UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
	*	
THE EXPLOSION OF APARTMENT	*	
BUILDING 8701 OF FLOWER BRANCH	*	
APARTMENTS IN SILVER SPRING,	*	Accident No.: DCA16FP003
MARYLAND ON AUGUST 10, 2016	*	
	*	

Interview of: KEVIN V. HOLMES

Washington Gas Facilities
Chillum, Maryland

Saturday
August 20, 2016

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: RAVI CHHATRE
Investigator-in-Charge

APPEARANCES:

RAVI CHHATRE, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

MR. CHHATRE: Good afternoon. Today is Saturday, August 20, 2016. We are currently in Washington Gas facility at Chillum, and we are meeting in regards to the explosion of the Apartment Building 8701, of Flower Branch Apartments in Silver Spring, Maryland, regarding the ex that occurred on August 10, 2016. The NTSB investigation number for this accident is DCA16FP003.

My name is Ravi Chhatre. I am with the National Transportation Safety Board located in Washington, DC, and I'm Investigator-in-Charge of this accident.

I would like to start by notifying everyone present in this room that we are recording this interview for transcription at a later date. All parties will have a chance to review the transcripts if and when they are completed.

Also, I would like to inform Mr. Kevin Holmes 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, business contact information such as work phone, email address, and mailing address, and whom you have chosen to be present with you during your interview.

MR. HOLMES: Kevin V. Holmes; K-e-v-i-n, V as in Vincent, Holmes, H-o-l-m-e-s.

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

MR. HOLMES: Mr. Nichols.

MR. CHHATRE: And your contact, business contact information.

MR. HOLMES: 703 -- cell phone [redacted].

MR. CHHATRE: 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, and your contact information such as work phone, email address or business mailing address. Starting from my left.

MS. GUNARATNAM: Rachael Gunaratnam; R-a-c-h-a-e-l G-u-n-a-r-a-t-n-a-m, NTSB hazmat investigator. Number is [redacted].

MR. EMEABA: Kalu Kelly Emeaba; K-a-l-u, K-e-l-l-y, E-m-e-a-b-a, NTSB investigator. Phone number is [redacted].

LT. OLIN: Lieutenant William Olin, fire and explosives investigator from Montgomery County, Maryland. Office address: 100 Edison Park Drive, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877. Phone number: [redacted]. Email address: [redacted].

MR. AMROLIWALA: Rashmikant Amroliwala; R-a-s-h-m-i-k-a-n-t, and last name, A-m-r-o-l-i-w-a-l-a. Working with the State of Maryland, Public Service Commission, Pipeline Safety Engineer. My phone number is [redacted].

MR. PRICE: Steve Price, Division Head of System Operations, Washington Gas; [redacted]; email [redacted].

MR. STAEBLER: Doug Staebler, Senior Vice President of Operations for Washington Gas. Staebler is spelled S-t-a-e-b-l-e-r. Phone number is [redacted].

MR. SPANGLER: David Spangler, S-p-a-n-g-l-e-r. I'm Manager of DOT Pipeline Safety Compliance at Washington Gas. Phone number: [redacted].

MR. NICHOLS: Spencer Nichols, Associate General Counsel, Washington Gas; [redacted].

MR. CHHATRE: Thank you for that.

INTERVIEW OF KEVIN V. HOLMES

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. Mr. Holmes, if you would for the record, can you tell us your formal education, background, work experience, anything related to your background?

A. Education high school, completed 12th grade. I've been with the company since August 10th, '87. Career field operations, outside work.

Q. And you are with Washington Gas?

A. Yes.

Q. So can you tell us what your current title is?

A. Current title operations technician.

Q. And what are your are your responsibilities as operations technician?

A. We do various work. I do turn-ons, turning gas on; turn it off when people move; leaks inside, outside leaks; carbon monoxide

