in Building 8701?
A. I have been in or attempted to get in every building there. As you have said, that it's been years. If I were -- I requested some survey paperwork, the flame pack, the quad maps and also the inside leak surveys, if you would provide them, I could say that. No one -- I'm not going to say no one but most people aren't going to remember. I've done thousands upon thousands of surveys there, and I know I have been in most of those buildings, if not as --

with myself but with others. Now, we --
Q. Is the, is the --
A. Excuse me. Now you've asked me questions about why I was fired and the like. Before any -- I ever had anything to -- or any problems with Washington Gas where they wanted to fire me for workplace violence, there was nothing until I reported these things to you. So what I'm going to say is that they did not want to deal with this, and everything that I reported, everyone that I called -- I called the Montgomery County Fire Department multiple times before, probably back up into 2005 and 2006. Okay? So that was before anybody had a problem with me.

So this is not about me not -- or trying to get back at Washington Gas and wanting -- my opening statement was I'm not here to bash them. I'm here to present information.

MR. CHHATRE: Going back to the question.

MR. GRAY: Yes.

MR. CHHATRE: Because the question is --

MR. GRAY: I have been in that building, yes.

BY MR. PRICE:

Q. You have a positive recollection of being in Building 8701?
A. I drove past it and saw it, yes, what's left of it. Yes, I have.
Q. You've been inside the meter room?
A. Yes.
Q. What does it look like?

A. How long ago was this? I just said it's been a long time. But I know I've been inside that building doing work. As a matter of fact, it's one of the buildings I was in to get my certification as 6A.
Q. So describe it.
A. It's been a long time.
Q. So you can't?
A. It's been a long time. I think that's reasonable. It's been a long time. There's nothing left now.
MR. CHHATRE: Clearly the answer is you -- do you recall or you don't recall?
MR. GRAY: I don't remember what it looked like.
MR. CHHATRE: Okay.
MR. GRAY: No.
BY MR. PRICE:
Q. Do you remember any of the meter rooms in the Flower Branch Apartments?
A. Specifically, no. I've done thousands of these surveys, thousands, so do I remember each individual one? No, I don't.
Q. When did you report 300 leaks in one day, and to whom did you report it?
A. It's on a -- there were two maps done in Washington, D.C. and a high concentration, it was right around that number. I'm trying to remember the street. But these were outside leaks. And there were also two other technicians with me that also reported the

same number of leaks. Actually there were a few more.
Q. So it was in Washington, D.C.?
A. Yes.
Q. Yes.
A. And before all of this happened, they wanted to fire me and the like, I dealt with the Cooperation Commission in Washington. I thought that this gentleman was Dr. Newday (ph.). And since this time, though -- it's taken me years to get people to listen to me to actually see what's happening. There were -- do you know about the independent survey that was done in Washington, D.C. and how many thousands of Grade 1 leaks did they find, sir? You don't know that? I asked you a question.
Q. Did you file, did you file a complaint with -- did you file a complaint with the District?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. So that should speak for itself.
A. No, it shouldn't. You should -- I asked you a question. Do you know how many there were? So it doesn't look like -- and this was before I had a problem with Washington Gas wanting to get rid of me. I let the company know, and when you wouldn't do -- you, when I say you, I mean the company. Then I had to go somewhere else. And I did that in good conscience, knowing perfectly well that I was going to have to deal with you all trying to fire me for some reason or something. But Washington Gas as a company initially was very good to me. The culture changed. They started

ignoring things, especially in poor neighborhoods, and things started happening. And I hate to say when I'm right.

MR. CHHATRE: Just like what I told Washington Gas --

MR. GRAY: I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

MR. CHHATRE: -- I'm telling you.

MR. GRAY: I'm on a tangent. Excuse me.

MR. CHHATRE: Just please leave these matters out and just answer the questions being asked. If you do not recall, simply say you do not recall and that's perfectly fine.

MR. GRAY: Okay.

MR. CHHATRE: So --

BY MR. PRICE:

Q. When you were asked about replacement of regulators, did I understand you correctly to say that you never did that alone?

A. Not commercial. No 6A technicians did that on their own. That was a rough-in job.

Q. So whenever you were present in the replacement of a merc reg, you were in the presence of somebody more qualified than you? Is that correct?

A. Yes.

Q. Whenever you detected a leak did you properly report it as you were qualified to do?

A. I reported leaks according to the rules and regulations of Washington Gas and what the criteria said that the leak were, every time.

Q. So you never left a leak unreported either outside or inside?
A. I have never detected a leak with my equipment to the extent that the equipment worked and not reported it. I have never failed an audit ever.
MR. CHHATRE: Let's go off the record for a minute.
(Off the record.)
(On the record.)
BY MR. PRICE:
Q. Mr. Gray, the department that you worked in when you were identifying leaks, which department was that?
A. Well, it's been a long time.
Q. Do you not know the name of it?
A. We -- the last department I worked in was leak survey.
Q. Right. And how long were you in the leak survey?
A. For Washington Gas as an employee I believe it was almost 3 years.
Q. Okay.
A. I'm not trying to be -- I believe it was almost 3 years. And there were 2 years or a year and a half I did that as a contractor for Heath Consultants.
Q. Okay. And besides the, what you refer to as minor repairs that you might do as a leak survey technician, if there were any major maintenance or repairs that had to be done, would you call in rough-in?
A. What are you calling major repairs or maintenance?

Q. Well, you tell me what, when you --
A. No, you asked the question. I'm asking you what do you call that?
Q. When would you call in rough-in?
A. We'd call in rough-in on jobs that were involving large buildings where you had to turn off multiple buildings or just if they were very large regulators. It wasn't what one man was supposed to do, even a regular 6A. My job was mainly to do leak survey.
Q. Identify leaks?
A. Identify and repair within my scope.
Q. And what was your scope? What repairs were within your scope?
A. What repairs? I could make any repair that any 6A technician could make, but the Washington Gas was mainly concerned with leak survey. So if you found something, it was really bad and it was going to take a lot of time to repair, lots of times if there was someone -- another technician to repair it, we referred it. If not, we stayed there if it was that serious and we fixed it ourselves.
Q. So if you referred a leak, in other words, you referred it within the processes and the reporting processes that you were trained to refer it?
A. I followed Washington Gas rules and regulations.
Q. Yeah. And if you repaired a leak would you document that as

well?
A. Yes, we did.
MR. PRICE: Okay.
BY MR. STAEBLER:
Q. Douglas Staebler, Washington Gas.
MR. CHHATRE: Speak loud so --
MR. STAEBLER: Okay.
MR. CHHATRE: -- everybody --
MR. STAEBLER: Let me switch with you.
MR. CHHATRE: -- can hear from you. Oh, you (indiscernible) --
BY MR. STAEBLER:
Q. Douglas Staebler, Washington Gas. So Curtis, just following up on -- or Mr. Gray. I called you Curtis.
A. You call me what you want.
Q. Okay.
A. Just don't call me late for dinner.
Q. That's right.
A. All right.
Q. Following up too, so on leak survey you mentioned, and I didn't catch all of it, being able to do repairs on some leaks. What type of leaks would you be able to repair?
A. I could repair any leak that we were trained to do in our 6A class.
Q. Did you have tools, out of leak survey --

A. Yeah. You know, we had --
Q. -- you're saying? What tools you had with you, because you're walking, right? You're -- you've got a flame pack. You've got a --
A. You're not always walking. If I had a van, fully equipped service van with every tool that every 6A technician had, and if we found a leak and it needed to be repaired -- I was not carrying the truck on my back or with me or pushing it along, as you know. I'm not trying to be smart. But if we had a leak, we would go back and I had every tool that I needed to repair it. If I didn't and we needed something else, I called dispatch or I called my supervisor and they would dispatch someone else to make those repairs.