investigations; emergency response.
Q. Okay. So let's just focus on inside and outside leaks for now. Were you ever called in on Buildings 8701 or 8703 for any gas odor complaints?
A. Not that I remember.
MR. CHHATRE: Maybe that is why we don't have any package.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You do have them.
MR. CHHATRE: Maybe I just missed it. Oh.
BY MR. CHHATRE:
Q. Have you seen this package here?
A. Yeah.
Q. Does it recall anything? I'll give you a few minutes to look through that.
A. You asked me about a leak but I wasn't called there for a leak. It was just to turn the gas on --
Q. On, okay.
A. -- in this package.
Q. Okay. So the reason you turn on, it means somebody left the apartment or somebody moved in, is that what --
A. Now according to this code, this is what you call a 620 there on the top, dispatch code, 6-2-0, that's a failed pay. Someone was turned off, didn't pay their bill, then they get a date, an appointment to have the gas turned back on.
Q. So you just turned back on.
A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And that's all you did that day?
A. Yes. That day, uh-huh.
Q. And when you do that, do you do anything else or you just go in, turn the meter on and -- walk me through how you do that.
A. Don't just turn the meter on, no. Well, when you pull up, you have to verify you have the right address. There should be a call ahead number where the customer wants you to call ahead before you get there, you do that as well. With this being an apartment, 9 times out of 10 you've got to go to the rental office to get the keys. So once you get the keys, you go to the apartment, the customer's home. You let them know who you are, and you go in and you turn everything off at the shutoff. You have to perform what you call a house line test.
Q. Okay. And what is that?
A. That's when you're testing the pipe to reintroduce gas.
Q. How do you do that?
A. You go to each appliance that's fueled by gas and turn it off at the shutoff.
Q. Okay. And after that?
A. If it's a stove, you turn off the stove. If it's a furnace, turn off the furnace. Hot water tank, you turn that off.
Q. Okay. So you've done that. What next?
A. Once again this is apartment, so it's going to be more than likely more than one meter. You have to identify the meter that you're supposed to go to that was set for that unit, and then you

do your work there as well. You do a rip test, you get your readings, what the reading is. There's a piece called a disk. When you turn gas off -- prior to turning off, you have two rubbers. When you turn it off -- you turn it off, you take a rubber out, put a disk in.

Q. Take what out? I'm sorry.

A. Disk.

Q. No, no. What do you take out?

A. When you're turning off --

Q. Right.

A. -- when the gas is on you have two rubbers. You turn the gas off. You take a rubber out and you replace the rubber with a disk on the inlet side --

Q. Okay.

A. -- when you turn it off.

Q. Okay.

A. When you go back to turn it on, you have to put two rubbers, take the disk out. So you're taking the disk out and you're putting new rubber in twice, two new rubbers.

Q. What is rubbers?

A. You have a swivel. The swivel connects to the meter. Okay. You never turn the gas back on -- when you're removing a rubber to put a disk in, you leave one rubber there. So you turn the gas back on and so you replace the old rubber with a new rubber. So that's two rubbers, two brand new rubbers.

Q. Okay.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's a washer.
MR. CHHATRE: Yeah, I was just asking -- I didn't --
BY MR. CHHATRE:
Q. You do that every day. We just want to find out what that rubber means.
A. Right. Washer --
Q. Okay.
A. It's two different process to turn on and turn off.
Q. Okay. So what happens next? You do that, then --
A. You're going to test the line, you're going to test the pipeline.
Q. So you can associate that particular meter with a certain service?
A. Right. You're going to test that meter all the way up to each shutoff to each appliance.
Q. Okay.
A. So you're testing the pipe to make sure that it's what we call tight enough to reintroduce the gas.
Q. Okay. And then you turn the appliances on?
A. Well, it has to pass the test first. If it doesn't pass the test, you turn it off and you put the disk back in.
Q. Okay.
A. Okay. And then you tag it and let the person know. In this case, you will let the rental office know something like that. If

it holds, then you do your rip test, your soap test, do your house line test, make sure it holds, and then you proceed to go light the appliances.
Q. Okay. Bear with me. What is a house line test? What do you do?
A. You test the piping.
Q. From the meter all the way up to leading to the apartment?
A. To every shutoff. If you have a stove, you test the pipe from there to the shutoff to the stove, to the shutoff to the hot water tank, test the shutoff to the furnace.
Q. For leaks? Or what you are testing for?
A. Yeah, for leaks.
Q. Okay. How do you do that?
A. Because you have to understand with the piping being enclosed --
Q. That's what I'm asking you. How do you do that?
A. How do you do that?
Q. How do you do that? Yeah.
A. Well, you do that with a U-gauge.
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah. It's a process with a U-gauge.
Q. Okay. You attach a U-gauge to each appliance; is that --
A. At the meter.
Q. At the meter.

A. At the meter.
Q. Okay. Okay.
A. At that point you're testing from the meter all the piping through the walls up to each appliance.
Q. Okay. And if everything is kosher, then what happens?
A. Then you proceed to go turn everything on.
Q. Okay.
A. Once you turn the shutoff, you make sure it's no -- any other available fittings, make sure it's no leaks there.
Q. Okay.
A. And then you proceed to turn on the appliances.
Q. While you are at the facility, check anything else in the -- do you check any other meter? Do you check regulator? Do you check vent pipe, any of that stuff while you are doing this or not?
A. Well, this particular one, we're here for one unit.
Q. That's what I'm asking. If something like this happens, do you do it -- check anything else in the system or you don't?
A. Well, for this unit here, we're checking this particular meter and all the piping to reintroduce gas.
Q. Right, right.
A. This meter here. Now if it's something that you see visually or something looks out of the ordinary or if you actually smell gas, you go try to find the leak.
Q. Okay. But if you don't smell the gas, you necessarily don't

have to go, following the procedure, to check the regulator or check the vent pipe or anything, do a valve test, none of that stuff?
A. Right. Well, with a U-gauge, you're testing the regulator before you turn it on anyway.
Q. Okay.
A. You test the regulator and the house line as well.
Q. Okay.
A. It all depends on what you're talking about. You have 12 meters here and you're here for one number.
Q. Right. No, I understand that. So unless you have any odor, you wouldn't really do anything to other meters; am I correct?
A. Basically. Basically.
Q. And then because you are checking the meter, you are indirectly checking the regulator because --
A. Yes.
Q. Okay.
A. You're going to check the meter make sure the dial spins that the gas goes through so when the customer uses whatever they use, that it works.
Q. Gas is coming.
A. Right. So there's couple checks there at one time.
Q. Okay. So now when you check the meter, let's say you already checked the meter and that tells you -- does that tell you the regulator is functioning properly or the regulator can function

improperly and you can still get the gas in -- I mean I'm trying to understand.
A. Well, the U-gauge is going to let know that the regulator is working properly.
Q. And U-gauge at the meter?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay.
A. You're testing the regulator and you're going to test the house line.
Q. Both.
A. Both.
Q. So it has to stay at a certain pressure. Is that how you say it's going to tell you something is --
A. Yes.
Q. So what pressure it has to be?
A. It all depends what system you're testing.
Q. Okay.
A. We have various systems.
Q. And so how do you know what pressure the regulator should be showing you?
A. The regulator --
Q. Does that come with your call like this here or?
A. Well, the regulator you can identify it by there's labels on each regulator.
Q. Okay.

A. If it's a ground system, it'll tell you it's a ground system.
Q. Okay.
A. If it is or isn't. If it's a low pressure system, there's no regulator. So if you've familiar with the work --
Q. Little bit, yeah.
A. -- and looking at the regulator to identify itself.
Q. So regulator will have a label that says so many inches of water column or --
A. Right.
Q. -- so many psi. So your U-gauge has to show that pressure that the regulator is showing?
A. That the regulator shows, yes, (indiscernible).
Q. Okay. And what is the plus/minus amount that you can say, hey, look -- I mean, suppose -- we'll say a number that at this building that exploded was 7 inches of water column. So if you go in there, do you have any variation in there that you can say it still functioned properly?
A. I mean, I'd have to go by the gauge. I can't --
Q. No, I understand.
A. I don't know what regulator is in there. I don't know, you know -- I don't know sitting here.
Q. Okay. I'm not talking about how can you tell the regulator in that building was working or not. I'm saying if you go to a building -- forget about the explosion building. You go to a building, the regulator gives you a certain number, let's just say

7 inches of water column, and you are starting this meter. Now -- and you are putting a gauge on it. What change in the view tube will make you suspicious that maybe there is something wrong with the regulator?

A. Well, once again --

Q. I mean, we show 7 inches --

A. -- you have to understand what pressure you're dealing with, you know. We have different pressures in the system. You have 2 ounces, you have inches, you know. I mean, if the regulator -- it could be a few things. It could be blockage, could be the regulator's not working. It could be a few things that would let you know the regulator isn't working.

Q. Maybe walk me through -- use a hypothetical case and walk me through what in your mind will make you suspicious the regular isn't working. You pick your own example.

A. You may not get the correct numbers in inches that you're looking for, number one.

Q. Okay.

A. It may not pass gas. It could be locked up. It's restricting --

Q. Okay.

A. -- you know, a few things that let you know the regulator is not working.

Q. Okay.

A. If you're not getting the correct readings, that's number

one.
Q. So, I mean, I guess what I'm asking you is, the correct -- let's just say the correct reading has to be 7 inches of water column.
A. Um-hum.
Q. Right?
A. Um-hum.
Q. So if you are not reading 7 inches, you're reading 6.9, is that still good or you have a regulator is not working at that point? I'm trying to understand what -- if you have any play in that reading you're talking about or you have no play.
A. Well, you have two settings, three total. You have low, high, lockup.
Q. Okay.
A. So basically when you set -- if you have to set a regulator or adjust, you can only do that on the first one, which is your low low. Now if -- it all depends. If you're not getting your reading at your low low, you can adjust. If it's too high you can adjust. That's the only time you can adjust a regulator.
Q. Okay. And are you qualified to do that?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. Now with your -- quite a bit of education, '87, have you replaced any regulators in single-family unit or apartment complex or both?
A. Single-family.