But as a rule, we did not as -- in leak survey, we did -- I was not always working leak survey as a 6A. We would -- if the regulators weren't working, we would replace the mercury regulators. I had training to do that, to replace them, or any other regulator as far as what would usually be used in the home, on an average home. I was trained to do that and to remove and replace mercury regulators.

Q. Okay. And you also mentioned, I guess, during leak survey you would detect regulators that are weeping.
A. We would -- it's just part of the regular survey. When you, when you would flame pack -- when we're flame packing we'd walk the service up to where the service went into the regulator and

you would test on the regulator to see if it was weeping with your flame pack. You never took your flame pack inside. And if you got indications of gas then you checked it further.
Q. Okay. And how would you determine if it was coming from the vent or (indiscernible) --
A. Well, one way to do it was you would take and you'd put -- the gas company calls it leak detection fluid. It's dish soap. And you'd put it, the dish soap with some water in your hand, and you put it below and you'd seal the -- I'm speaking of an outside regulator -- and you'd put it on and it would bubble. Now, if it was an inside regulator, then you would just put it on the vent pipe that was coming outside and that would help you determine. But it took more than just putting it up there because lots of times they would not weep unless there was a change in pressure or gas was called for in the building.
Q. Okay. So you can't -- you couldn't feel it blowing then, correct?
A. Sometimes you can, but we're talking about weeping and blowing are two completely different things.
Q. Right.
A. If gas is blowing, as you well know, you'll know that it's blowing because it literally -- you can hear it.
Q. Right. And so did you come across regulators that were blowing then, too? Or is that typically when a plumber was there?
A. It has happened, but usually with the mercury regulators

would blow when a non-gas company trained technician or plumber would turn -- the problem wasn't turning the regulator off. It was when you turned it back on and you turned it on quickly what would happen is it would blow the mercury out of the pipe and then out onto the ground and then you've got a hazmat situation with -- when we can, if it's pertinent I have some notes from one with the company. But yes.

Q. Right. It was typically from someone turning it on too fast.

A. Yes.

Q. Yeah.

A. Yes.

Q. And so on the regulator vents, and I'm not sure if this would be from your leak survey experience or you -- I guess you just worked for rough-in as a helper then also? Is that --

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. With a mercury regulator or any regulator maybe where it's weeping -- so on leak survey you detected a regulator that was weeping. Did you expect that it just started the weep just before you got there?

A. There's no telling.

Q. Right. So it could have been weeping for a while undetected?

A. Well, lots of time we -- if we're -- are we referring to system-wide or this particular area?

Q. System-wide, yeah, just thinking mercury regulator operations, yes.

A. We found a lot of them --
Q. Yeah.
A. -- that were weeping. They weren't blowing and they were weeping. And some of -- this is before I was 6A. A 6A would come up and he would show me why it was doing it and we'd put more mercury back in the mercury cap and screw it back on and that took care of the problem.
Q. Right.
A. So that happened many times.
Q. Yeah. And but then, I guess, then the mercury -- the regulator was still functioning correctly for the customer even though it was weeping, it still operated -- was operating? Or you had to change out the regulator?
A. The technician -- my experience with the 6As before I was, they would test it and they'd test lockup on it and it would still function. But then the problem is how long was that mercury that was in there going to last and what blew out the mercury in the first place? This is what I was told and this is what I've seen. What is going to keep the mercury from getting blown out again and the regulator not working?
Q. Okay. But then you were trained to detect the weeping using a soap solution to see the bubbles in that (indiscernible)?
A. That was Washington Gas procedure that was -- I was trained to use, yes. That was one of them. The first one, if we were flame -- different situations. If we're flame packing it's

different. You follow where you believe that the gas line was and then part of the procedure was checking the vent. Okay, vent's, everything's okay or whatever, and then that was it.

Inside leak surveys, if I smelled gas, that would be one of the things that I would check to see if a vent was weeping. But you had -- I never left a site without finding where the gas was. It took me some time, but it's -- I'm going to brag. It was my work ethic. I wasn't there to walk services. I was there to find leaks. And if my numbers weren't high and astronomical, it didn't matter because I found the leak.

Q. And with inside meters, if they were weeping, the vent is typically outside, isn't it?

A. Meters don't weep.

Q. I mean the regulators, yeah, the regulator was weeping --

A. Yes, sir.

Q. -- it's vented outside?

A. It's supposed to be outside. But then we get to the point if the vent is clogged the gas is going to go somewhere, and we didn't usually use the -- we called it dope -- to seal pipes for vents. We were told we didn't need to do that. So I don't think I ever did.

Q. Okay.

A. So if there's pressure built up on it, guess what? It's going to go out the --

Q. Yeah. So, and to clear up what you saying before --

A. Yes, sir.
Q. -- that if the vent was clogged basically the gas wouldn't get out and then it would -- the pressure would then build up in the house piping, not necessarily leaking in the basement, correct?
A. This is --
Q. That's what you meant by pressure is --
A. This is what I've been told could happen.
Q. Okay. So you didn't --
A. Did that happen in this situation? I don't know. I don't have enough information. But I have seen the vents not working and we had to take them apart on more than one occasions. The one that I remember most was in Crystal City across from Crystal Towers. There were multiple mercury regulators stacked in that little yellow apartment building across the street. But that was the problem there.
Q. Okay. And you would shut the gas off to the regulators to --
A. Not going to change a regulator unless you shut the gas off.
Q. Okay. Good to know.
A. Yes, sir. Well, you knew that. You probably taught me.
Q. No.
A. Yeah, you did as a matter of fact.
MR. STAEBLER: So good. I think --
MR. CHHATRE: No more questions?
MR. STAEBLER: Yep.

MR. CHHATRE: Roger? You're on. Roger, are you there?
MR. EVANS: Yeah, this is Roger Evans.
MR. CHHATRE: Yeah, go ahead.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. Roger Evans. Just a few questions. Curt, can you go ahead and describe your classroom time and how long it lasted and what you learned in the classroom as far as regulators go?
A. Oh, my gosh. I'm working from memory. Like the gentleman from Washington Gas says, I'll say that, but you haven't been there for a long time so there are things that I'm not going to remember. But the training at Washington Gas was very thorough, okay? I believe there were 2 weeks of the 6A training along with field training that was just given by the 6A mechanics and 7 mechanics that would mentor you. So it was thorough. And formally, I believe it was 2 weeks for 6A class and then you had to be taken out in the field and cleared.
Q. Okay.
A. So they -- we had a -- we have a whole section -- excuse me. Washington Gas has a whole section in the 6A training manual that goes over every meter that Washington Gas puts out, including turbines, which grade 6As never use. So if we had a problem with a regulator or something, we had a reference that we'd go to and look up and it would tell us how to deal with it or we could always get on the phone or call dispatch and another technician with more experience would be there, pardon me, to show you how to

deal with the problem. So -- but there was a lot of training. There was a lot of training.

Q. And as part of the training did you have to complete a test?

A. Yes.

Q. And can you describe the test?

A. Of which -- for the regulators?

Q. Yes.

A. The test that I remember went over almost every aspect of what we would deal with it as a 6A: pressures, type of regulator, being able to identify it just by looking at it so that we didn't put a 2-pound regulator on an inches water column system; the springs, cleaning, maintenance of the regulators, installation; testing to see that we had the right pressures on the regulator. Just the install, just the -- well, just the whole nine yards. They were very thorough on how to do that. If I -- not everybody followed procedure. People took shortcuts.

Q. Describe for us what type of problems can occur with the regulator and what can make a regulator fail?

A. Overpressurization, which happened on more than one occasion; the spring becoming weak in the regulator, which determines when it opens to relieve pressure. In the older mercury regulators -- this is from my experience -- if there's no mercury in it. Now would -- mercury had to go somewhere. But if there's no mercury in it the mechanism didn't work correctly.

Q. Can you describe any anomaly that could occur with the

linkage and the leather internals?
A. The pad? On -- for a mercury -- we're speaking about a mercury regulator?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. Yes.
A. Just like anything else, age. Washington Gas, if they will, they can tell you when they stopped putting in mercury regulators. Just like anything mechanical, after a while they wear out and should be replaced. If they're not you get problems like with the things not working. The -- I'm --
Q. Can you describe some failures that you experienced with mercury regulators?
A. Yes. Most of them were from contractors turning the mercury -- excuse me -- mercury regulators off and then turning them on too quickly, which did not give the regulator time to equalize pressure and it blew the mercury out of the vent pipes. And then gas would just blow -- if the regulator, the failsafe, we'll call it, worked like it should, blew the gas outside the vent. And if it didn't, then the gas went somewhere else. I've seen that happen several times, but like I say, it was usually because of operator error with them.
I found other vents -- I've found, actually I found one where the cup broke and mercury was all over the floor in this one townhouse in Southeast D.C. and gas just blew for an indeterminate

amount of time because -- I don't know why. Because nobody came just to turn it off I guess, but --

Q. So when you have a mercury regulator issue such as blown mercury, was that always replaced under Washington Gas guidelines?

A. Well, Washington -- yeah. Well, it's kind of hard to say what their guidelines were because if you went by them and you reported, then they would change and it wasn't in writing. But because they weren't putting new mercury regulators in there, they would usually replace it. If they didn't replace it, they -- lots of times the 6A technicians kept mercury in bottles in their truck and they would just pour mercury into the cap and screw the cap back on that was at the bottom of the saucer shape on the regulator, and test pressures and put it back into service.

Q. Did you have training on the hazards of mercury?

A. Yes. I had training on servicing mercury regulators and replacing them, not on cleaning up the mercury if we had a spill. And we -- that was another issue that we had about that. That was a whole different skill set as far as dealing with hazmat as far as a spill would go and the like.

Q. Were you aware of any plan that Washington Gas had to replace mercury regulators on a call basis in, you know, certain (indiscernible)?

A. Yes, I do. I was told by my -- this was before Joel -- I don't remember Joel's last name -- my last supervisor before him Mike Hardiman (ph.) had us, us being the leak survey people --

this was when I was a Grade 5. Anytime you saw a mercury regulator, they were trying to take them out of service. So they said to mark where you have them, which we did, and we'd turn it in. Some months later Mr. Hardiman was reassigned and we were told not to do that anymore because just don't. So we stopped. They stopped that program. But before they had stopped it they started to give the program to contractors that came in to replace the regulators. And then all of a sudden one day, okay, we're not going to do it. So then it stopped and then from there I don't know what happened. You know, you just -- it's company policy so they just didn't replace them.

Q. Just curious, as far as your career goes with the Washington Gas, how many years ago did you first notice in this complex that had the explosion that there were mercury regulators?

A. As soon as -- let me see. Let me think now. Give me a minute. It's been a while. I've seen mercury regulators system-wide since I believe it was 1998 when I started working there. Okay? In this area -- this is an old area. I'm going to say -- I'm not sure, but as soon as I would have started going into these buildings I would have seen them and known they were there.

Q. And at that time were you -- you know, had you made or created paperwork or work orders or whatever you would do in order to get the regulators replaced, had you made those requests for this (indiscernible)?

A. Yes. I made, I made these requests many times. It was all

in my paperwork. But this is not conjecture and not be guessing, many times when we did not have crews or people to do work, work orders disappeared. Work orders -- I've seen one foreman tear up a work order for a Grade 2A leak and I informed people in the gas company and actually outside the gas company when this happened. I believe that was around 2005. So if they didn't want to do the paperwork or they didn't want to do the repairs, then paperwork disappeared.

Q. So at the time you put in a request to have the paper -- excuse me -- the work -- the regulators replaced, were these in electronic work order requests or were they handwritten?

A. The first ones that I did they were handwritten orders. They were called UWOs. Then after that we put them -- we had a system called, I believe it was called CAD. Is that what it was? We put them in the CAD system. But then we were told we're not going to -- we're going to suspend -- this is what I was told -- we're going to suspend the program so don't worry about it. So that was the end of that.

Q. And did you continue having mercury regulator issues at this complex after that?

A. I was only there every so often. There are a lot of other technicians. But I spoke to a senior technician who helped me along who's retired now, who's going to go nameless, but he said they had -- I can't -- this is what I'm told, whether this is the truth or not, that they had problems in there since he was there

since the '70s.
Q. Okay. What are you -- on your training, let's go back to your training on regulators. What are the failure modes that you know of that are with any regulator? You know, like, if there's -- let's just say that you get called out on a call and you know there's a noise, there's maybe blowing gas, there's weeping, what have you, getting back to your training, did you have like a decision tree document or did you have a manual that would say on this type of regulator if you have this kind of problem you should do this, do that?
A. No.
Q. So the issues that you had with each regulator was -- I mean, you would have to consult somebody or --
A. What you were told --
Q. Or would you --
A. You made your own decision. If a regulator was blowing you automatically knew there was a problem with the regulator or pressure, then you just turned it off. A weeping regulator is not one that -- it needed to be replaced but not necessarily right then and there because it came from any number of things. It could be a dirty pad that shuts the gas on and off, or a weak spring. But a regulator blowing needs -- the gas needs to be shut off and it needs -- the regulator needs to be replaced, if the problem was caused by the regulator and not by an overpressurization.

Q. Okay. So let's talk about the blowing of the gas on a regulator. Have you ever in your career observed a blowing regulator that was intermittent?
A. No.
Q. So if a regulator were to start blowing would that become a level 1 type leak?
A. Absolutely.
Q. And were those ever downgraded?
A. Yes.
Q. And what was the downgrade?
A. Pardon me?
Q. You say they were downgraded?
A. Before I was a 6A, yes, they did downgrade them.
Q. Well, what was the action they would take on these regulators once they were blowing by like that, if they were downgraded from a level 1 to let's say a level 2 leak?
A. I -- what -- if I was not there I did not know. They would -- I was a little, I was -- I'm not your average fellow that's going to work for Washington Gas. I did things a little bit differently. I've got a little bit more experience, and when something says that it has to be done a way, that's the way I did it. So what Washington Gas would do to any of us that were -- we felt like it's a 1 and it has to be repaired and we wouldn't leave it or downgrade it, they would send someone of a higher grade and they would come in and then they would do what they would do. But

then it was not my problem and they couldn't hold me liable and say we're going to fire you or whatever because you misreported this leak. So when we would leave, which didn't happen very often with a blowing regulator, but did happen I believe once or twice, then, you know, I don't know what they did with it. I'm assuming they sent someone there later on to repair it, but there was no reason to send a technician away.

Now what we did when they were blowing regulators, even as a Grade 4, you just turned it off. We were allowed to turn it off, but you couldn't turn it back on.

Q. Okay. So the problem was somewhat neutralized then?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Have you had occasions where you went out to the same complaint several times in that particular complex?