Q. Okay. None in apartment complexes?
A. Well, no, because it's more units. It all depends, once again, it depends on which pressure you're dealing with. The larger diameter regulators we don't replace.
Q. Okay. Do you -- are you familiar with what kind of regulator it was in 8701?
A. No.
Q. Can you tell when it's a -- can you tell it's a large regulators --
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In?
MR. CHHATRE: 8701.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, I'm not sure what you're asking me.
MS. GUNARATNAM: What type of regulator?
MR. CHHATRE: What type of -- he just said that if there is a large regulator -- --
BY MR. CHHATRE:
Q. Right? Is what you are telling me you use, or --
A. A large -- it takes, yes, a larger -- normally a larger regulator would cover -- it draws a bigger load.
Q. I understand.
MR. CHHATRE: So I'm trying to find will that be considered large regulator or would that be considered a small regulator?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Those are -- they're just -- they're mercury regulators, so they're just smaller regular regulators.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And sometimes it's based on the pipe size too. So if you're getting a commercial unit, you know, you might have a 2-inch regulator where this is a, I think a 1-inch regulator --

MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- on these units. So, yeah.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. So have you replaced 1-inch regulators?

A. Well, basically apartment buildings, we would refer it to another department.

Q. I'm sorry. Say that again.

A. We would turn that in to another department.

Q. Oh. So if you would suspect a problem, you wouldn't do anything?

A. Exactly.

Q. Okay.

A. We don't turn it on if it's a problem.

Q. Have you seen in your career, have you seen a regulator that's failed and then you had to call other department?

A. No. Well, it's various reasons. You know, you can get water in the line and it will fail. It's --

Q. No, I understand.

A. -- so many components. I haven't, no.

Q. You haven't.

A. No.
Q. Okay. You have never done that.
A. Uh-uh.
Q. In a single-family unit have you changed regulators?
A. I have.
Q. Have you seen a regulator that's failed? Does it make any noise? How will you know the regulator has failed?
A. Well, if it doesn't give you the correct numbers, you know. Say, for instance, if it's a hole in it. I've seen a guy replace a roof and a post fell down and break the regulator. You know --
Q. Okay, uh-huh.
A. -- it's different scenarios.
Q. Sure.
A. Different scenarios.
Q. So will the failed regulator make any noise at all or it will not make any noise; it just --
A. Not necessarily.
Q. Not necessarily.
A. Not necessarily. You have to go by the gauge. You have to put a U-gauge on it.
Q. Okay.
A. You put a gauge. You have to see readings. I can't just look at it and say --
Q. Sure.
A. -- that regulator is good or that regulator --

Q. I understand.
A. -- is bad.
Q. Okay. Now would the failed regulator, I guess, if no gas is going further from the regulator, will it make noise? I mean, let's say all gas is leaking out, will that make a noise?
A. If the gas is flowing out the regulator? Of course.
Q. Going into the vent pipe. I mean, the regulator will have a vent pipe if it's inside regulator, right. Outside there's no vent pipe.
A. Right.
Q. Am I correct?
A. Outside there's a vent pipe. Inside -- inside there's a vent pipe; outside there's no vent pipe.
Q. No, right.
A. Right.
Q. So if there is regulator making a noise, it has to be inside?
A. Well, not -- I mean, if the regulator is bad doesn't, that's -- if it's inside or out, you know, it will make --
Q. And it will make -- okay.
A. Right, if the regulator is bad regardless. The vent pipe is just so it can exit out.
Q. Sure. Will you smell gas then or you will not smell gas?
A. If the gas is on, more than likely you probably would.
Q. You would smell gas? It doesn't matter inside, outside, you still smell it. Okay.

MR. CHHATRE: That's all I have. Thank you.

Rachael.

BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

Q. Going back to this 2014 incident, I know it was a couple of years ago, so it's okay if you don't remember. Do you remember this apartment building at all? Any description of like the basement itself or whether it had any --

A. Uh-uh.

Q. Okay.

A. This apartment, this is in a neighborhood -- it's kind of a boundary line here, you know. We kind of work out of Forestville --

Q. Oh, okay.

A. -- and it's -- sometimes we may go over there but it's not my service area, so. My service area, I've been on the street, maybe a house, but if I see it, it'll come to me. But this doesn't ring a bell at all.

Q. Okay.

A. I see I was there, but it doesn't ring a bell.

Q. Okay. What kind of training is involved with replacing regulators?

A. What kind of training? We have OQ cards. We have testing and training. It's ongoing. So it's extensive. And service work.

Q. So both on-hands and classroom?

A. Basically.

MS. GUNARATNAM: That's all I have for now.

MR. EMEABA: Kalu Kelly Emeaba.

BY MR. EMEABA:

Q. I just need some clarification regarding your work. You mentioned while answering some of the questions, that you perform a leak test.

A. That I perform a rip test? What did you say now? Where are we at as far as performing --

Q. No. In response to some of the questions you were asked some of the tests you do during the turn on of a meter and the regulation -- meter regulator area.

A. Right.

Q. You mentioned you perform some leak tests, and I want to know what does that mean?

A. Well, you want to make sure if you're talking about a residential house, you want to make sure it's no leaks or smell at the building wall or the meter rack before or after you turn the gas on.

Q. So that's what you call a leak test? Okay. Is that synonymous to a single-family home or a multi-dwelling unit such as this one at 8701?

A. Right. You're going to perform both.

Q. Okay. And you say -- you talked about a test of the house line. At what pressure are this line testing?

A. This line here?
Q. Yes.
A. I don't know. I'd have to see the regulator. It may be a 2-pound system; it may be inches. I can't answer if I don't see the regulator, you know. Like I said, if you have -- if you're dealing with 2 pounds, it's not inches. If you're dealing with inches, you're not dealing with 2 pounds. So, I mean, it's -- I don't know what it was.
Q. Okay. When you conduct a line, a house line test, for instance, if this line, the output of the regulator is at 7-inch of water column, so at what pressure is the house line tested at?
A. At what pressure is the house line tested?
Q. Yes.
A. I'm not understanding. Whatever --
Q. At 8701 we are being told the output, the pressure is 7 inch of water column.
A. Um-hum.
Q. Okay. So if you are conducting a house line, house line test on this for one of the apartments, how do you conduct the test and at what pressure do you conduct the test?
A. You're talking about here it tells you what the pressures were as far as the regulator? You have to find it. My high low was 5.0, my low low was 5.5, and my lockup was 7.5. Yeah.
Q. So is that a pressure you introduce or the pressure that is already, you know, in the system?

A. That's what the regulator is rated for. It sounds like a inches regulator. Well, let's see here.
Q. Okay. So when the house line is conducted, you actually have gas in it, natural gas through this?
A. House line test, yes.
Q. Are there provision to adjust those pressure or the pressure, the test pressure you use?
A. The regulator is supposed to be set. If you need to adjust it, you can only adjust it at the first one, low low.
Q. I'm talking about, okay, for the --
A. Low low. If it's low, you adjust it then.
Q. For this particular type of 8701, which you have multiple meters, okay?
A. Um-hum.
Q. That is connected and you are doing, performing a house test on a particular unit, that is what I am asking. Can you guide me through what you should normally do in order to complete that house line test for a multi-dwelling unit such as this?
A. That's what I answered the gentleman here first, when he asked me what do you do when you turn gas on, I explained that to him, you know. And you asked me is there gas in the line? It's gas in the line --
Q. Correct.
A. -- to do the house line test.
Q. Correct.

A. Yes.
Q. The reason I'm asking that, I needed more clarification on the -- for a multi-dwelling unit such as 8701, you have a regulator, service regulator, and more or less it controls the entire --
A. Right.
Q. -- house, the entire dwelling, 14 apartments. And you are working on one apartment which you are turning on. And that's why I'm asking how you perform that task, and to also learn if it equally impact other apartments or not.
A. Well, it shouldn't because one regulator -- if you have -- how many meters are you talking about? Are you talking about five?
Q. You have 14, 14 of them.
A. Fourteen, and you want to say 7 up top, 7 on the bottom. It's one regulator for all 14 meters. So if we're here for one, that one meter has the pressure for all of them. It's only one regulator.
Q. One regulator has pressure for all of them?
A. For all of them.
Q. Okay. So when you talked, spoke about adjusting the pressure on the regulator -- okay, so for instance, 8701, there are two regulators. There are two of them. So if you have two regulators, are they distributed maybe one of them controlling seven and the other one controlling seven. How does it happen?

How are they kind of mapped out and how can you do the adjustment to test the service line for a particular apartment?

A. I'd have to see it. Normally, a multi-unit is only one regulator. It all depends on the system now, on the system. Usually it's one -- you said two, it's one regulator.

MR. EMEABA: Okay.

MR. STAEBLER: Doug Staebler.