A. In that complex itself, yes --

Q. Yes.

A. -- especially in the wintertime.

Q. Can you describe some of those situations?

A. Odor of gas, unknown origin, we were dispatched, even when I was a helper. When I was -- this was when I was a helper with a 6A. At night they had two people on a truck and we'd drive through, and in the wintertime Washington Gas, we had -- they -- excuse me -- they had a higher demand for gas so pressures went up. And when pressure goes up, it puts more of a stress on systems and facilities so you've got leaks. And so we were in

this area and just this general area of Prince George and Montgomery County many, many times for odor of gas calls.
Q. And did some of these turn into a level 1?
A. Sometimes.
Q. Sometimes? Okay. Whenever you address a gas smell, would you work with the fire department at times?
A. No, we were told not to call the fire department.
Q. Well, let's talk about evacuation. If you have a gas smell, tell me about your decision tree for when do you tell someone to get out of the building? What's your training for that?
A. They, being Washington Gas, did not want to -- they wanted things handled quietly. One instance in particular was on Fox Road in Hyattsville. We had a house full of gas. It was -- it reached the explosive level and we were told not to call the fire department.
Q. So what was the occasion that you called the fire department?
A. Well, I called them once on a leak in Herndon and I got in trouble for it, and one in Arlington. Arlington, Virginia had -- the system is old and they were having explosions. This was many years ago. They had multiple explosions, so Arlington said anytime that you have a gas leak in our system it's a Grade 1 leak. Washington Gas said you will not call in a Grade 1 leak. You will call into your supervisor and then they'll handle it. So the same thing in Bowie. There was a special survey for Bowie where there was the same thing, the soil there took out the -- it

leached out the mercaptan and you were supposed to call the fire department, and they just said no, downgrade the leak.

Q. So if the resident of a community has called 911 and then you show up, is there interface to -- do you work together with the fire department to solve the issue?

A. Usually the fire department would defer to the gas company employees because it's something that they absolutely specialize in and the fire department trusted what they were saying, which many times or at least a few times it's my experience they should not have. So we didn't really -- we tried to work around them to keep there -- become an incident where people got nervous.

Case in point, in Chillum we had a leak in the -- we call it the blockhouse, and it's the transmission lines cross all over that you see. We had a situation there where it was really bad. We had a hole in a transmission line as big as a man's thumb, and I'm going to guess 2 or 3 inches in circumference, and we didn't follow any guidelines. And that was simply, in my opinion and from what I've studied on other leaks, was a recipe for disaster. And we never notified the fire department.

Q. So as far as your training, though, you have authority to tell people to leave and all that, right?

A. Yes. Well, we can recommend it. We can't make them. We can't arrest them or push them out of a building, but --

Q. Right.

A. -- what we would say is if you --

Q. You can have them (indiscernible) --
A. Right.
Q. -- if you would?
A. Yeah. We would --
Q. Okay.
A. Yes. I'm sorry.
Q. Okay. I'm going to go back to regulators, just some of the line issues I'd like to ask you about. Are you aware of any situation where a regulator actually caused line pressure to enter a dwelling?
A. I've never witnessed one. It was part of training to tell us that this could happen.
Q. Can you describe the circumstances with which that would happen?
A. I can, I can describe what I would think would happen. I've never, like I said, I've never been on one where it pushed pressure into the building. But the regulator is made so that you do not get distribution pressures or even transmission pressures on a house line, which is not made to handle it. Neither are the regulators on stoves or on hot water tanks or dryers or any other gas appliance. And if that gas has nowhere to go it's going to go inside to these appliances and it's going to get through their regulators and then you're just going to have gas blowing in a building. There's a technician that told me about a situation like that. I've never witnessed one firsthand so I'm simply

repeating what this situation as it was described to me.
Q. Okay. Do you have an understanding of the type of regulators that would allow this to occur?
A. Any regulator I believe will do that, but with transmission pressures if you have a service off -- there was a regulator called a safety regulator which was supposed to prevent something like that, but that's a different animal. A regulator is supposed to do exactly that, regulate. It senses, whoops, this pressure is too high, guess what? I'm going to dump this pressure where it's safe. But if it's not working properly, what is it going to do or what can it possibly do? Let that pressure into where it's not supposed to be and then you have a problem. Does it happen very often? No, but -- at least in my experience, but as equipment gets older I believe it's going to be -- it's going to happen more often.
Q. Okay. Can you describe for us if you have a blocked vent on a regulator, you know, an outdoor vent, if it's blocked, can you describe what you think would happen?
A. Depending on the pressure, if it's completely blocked, there's no way to get -- that pressure is going to -- it's got to go somewhere, and like I've said before, it's going to follow the path of least resistance and then it's going to find a way out.
Q. And how often have you in your career found vent lines that were clogged up where they're, you know, nearly completely blocked?

A. There's a lot of them. I mean, doing -- all I -- when I went to leak survey that's just what you did. And there were a lot -- they had obstructions. Were they completely clogged? I don't know. But they had -- they were filled with obstructions. Some had never been cleaned, because it was not part of policy unless, you know, you're replacing things. And even when they were replaced, lots of times what I've seen is a technician uses the same pipe and they haven't cleaned them.

Q. So can you -- can you describe some of the issues you've seen with vent piping being clogged and what was causing the clog?

A. Yes. Most common was mud daubers. The next one was the vent pipes broke off underground and filled with concrete. I've seen that. I've also seen where plumbers have put caps on the -- where the vent would go, where the screen would go. I've seen them put caps on those. But the most common is the pipe breaking and being filled with concrete or just covered up with mud and debris, and the other one is the, like I say, the most common is mud daubers.

Q. And that's an insect of some sort, right?

A. Yes. Yes, it's a wasp, a type of wasp.

Q. And as part of your training do you always, you know, with -- well, first off, do you have checklist when -- you know, did you have a checklist in your hand when you would go out to inspect --

A. No.

Q. -- these that said, okay, check this, check that?

A. When we first started doing it --

Q. Was that part of (indiscernible)?
A. -- yes, I made my own checklist. I had -- we'd keep a notepad in your pocket, and I wanted to do the job right so I did keep a checklist. But after you do a few thousand it becomes routine and you just do it the exact same way.
Q. Okay. And then if you have a blocked vent does that become sort of a -- let's say as an example, that concrete. Does that become a work order with you folks or you tell --
A. No.
Q. -- the tenant or what?
A. Not a work order. It becomes -- actually if there is an obstructive vent or a vent you can't find, it's a grade -- considered it takes Grade 1 status and you -- when I first started doing this as a Grade 4, you'd have someone come out with you and try and find the vent, or if it was broke off, you stayed there until a truck came to repair it; it was Grade 1 status.
Q. Okay. The weeping versus blowing that you were talking about earlier, what grade is weeping?
A. Actually there were no -- Washington Gas policy at the time said there are no aboveground leaks less than a Grade 1. So it was when I first started working and just -- I was working as a contractor and we'd just flame pack, a weeping vent was a Grade 1 leak and you stayed there until a technician who was qualified came to get it. If it was blowing, it was really serious and, I mean, they just got -- the same status but it just, you know, you

smell it more. And then I'm trying to remember. We were allowed to turn them off. It was blowing, we would turn off the gas.
Q. Okay. The other thing I'm curious about is whenever you have, you know, an assignment to go to a building like this and you're going to just do routine checks, would they record the time you arrive, the time you leave?
A. No.
Q. I mean, was there a doc request that we could say, okay, this person was here for this many hours for this inspection on this date? Is that something that's out there?
A. We'd -- sometimes. Now, we were given these inside leaks surveys were just kind of haphazard on days where it rained, all right, so we'd just get them done. My experience was that they weren't really trying to get into these buildings, depending on the technician, okay? But there are -- there is paperwork. I don't know how long Washington Gas has to keep it that says they got in these buildings and they have so many attempts. So what would happen, if somebody didn't feel like doing it, they'd write down three attempts, okay, put it aside and they'd go goof off somewhere and that would be, that would be it. But they do -- Washington Gas is supposed to keep records of the inside surveys.
Q. Okay. The other thing that I found -- a different subject then. There is a saying we've heard from several sources, I guess, about the chirping whale sound of the -- that regulators can make. Have you ever heard that in your career?

A. I've heard once that I remember. And what that comes from is pressure blowing past the little -- well, actually I believe some of them were leather in the really old ones, but it's a rubber seal or pad. It's like blowing a turkey call, okay? And that's usually when the regulators kind of vibrate. It just pushes in and out and that's what we would call weeping.

Q. Oh, okay. So it's --

A. It's just one called -- not completely but that happens, yes.

Q. Right. And do you recall any sort of noise like that at this address?

A. I never heard anything like that there.

Q. Okay. If you have a regulator issue was there times when you folks didn't touch it and it was all subcontracted out?

A. Lots of times Washington Gas wanted to defer it to contractors. They paid them less.

Q. And what was the deciding factor to have a contractor versus you folks?

A. Supervisor's decision.

MR. EVANS: Okay. Okay, that's all I have for right now. And I'm sure I might have a little bit more after the next rounds.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

MR. EVANS: Thank you.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Thank you, Roger. Anybody have any follow-up questions? You have any follow-up questions?

MR. STAEBLER: Yeah, I would --

BY MR. STAEBLER:
Q. Curtis, on -- you had mentioned --
MR. CHHATRE: Identify.
BY MR. STAEBLER:
Q. Doug Staebler, Washington Gas. Curtis, you mentioned in one of those questions that we had a -- you know, there was a proactive replacement program for the mercury regulators because of --
A. Yes, sir.
Q. -- mercury contamination site or -- right?
A. No, sir. I don't know why. I guess they were just old and it was part of upgrading the system is what I was told.
Q. Okay.
A. And yeah, there was a program and then it was cancelled.
Q. Okay. And you know the -- I guess as a leak survey then, they told you to stop recording where the mercury regulators were --
A. Yes.
Q. -- as you would encounter them.
A. Yes.
Q. Are you also then -- do you know if they actually stopped replacing them, too, or just recording them?
A. Well, I was told by one of the contractors who worked for Washington Gas as a rough-in man that they weren't -- they didn't have a contract anymore. So I mean, that's all that I know. I

don't -- my job was to go out there and do this, not to go and see what policy was when everybody was -- do what I was told and to follow company guidelines, which I did, which got me in trouble.
Q. Right. Okay. And then you also, I guess, on one of the questions you were talking about mercury regulators, typical failures and about getting old. You mentioned about them getting old and kind of like the parts wearing out. I was wondering have you ever maintained a mercury regulator? Have you ever replaced the boots on a mercury regulator, replaced the linkage?
A. Weren't supposed to. We weren't supposed to do that.
Q. Right. So --
A. We weren't supposed to -- I found out later on we weren't supposed to have mercury in our trucks and put it in there, but we were told to because there was no one to replace them. So I did what I was told.
Q. Right. But I'm saying that, so the mercury cup is one thing, but I'm thinking that --
A. The insides? Most of those were riveted. You couldn't take them apart and service them --
Q. Okay.
A. -- at least as far as I know. I was never taught that.
Q. Yeah.
A. If you could, it was something I was never taught.
Q. Yes. I'm just trying to get to see, like, if you've ever experienced any type of mechanical failures yourself with one of

those regulators?
A. We weren't out there to repair regulators.
Q. Right.
A. We were out there -- if we had a regulator that failed, you would replace the regulator.
Q. Right.
A. But there were times when some of these old technicians put mercury in them and they told me how to do and so that's what I did.
MR. STAEBLER: Okay. No more questions.
MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Kelly?
MR. EMEABA: I'm done.
BY MR. CHHATRE:
Q. Okay. This is Ravi, NTSB, a few follow-up questions going back to mercury regulators. If you go -- and again, all my questions are multifamily dwelling, so please do not bring anything --
A. Yes, sir.
Q. -- in a single family home. Okay? Because otherwise it's going to confuse me when I read the transcripts.
So when you go, for whatever reason you go in the basement, either your survey or a leak -- odor complaint, leak complaint, whatever, looking at the regulator, if you feel the regulator has failed, what will be the telltale signs for you to tell the regulator has failed?

A. They're different. You want -- complete failure is blowing. Okay? The things that we would see is they're not getting enough gas to appliances if the gas pressures aren't right and people are, well, this isn't -- you know, my stove is not working correctly, or a lot of these places I believe they had gas dryers in this building also. If they weren't working and they weren't getting enough gas, that was a telltale sign or if it made noise. If it was making noise -- it's not supposed to make noises like -- but in this, like I said before, I haven't heard them in this particular building making those noises.

Q. But again, I'm not --

A. Right.

Q. -- my questions are not about the building.

A. I'm sorry.

Q. Mercury regulators in general. So forget about the building. So if you are going to anyplace --

A. Yes.

Q. -- multifamily dwelling --

A. Yes.

Q. -- what will you -- what telltale sign, you told me is blowing.

A. Blowing or weeping.

Q. Okay. Now, different blowing will it --

A. Blowing is when the gas is like it's coming out there wide open. Weeping is just pft-pft-pft, like that, just like a leak.

Q. So gas coming wide open --
A. Yes.
Q. -- where? In the room or in the basement or?
A. No, through the vent of --
Q. Okay. I was just --
A. -- the regulator.
Q. -- clarification because again I want to make sure.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. So it will go through the vent?
A. Yes. It's supposed to.
Q. Okay.
A. Now there were times -- these regulators are so old that metal corrodes, it breaks, then we had gas leaking from the housing of the regulator.
Q. Okay.
A. That happened quite often.
Q. Okay. And now what will be the pressure then that it's coming out at?
A. Don't know. The pressure's going to be different.
Q. Okay. Will it be a line pressure or will it be the inches of water column?
A. It's going to be distribution pressure.
Q. Okay. Now when you say regulator blowing, will it be making any noise?
A. Yes.

Q. What kind of noise?
A. Lots of time that that whale noise or that pft-pft-pft --
Q. Okay.
A. -- or other times which is -- you know, if it's really pushing or it's just you can almost hear the --
Q. You can hear it.
A. -- gas whistling through the regulator and you know it's happening because you can hear it blocks away.
Q. Okay. You can hear it?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Now when you say weeping, what will happen then?
A. Weeping you're getting smaller amounts of gas and sometimes not even a constant flow. Sometimes it cuts off when -- it depends on the gas that's being called for in the building.
Q. Okay.
A. So it will stop or when it's turned on and they want gas it pft-pft-pft or it just very, very slight leak. It's not what we would call catastrophic, but it's still a leak.
Q. I see.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. And any other indications that a regulator is not working properly or failing?
A. No gas going through it at all.
Q. Okay. Meaning it's getting blocked?
A. Yes.