BY MR. STAEBLER:

Q. So if you are doing -- turning on the gas for one unit in the building, and you would set your U-gauge up, and you saw the pressure was incorrect, and there's two regulators feeding that set, would you work on that or would you refer it to somebody else?

A. No, I'd probably refer it. That sounds like a split system. I mean, you know, two regulators, that's -- a house, regular house you have one regulator. So, you know, it's something there for the reason it's two regulators.

MR. STAEBLER: And so for clarification -- and Ravi, can I make a statement or it has to be a question just to help --

MR. CHHATRE: I mean, if you know, for clarification, maybe go ahead and do it.

MR. STAEBLER: Okay. Yeah. So, you know, the way we're organized, we have service techs and then we have what we call rough-in crews, and our rough-in crews work on like regulation for more commercial and multi-family meter sets. So if there's more

than one regulator, it's a more complex set. Typically if a service tech is out there, then they would refer something, a problem for rough-in to come out and fix.

BY MR. STAEBLER:

Q. And I assume if you found a condition that was not safe --

A. Right. I would leave off, refer it.

MR. CHHATRE: Does that answer your question, Kelly?

MR. EMEABA: Not exactly.

BY MR. EMEABA:

Q. I will ask you another question just to clarify some of your statement. You mentioned also that in the low low in the low pressure system, regulators are not required.

A. Right.

Q. Are you talking about a multi-dwelling unit as -- like 8701, which is at Arliss Street, or are you talking about single-family home?

A. It all depends. If it's a building or a single-family home, if it's on a low pressure system, it's on a low pressure system. Low pressure system doesn't have a regulator. This is what I was explaining to him. You have inches, you have low pressure, you have 2 pounds. So you don't have a regulator on a low pressure system.

MR. STAEBLER: Yeah, so we have --

MR. CHHATRE: Go ahead and identify.

MR. STAEBLER: This is Doug Staebler. So we have different distribution systems within. So we have a low pressure system where the main is in the street and the service is operated at 7 inches of water column. So at that case there are utilization pressures, no regulation required into the building. And then we have our medium pressure systems which is -- which we had over on Arliss Street, which is typically 20, 30 or 50-pound systems, and in that case they would require regulation at the house or at the building to cut it down into utilization pressure, which some places we provide 2 pounds of pressure and some places we provide inches of water column, 7 inches of water column. So --

MR. CHHATRE: Does that answer your question, Kelly?

MR. EMEABA: The response I'm getting from this is not applicable to Arliss Street.

MR. STAEBLER: Yeah. The are no regulator setup -- Arliss Street is not a low pressure system.

MR. EMEABA: Yeah, I understand that in some streets where you may have 6-inch water column from the main. Those ones do not require regulator because you have even drip loops that are connected to it.

MR. STAEBLER: Correct, yeah.

MR. EMEABA: Which in this case it is not.

MR. STAEBLER: It is not.

MR. EMEABA: So I, based on question of Ravi, the answers, responses was given, I wanted to be sure which one is he referring

to because it doesn't seem to be applicable to this incident.

MR. STAEBLER: Right.

MR. EMEABA: So thank you. That's my questions for now.

BY LT. OLIN:

Q. Okay, Kevin, this is Bill Olin. So I got -- was it a rip, r-i-p, is that what you're referring to?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay, r-i-p. And I'm looking here in your work order and it says vent and it's clear, can you tell us how you come to that determination, what all is --

A. Yes. Open the gauge and make sure the vent is clear, make sure there's no obstructions, in the event at the regulator inside, the regulator will fill, the gas will slowly go outside the vent. So they will then pump up the vent and make sure it's clear.

Q. Okay.

A. Outside of that, you can also check at the end of your L, your screen L.

Q. Okay.

A. And the screen L is at the exit point at the end of the pipe.

Q. Right.

A. You make sure that's clear.

Q. Okay.

A. When you pump up the vent line, that will let you know that it's clear.

Q. Okay.
A. Outside of that, what we normally do if it's a older looking one, rusted, whatever, we'll change it, the screen out --
Q. Okay.
A. -- to make sure.
Q. And so what are the steps when you're doing that when you're hooking up the pump? Are you hooking that up on the inside?
A. Right.
Q. And what are you connecting that to?
A. It's a device -- we have a pump and a gauge and you stick it in and the pump shoot air through it.
Q. Into the regulator or into the --
A. No. Not the regulator, the vent line.
Q. Into the vent line?
A. Yes. You're making sure that the line is flowing free in the vent, and there's no obstructions in the vent line, not the regulator.
Q. Okay. So is there a nipple or something on that vent line that you're plugging into?
A. You can take -- loosen the fitting.
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah, the fitting. The fitting, everything --
Q. And which -- and what fitting would you typically do to do that?
A. Normally that's called a union.