Q. Okay.
A. And the regulator is just not functioning like it should.
Q. Okay. Now what happens if (indiscernible) on the regulator you will have an orifice.
A. Yes.
Q. You would have an orifice for when the --
A. Yes.
Q. -- gas is coming in when (indiscernible).
A. Yes.
Q. So these are kind of a not even proper term for the lifter arm, the arm that opens and closes --
A. Yes.
Q. -- the orifice.
A. Yes.
Q. Now what happens if the orifice gets blocked for whatever reason?
A. Then it's not going to function. Then you're going to have a buildup of gas if there's a failure in the system. I mean, that's a failsafe and you're going to have a buildup of gas and that gas has to go somewhere.
Q. Buildup of gas in the regulator or?
A. It can build up in the regulator, but if that -- where it's supposed to flow out -- if it's blocked this way --
Q. It's blocked coming in.
A. It's what is --

Q. It's blocked coming in, right?
A. Yes.
Q. I mean, the gas has to come into the regulator chamber first.
A. It's got to go somewhere. There -- if there's a failure it's got to go somewhere.
Q. Well, I said the orifice is blocked.
A. Yes. Or --
Q. What happens?
A. Wait a minute. Just give me a minute.
Q. You think about it. I'm just --
A. Yeah. I'm trying to. I'm looking at a diagram in my head. Then there's nowhere, if there's an overpressurization, for the gas to go except for in the building. That's what's going to happen.
Q. The gas is going to go -- well, the line pressure --
A. Yes.
Q. -- is going to go into the building?
A. Yes. It has nowhere else to go.
Q. When you say building meaning the --
A. It's going --
Q. -- orifice side of the regulator?
A. Yes, sir. It's going to supply --
Q. I just want to make sure when you say building you are talking about building piping?
A. Yes. Yes, that's what I should have said.

Q. Not, not the building. It's just --
A. Right, it's going to go through the pipe in the building.
Q. Right, but I was confused, pressure is going to go into the building and the building --
A. Yes, yes.
Q. I wanted to clarify.
A. I'm sorry.
Q. It's going into the pipeline.
A. It's going to go into the pipe in the building --
Q. Okay.
A. -- and it's going to find a way out.
Q. Now are the meters, can meters handle that pressure?
A. No.
Q. What will happen then?
A. We were talking about some of these meters we've taken out of some of these apartments have been 40 years old and we all know what happens, with especially the tin meters, which there were some tin meters in that building I remember.
Q. Forget about that building.
A. Sorry.
Q. We're not -- we are talking general.
A. I'm sorry. In general they're going to fail, and where they fail is around the seals where you attach the meter to, what are these things called, to where the supply line. I don't remember, but that's where they would fail and they'd fail there lots of

times.
Q. Okay.
A. That's the weak spot in all of this is not even the regulator, it is the meters.
Q. So only when the high pressure comes in, not into inches of water column?
A. Yes. In this situation yes.
Q. Okay. Now what happens if the diaphragm fails? What will happen?
A. The same thing. It's all part of one working system.
Q. So what happens if those --
A. You can get that overpressurization or you can also get -- I haven't taken one of those apart in a long time.
Q. Well, if -- only if you know. If you don't know.
A. I know but I'm not sure.
Q. Okay.
A. Because this was part of our training, what happened with it and all that, and I'm just trying to remember from these (indiscernible).
Q. In all these failure modes of mercury regulators, were they taught to you, discussed in your training? You said 2 weeks --
A. Briefly.
Q. -- 2 weeks?
A. Briefly. There are things that they said you need -- this was the whole training as far as 6A goes, period.

Q. Sure.
A. They said this is what you need to know. If this breaks replace it. It was that kind of thing, so they weren't over intellectualizing it. If this breaks replace it. You don't need to know how this works. You don't need to know how this comes apart. You take it and just replace it.
Q. So what sort of breaking modes were taught to you, that this is when -- okay, if it breaks replace it, but this is how you know the regulator is broken.
A. It's weeping. It's not giving pressure at all. The pressure is low. It's blowing. Okay, then you know that it's really -- or the housings on these. We've got a group of replacement -- the spring regulators that were irregular and they were leaking like crazy. The seals just on the outside weren't -- it wasn't sealed so they were leaking. Come across many of those.
Q. So now going back to mercury regulators, if for some reason the mercury is gone from the cup, will the regulator be leaking all the time?
A. It will be blowing.
Q. Blowing?
A. Yes, as long -- if there's gas supplied to it it's going to blow because the mercury is what was used to actuate the mechanism to, you know, to control the pressures.
Q. So then it will be blowing through the vent line or --
A. Supposed to blow through the vent line if it can, but I've

seen --
Q. So let's go back.
A. Yes.
Q. If it cannot go back to the vent line, what happens? It's in a chamber.
A. It goes --
Q. It's in a small chamber, right?
A. It -- yes. It goes into the house line is what we call it. It goes in the house line and it's trying to find somewhere to get out.
Q. Okay. So it's going to go -- so high pressure gas now or line pressure gas is going into the house line?
A. Distribution gas, yes.
Q. Okay. Okay.
A. And that's bad.
Q. Okay. Now in your tenure with Washington Gas, how often you have seen the meters failing with a bushing or coupling, or whatever you're talking about?
A. Every day you're surveying.
Q. Okay. And what kind of gas is coming out of those meters?
A. House pressure, because it's after -- it's supposed to be house pressure because it's after the regulator.
Q. Right. Okay.
A. But some of the systems were low pressure gas and they don't have a regulator, so just low pressure gas.

Q. Low pressure gas.
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. Now, have you seen any of those?
A. Yes.
Q. In multi -- again, in multifamily dwellings, right?
A. Yes.
Q. And how do you know that, that that is where it is leaking?
A. You test with a SENSIT or you soap it up.
Q. Okay. But you will smell it?
A. Yes, you smell it. Absolutely you'd smell it.
Q. You smell it.
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. You smell it. But you won't hear any noise, will you?
A. Sometimes. Sometimes.
Q. So elaborate. What is sometimes?
A. I've gone -- if you're -- you're going to come across so many different situations because you're in this environment all the time.
Q. Sure.
A. So there's always something new to learn in here. I have gone into buildings and heard gas blowing, and it's just pssst, be like that. Also just depends on how quiet it is, you can hear it. And you can --
Q. But you have heard it?
A. Yes.

Q. So tell me the difference between that noise, a leak and a --
A. And blowing?
Q. -- versus gas blowing through to the vent line?
A. Okay. Gas blowing through a vent line is less restricted than gas coming through somewhere where it's usually going to leak on a meter. I've seen it around the couplings on a meter. It's just pssst, going to be like that. Or if there's a hole in the meter it can be just like holding your mouth open and gas is just haaah, like that. That's harder to hear. But I've seen a few of those actually in this area where there -- that we're discussing where the meters have rotted from being pressed up against the concrete and improperly installed.
Q. So which one of those two noises is louder?
A. The blowing through the vent.
Q. Is louder?
A. Yes.
Q. Now how far away from the leak in the meter you can hear? Let's just say meter is where the TV is. Typically, again, if you don't know the answer that is fine. I just want to know kind of get a sense from someone who has worked in this area for so long.
A. Let me -- I mean, this you can just -- you can hear it before you walk in the door sometimes.
Q. Which one?
A. The -- either. The one where it's blowing outside you can hear that down the street and you're going to smell it. The one

inside the building, for the life of me I'm trying to remember what this room looked like, but next to it I believe that there were --

Q. Which room? I'm talking in general. I'm not talking about --

A. Oh, in general?

Q. Yeah.

A. Right --

Q. I have (indiscernible) --

A. -- the circumstances --

Q. I have 8 meters on that wall.

A. Fifteen, 20 meters away you can hear it in a quiet room.

Q. Okay. Now can you hear a leak at a meter from closed door --

A. Yes.

Q. -- outside the door?

A. Harder. No, it's harder.

Q. Can you hear the gas blowing through the vent outside the door in a basement?

A. Yes.

Q. You can?

A. Yes. Well, I'm saying yes because I have heard it.

Q. Yes.

A. I've heard it 4 blocks away.

Q. Okay.

A. And it wasn't even a called-in leak. We routined it. I'm

like what -- you could smell the gas. I'm like what in the world is that? And we looked till we found it. This was an old, old technician that we found it. It took us about an hour but we found it.