LT. OLIN: Okay. That's it for me. Thank you.

MR. AMROLIWALA: Rashmikant Amroliwala, Maryland Public Service Commission.

BY MR. AMROLIWALA:

Q. I was just reviewing your report that's July 7, 2014, and this is concerning 8701 and Apartment Number 104, gas turn on. When you went there for gas turn on, I guess that apartment complex they have just two regulators and the 14, 15 meters over there. When you turn on gas for Apartment 104, how did you test the regulator? Because your report says that you test the regulator. The regulators are big regulators, as you said. Because that regular feeds all the 14 meters, 15 meters, both the regulators are interconnected. So how did you test the regulator over there?

A. Well, this one here -- when you keep saying a bigger meter, we wouldn't test -- I mean regulator, that's what I'm saying. So you can test the regulator at the meter nearest to the regulator, the meter nearest to the regulator.

Q. Because in that building, I haven't seen the individual regulator for the apartments so that's why I asked you that. There's two big regulators, two regulators that high. So did you test it out of these two, one regulator with the high low, low low, and lockup?

A. What I'm telling you is I don't see that --

Q. Your report --

A. -- here, in here.
Q. Your report says that you just tested regulator that's the high low was 5, low low was 5.5 and lockup was 7.5. If this is like the single-family home or maybe a different home just with separate regulators, then I can understand that you can test it, but at this particular location, did you tested that regulator? And if you want to test that regulator, because for testing of the regulator you have to disconnect the rest of the meters and then you need to do the testing. Because when you do the testing, you need to connect a U-gauge and do the testing, apply some pressure and make sure that you get the, you know, high low, low low or whatever is that. So this is the question over here that --
A. Do you know it's two meters or two regulators in there?
Q. Yeah. That's what I understand. I have seen it, just the two regulators. I have not seen the separate regulator for Apartment 104.
A. But you asked me -- you said it's two regulators in there.
Q. Two regulators for 14 apartments, and one for water heater. So total two regulators. I have not seen the individual regulator for each apartment.
A. You haven't seen it?
Q. So that's the question we're here. Because in your report it is mentioned that test regulator, and I don't see the separate regulator.
MR. STAEBLER: Yeah, so --

MR. AMROLIWALA: Go ahead, go ahead.

MR. STAEBLER: Yeah, so I would think --

MR. CHHATRE: Identify.

MR. STAEBLER: This is Doug Staebler, yeah. So if you're going to do a test, part of the test with the U-gauge is to set the gauge to your inlet side of your meter, and then with the valve you're going to do a flow test and let gas flow through, and that will show you what the pressure is set at. And then -- R.K., but you're right, you know, if the meter sets -- anything else is flowing, you can't do a lockup test on the regulator because the regulator is not supposed to lockup; it's flowing gas for the other apartments. But you'd be able to check the pressure that's in the set, and you may not be able to do low flow or high flow because of the -- if the rest of the meter sets the flow in gas, it's already in the high flow condition.

But you -- would you check the pressure with your U-gauge in a multi-meter set to see if a regulator is --

MR. HOLMES: Yes.

MR. STAEBLER: -- around 7 inches of water column? So, you know, you're right if there's nothing else flowing, you could still do a lockup --

MR. AMROLIWALA: Right.

MR. STAEBLER: -- test and stuff.

MR. AMROLIWALA: But he cannot do any lockup test when the meters are connected together on this all interconnected line. So

that's -- and he mentioned high low, low low and lockup. Everything has been written here. So the question is how this has been done?

MR. CHHATRE: Are you asking -- this is Ravi. Are you asking that this was just filled in or you think it's erroneously made an entry or --

MR. AMROLIWALA: I'm just --

MR. CHHATRE: -- that's your concern?

MR. AMROLIWALA: No. Yeah, the concern is like here the testing of regulator is not possible.

MR. CHHATRE: Possible. That's what I'm saying. Your concern is --

MR. AMROLIWALA: Yeah.

MR. CHHATRE: -- how the entry is made.

MR. AMROLIWALA: So, yeah.

MR. CHHATRE: Is that something you are interested?

MR. AMROLIWALA: Yeah, so --

MR. CHHATRE: Is that a concern?

MR. AMROLIWALA: Yeah, so that's a concern that is not done. And you know that that's not possible because lockup cannot be checked over here at this particular location, yeah.

MR. CHHATRE: Can you explain or are you clear as what the question is being asked?

MR. AMROLIWALA: Yeah, you just tell us that is it possible?