Q. Now in your training were you told how long a gas meter needs to be, needs to be in service before it can be replaced or it has to be replaced?

A. No.

Q. No.

A. We just --

Q. So you're --

A. Go replace it, then we replace it. It's that kind of thing. That was above my pay grade.

Q. So an M&O procedure. There is no life given to a regulator or to a meter?

A. There is, but with --

Q. That's what I'm -- I mean, that's what I asking you.

A. Yes. Yes, there is.

Q. Do you know what it is?

A. No. I don't remember what it is.

Q. Okay. But it's given in the M&O procedure?

A. Yes.

Q. To your recollection it's mentioned in the M&O?

A. Yes, it is.

Q. All right. For both regulators and the meters?

A. For the meters definitely. I don't remember the regulators.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay. And that's been very helpful. Thank you very much. I have no more questions.

Roger? Roger, do you have any follow-up questions?

MR. EVANS: Yes, I do.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Go ahead.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. And I recall years ago I had an old Volkswagen, and I had this squeak. I bought the thing new and I could never figure it. I'd have it -- I would taken in and the technician would say, I can't find it. I finally found somebody that worked there that could find it and he fixed it. So what I'm wondering is, in your training when you go out to a place where someone says, hey, I smell gas, and the person goes there and he says, okay, I couldn't find it. And then another call comes in maybe from another person in the complex and says, hey, I smell gas. First off, is it going to be the same person that would go back or it's going to be luck of the draw, what time of the day it is? Do they look at previous records before they would go and look at that particular call? Like if there's been -- if somebody's made five calls for, let's say, a gas smell, is the technician in Washington Gas aware of the fact that there are five previous calls on this place?

A. Washington Gas does not look for work.

Q. So there's no recognition of any previous calls when someone makes a call to a location?

A. If there is they don't -- they stopped telling. I did a -- in 2010 I went out with WJLA News and found a leak in 10 minutes that Washington Gas couldn't find in 2 weeks in Silver Spring about a mile from this complex. So they don't look for work if they don't have people. My experience and what I was told when I worked there, what -- the easiest way to do is to say odor of gas, nothing --

MR. CHHATRE: This is Ravi. I'm sorry to interrupt you.

MR. GRAY: I'm sorry.

MR. CHHATRE: Just answer the question.

MR. GRAY: I'm sorry.

MR. CHHATRE: We don't want your interpretation as to --

MR. GRAY: I'm sorry.

MR. CHHATRE: -- what Washington Gas is doing.

MR. GRAY: I'm just saying this is --

MR. CHHATRE: Just please stay with the question --

MR. GRAY: Yeah, forgive me.

MR. CHHATRE: -- because otherwise we've got -- okay.

MR. GRAY: Forgive me.

MR. CHHATRE: All right. Go ahead, Roger.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Yeah. So just curious about when you're training if you are -- if you're trained to go out and check a gas odor of some sort and is that particular activity supported with a checklist that says, okay, if you've tried everything else you can go down this

list and go to this one, go to this item? Is that a part of the training?
A. No. Actually, I take that -- yes, it is, but it's not -- we did not adhere to it. Certain people did not adhere to it.
Q. I mean, let's just go back a little bit. Let's just say that you're hauled off to go for the fifth time at this particular residence, this complex, and you're going to try and chase down gas. And four of your other employees, your peers, have gone there and couldn't find anything. I mean, just go through what you would look for.
A. What I would look for?
Q. Yeah, let me just hear what you would look for.
A. What I would look for, I would, I would drive around the area at first and see if I could find out where I'm getting the strongest odor of gas. And then I would try -- I would just find it. I would take out -- if I thought it was underground -- it depends on what it's, you know, while I was there what I'm going to use. I would use a flame pack and try that. And then I'd go around to different buildings and I'd ask people do you smell this gas, which I've done many times and found the leaks. But it's all kind of the motivation of the individual.
Q. And what about would you have free access normally for a complex like this, you could go anywhere that you wanted to go, the equipment rooms, you know, rooms that are locked, perhaps, with --

A. They're locked --
Q. -- combination locks?
A. They were locked many times. Well, because of the area, the area there is -- it's a higher crime area so they kept a lot of these -- my experience when I was there, you know, I was reminded how many years ago it was, it was hard to get into. But what I did -- where there's a will there's a way. I got most of these surveys done by going and getting the keys from the maintenance people and to go in. But if there's gas there, on more than one occasion we've called the fire department. The fire department gets you in. That was procedure, but it wasn't always followed.
Q. Okay. And anything in your -- this is a different question. In your career have you ever known of an accident that was directly related to a mercury regulator?
A. Let me think. An incident as in an explosion or?
Q. Yeah. Yeah, an explosion.
A. No.
Q. Okay. Is there -- let's just talk about -- I'm trying to figure out how to ask this. Describe the situation when you would want to actually take a union off of a supply to an outside regulator, why would someone take that apart?
A. I wouldn't. The union below --
Q. Pardon me?
A. A union, you were talking about below the stopcock or above the stopcock?

Q. I'm talking about the union that would be inside the building that's going out to the regulator.
A. For the vent?
Q. Yes.
A. To service it? Or if they --
Q. So --
A. I'm sorry.
Q. So go through the steps that you would, you would go through on a -- where you would have to take the coupling off, like, the union off, the screwed union, and tell me what you would do and why you would do that?
A. What you would -- now we're taking off the union that goes to the vent line, is that correct, from the regulator?
Q. From the inside -- well, I guess it's from the meters, and --
Ravi, is that the one from the meter?
MR. CHHATRE: No, no, the -- I think your question you're asking, that the union that connects the vent line. Is that what you're talking about?
MR. EVANS: Yeah, yeah, that's it.
MR. CHHATRE: Yes. Okay.
MR. GRAY: The union on the vent line. You would turn off the gas. This is procedure. Not everybody did it like that. You'd buck, which means you'd support the side of where you were going to take it off so you didn't do any damage to the regulator, which would be a whole other stinking kettle of fish. And you

loosen it up and then you'd just remove it. You'd just unscrew it and just take it off. Is that what you --

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Well, yeah, that's kind of what I'm getting at. I'm just wondering did you have any occasion to do that at that complex?

A. I don't remember.

Q. Okay.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. This is Ravi. Why would you turn the gas off to remove the coupling?

A. To remove the coupling. So that if you -- because if you break that that -- well, this is what I did. If you break something on there, then you've got gas blowing in the building. And then lots of times these shutoffs are stuck, you know, because they're old. They're old and then, you know, metal gets old and whatever.

Q. But is that in the procedure or is that's your practice?

A. That's in the procedure, but not everybody did it.

Q. Yeah. I mean, you are going -- is this the procedure, yes, by --

A. It's in the procedure to do that, yes.

Q. Well, who's not -- no.

A. Yes.

Q. No, no -- I cannot believe your knowledge of what somebody else did because you are not there.

A. Yes, I have been there, and they haven't done it.
Q. Then have you? Okay. But let's just stick with the questions.
A. Okay.
MR. CHHATRE: Okay. I'm sorry, Roger.
MR. EVANS: Yeah, that's all right.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. Okay. Going back to when you go to a place multiple times, is there -- you know, in the training that -- you know, there's a lot of things in sports where they say don't give up, don't give up; you're going to be successful, don't give up. In the world of looking at gas lines and leaks and all that, do they preach to the, you know, to the employees that, you know, they're not supposed to give up on if they smell a gas leak and to continue and continue until they find it?
A. No. It's the exact opposite, or was when I was there. The exact opposite from what you're told, but a lot of technicians still went and -- the older technicians. There was a -- I don't want to say things I'm not supposed to say. No, they did not encourage you to find leaks. This is a quote from a supervisor, "You're there to walk services, not find leaks."
Q. And kind of in context, walk leak versus -- or walk services versus find the leaks, when you walk services aren't you looking for leaks?
A. When you -- well, you're supposed to, but when you walk

service you're keeping things in compliance with the powers that be. When you find leaks you're making work and they didn't -- my experience, we didn't have people to make the repairs. So a supervisor told me, "You're here to walk services, not find leaks."