MR. STAEBLER: Yeah. I'm saying it shouldn't be possible

because I would think --

MR. CHHATRE: And that is Doug.

MR. STAEBLER: This is Doug Staebler, yeah. That -- the lockup test because you would still -- well, it could be if there were no pilot lights and no equipment was burning, and so if there's no flow, then the regulator would be locked up and you would be able to see that. But if there's pilot lights in the other units or a furnace is on or someone is cooking, then the regulator is not going to lock up because it doesn't want to lock up because it needs to supply gas.

MR. CHHATRE: So the short answer, Doug, then is --

MR. STAEBLER: Most likely --

MR. CHHATRE: -- this typically is not possible.

MR. STAEBLER: Yeah. It would be --

MR. CHHATRE: So the entry is erroneous. Really the bottom line is, not to beat around the bush, the entry is erroneous.

MR. STAEBLER: If those are entries saying what you found out there.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Any other questions?

MR. AMROLIWALA: One more question.

MR. CHHATRE: No more questions?

MS. GUNARATNAM: One more.

MR. CHHATRE: Oh, one more. Go ahead. I don't want to block you. I just --

MR. AMROLIWALA: No, no, no. Yeah, again, this is

Rashmikant Amroliwala, State of Maryland.

BY MR. AMROLIWALA:

Q. In your report after the regulator, you say that the house line -- the gas left off at the stopcock as per the customer. So at the same time did you check all the appliances, that the appliances are okay and not required to put the red tag or anything? Because the gas wasn't -- all the appliances were not lit, so the relighting procedure was not done over there.

A. This was the range was off for the customer.

Q. It says that the gas was off to the stopcock.

A. To the range. The range off for the customer.

Q. Gas off at stopcock as per the customer. The range --

A. To the range.

Q. So gas was off to the range?

A. Yes, per customer.

Q. The report which I am reading is not telling me that gas was off, gas was off to the range. That's why I'm asking you that. Here you say that the gas off at stopcock as per the customer.

A. It says here appliance.

Q. Are we reading the same thing or --

MR. CHHATRE: Can you tell me what page you are looking at?

MR. AMROLIWALA: I'm looking at the last page, at 7/7/14.

MR. CHHATRE: Remarks?

BY MR. AMROLIWALA:

Q. Remark 1, turn gas on near meter, stop test, test regulator

house line, left gas off at stopcock as per the customer.
A. It's here on the -- maybe they don't want the stove, you know, so it was off here; range off for the customer. It's not going to (indiscernible) --
Q. Okay. So if the appliances were leak, it's okay then. That's not a problem. This is the report I was reading.
(Simultaneous comments.)
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Here it says, yeah, range off for --
BY MR. AMROLIWALA:
Q. So you leave the appliances up to the range, right?
A. Yeah. I left it off at the shutoff to the range.
Q. Okay, that's fine. Okay, all right.
MR. CHHATRE: Done?
MR. AMROLIWALA: Yeah.
MR. CHHATRE: Questions?
I would -- maybe we need to get somebody to explain this entire document what each entry means, and I'll leave it to you to pick from your people who the right qualified person is. Because, I mean, I'm looking at it for the last 2 days and I still don't feel I really understand each entry and what needs to be done to make each entry. And the question now from the Commission now makes me a little bit concerned that the entries are being made -- so maybe somebody needs to explain that to us. We can either interview we already talked to or maybe a new person, whoever. Let's keep that in mind, and we will take care of that.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Okay.

MR. CHHATRE: Otherwise, I have no further questions.

Anybody else? Go ahead.

LT. OLIN: Yeah, Bill Olin. I mean, I'm just devil's advocate. Is it possible that they didn't have a range? I mean, they have gas furnaces; they needed heat. They get the gas turned back on so they'd have heat. Granted this is in July, I think, wasn't it? Yeah. So, I mean, just to throw it out there.

MR. CHHATRE: It's possible.

LT. OLIN: Yeah. I mean --

MR. CHHATRE: I think --

LT. OLIN: I can't think of any other reason why you wouldn't have it turned on. I mean, you've got gas and you wouldn't turn on at the range.

MR. CHHATRE: Right. That's what I'm saying.

LT. OLIN: So maybe --

MR. CHHATRE: I have some concerns now. I mean, I didn't have any before, but now I've got some concerns. I mean, somebody needs to explain those things to us.

So then if no more questions, thanks for coming, and 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 Kevin V. Holmes

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA16FP003

PLACE: Chillum, Maryland

DATE: August 20, 2016

was held according to the record, and that this is the original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed to the best of my skill and ability.

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Katherine Motley
Transcriber