Q. Okay. The other question I have is when you -- in your training, if you had an occasion where you had multiple calls from a resident in a complex like that and you knew that it was a mercury regulator, would there be a, you know, a different sense that's taught to say, hey, I've got multiple calls from this complex, I know it's a mercury regulator, I should just call that in and tell them to replace the dang thing. Was that kind of the -- was that even taught or was that not even part of the vocabulary there?

A. It depended on what neighborhood it was in.

Q. Can you expand on that one?

MR. CHHATRE: Elaborate more on that.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. We're all humans.

A. If we're in an affluent area it was replaced. If it was in another area it was not given the same urgency.

Q. So is it a fact that we could prove to the world that all the low income housing areas still have mercury regulators and the affluent neighborhoods do not have them? Is that what you're saying?

A. This is, this is my observance. For whatever reason, this is what I've seen, and the same way that we respond to the leaks. Can I elaborate or am I getting off-key?

MR. CHHATRE: Go ahead. Go ahead.

MR. GRAY: We had an instance where we had outages in an area -- well, not -- these weren't outages. We had leaks. We took all of our assets to one house in Potomac because someone built an addition on top of a gas line which wasn't in compliance, and all of our assets were there and we did that and that wasn't an emergency. And we also gave them more gas.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Yeah.

A. Compared to a home in, let's say -- if I get off-key just top me, okay? In Palmer Park in the winter a woman needed a vent line extended, and in the middle of the winter I was told to turn her gas off. So it depends on where you were. The people that can make -- this is my observation -- the people that can make the most noise are the ones that are served.

Can I give another, you know, transmission leak that we responded to twice and we didn't repair it? And then there was an explosion.

Q. And there was an explosion afterwards?

A. Yes. This was in a poorer section of town and we were there two or three times, actually twice while I was an employee, and then I took a gentleman -- Henry Cole contacted me and wanted me

to show him where it is, and we went with the, oh, shoot, the Public Service Commission and measured gas there. And I don't know when it happened later, but there was an explosion there and there were fatalities. If that had been --

MR. EVANS: That would be one of our doc requests, Ravi, to find out about that one.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

MR. GRAY: I sent you the information.

MR. EMEABA: Was that in Maryland or D.C.?

MR. CHHATRE: Did you give us anything on that?

MR. GRAY: In Maryland.

MR. PRICE: I would not know what to request. Tell me the specifics?

MR. GRAY: I sent it to you in an email, the video and the audio from us testing that.

MR. CHHATRE: You have sent me already?

MR. GRAY: I did. I can send it to you again.

MR. CHHATRE: Send it to me again.

MR. GRAY: Henry Cole was there and recorded this, and we ended up having an explosion, and they did not --

MR. CHHATRE: I will check my email, but when I put your name on it I only get three emails, so --

MR. GRAY: I'll send it to you again.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Who is Henry Cole?

MR. GRAY: Henry Cole is a scientist.

MR. CHHATRE: Once I get information from him, I'll send it to you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

MR. CHHATRE: Do you recall -- does the commission recall any explosion, what he's talking about?

MR. CLEMENTSON: I'd have to know the area.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

MR. CLEMENTSON: The specific the area.

MR. GRAY: Marlow Heights, Branch Avenue. Do you remember?

MR. CLEMENTSON: There was one out there.

MR. GRAY: That's the one.

MR. CLEMENTSON: But I don't know if it's --

MR. GRAY: That's the one. I have, I have film of us on it.

MR. CLEMENTSON: The only I was out there -- well, never mind. I'll look into it.

MR. GRAY: No, you know, that's why I'm saying I'll send it to you. You know, that was a few years ago, so I can understand people forget things. I do.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Yeah, just send it to me.

MR. GRAY: Yes.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. You know, the other thing for this complex -- this is Roger Evans again -- the infrastructure itself in that area, did you have issues with, you know, were there cast iron mains that were not replaced and were there, you know, ground leaks that you had

investigated in that particular neighborhood or has all that been taken care of through the years?

A. This is not getting attention until, what, 10, 12 years after I initially reported these things, so I don't know what they've done there since then. But there's a lot of plain steel. The cast iron is in another -- the high pressure cast iron is in another part of town. I was responsible for patrolling the high pressure cast iron, but it is still there. And it does leak --

Q. In that -- in that neighborhood by this complex or not by --

A. No, not that I know of.

Q. -- (indiscernible).

A. I'm working on memory. If you'd have asked me 8 years ago I could tell you. I don't believe or I'm not sure. Now the only way that you're going to really know what some of this stuff is is if you dig it up. But I don't -- I don't remember.

MR. EVANS: Okay. That's all I have. Thank you. Thank you very much, Curt.

MR. GRAY: Yes, sir.

MR. CHHATRE: Anybody has any follow-up questions? No?

MR. PRICE: Just a couple, if you don't mind, Ravi?

MR. CHHATRE: No, I -- go ahead.

BY MR. PRICE:

Q. This is Steven Price, Washington Gas. Mr. Gray, you have indicated you were a Grade 6A. Did you serve as a 6A only in the leak survey department?

A. No.
Q. Where else did you serve as a 6A?
A. Working out of Northwest Station.
Q. Who was your supervisor?
A. I don't remember his name.
Q. But as a 6A you're trained in leak investigation, correct?
A. Mainly doing the 6A work as a service technician is -- it's actually just for that. I actually trained 6As in leak detection for Washington Gas.
Q. Right. So our 6A service technicians are trained in leak investigation, correct?
A. Not as extensively as my department.
Q. But you were trained as a 6A and in leak investigation, correct?
A. Yes, that's correct.
Q. And every leak that you were sent on you followed our procedures for leak investigation, correct?
A. Yes.
Q. And those procedures include identifying the leak and making it safe if you do identify a leak, correct?
A. No. You can't always make the leak safe. You have to call in other people to do it. It depends on where the leak is. So I followed procedures. I called, and more than one time I was chastised for following this procedure.
Q. So when you cannot actually repair the leak you have to call

somebody and stay there till they arrive, correct?
A. You're supposed to, yes.
Q. And you did every single time, correct?
A. Until I was ordered to leave, yes.
Q. Are you suggesting that you've left a Grade 1 leak? You yourself have left it?
A. I left a Grade 1 leak with someone of a higher grade. And then --
Q. You mean somebody else was there?
A. That's right. And they called -- this was on the radio -- then they called out, downgraded the leak, and left.
MR. PRICE: I don't have anything more questions for Mr. Gray.
MR. CHHATRE: Okay. If not, thank you very much for spending almost 3 hours now.
MR. GRAY: You're welcome.
MR. CHHATRE: We appreciate your time here for us and helping us with this investigation. Off the record.
(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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 Curtis Gray, Jr.

ACCIDENT NUMBER: DCA16FP003

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: January 21, 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.

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Teresa Holevas
Transcriber