UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *
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MINNEHAHA ACADEMY SCHOOL EXPLOSION *
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA * Accident No.: DCA17MP007
AUGUST 2, 2017 *
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Interview of: CHARLES McCOY

Fire Station #21
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Sunday,
August 6, 2017

APPEARANCES:

ROGER EVANS, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

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

BRIAN PIERZINA, Senior Investigator
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA)

JON WOLFGRAM, Chief Engineer
Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety

SHANE JONES, Area Manager
CenterPoint Energy

RYAN LARSEN, Controller
Master Mechanical

DANIEL BOWLES, Executive Director of Finance & Operations
Minnehaha Academy

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

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I N T E R V I E W

(4:22 p.m.)

MR. EVANS: On the record. Good afternoon. It is now 4:22 p.m. Today is August 6th. My name is Roger Evans. I'm an investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board out of Washington, D.C. We are at the Minnesota fire department -- Minneapolis Fire Department Station 21, in Minneapolis. This interview is being conducted as part of the investigation into the Minnehaha Academy School blast that occurred on August 2nd. The case number is DCA17MP007[1].

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

Charlie McCoy, you're permitted to have one other person present during this interview. This is a person of your choice -- supervisor, friend, family member, or nobody at all. Please state for the record the spelling of your name, your job title, the company you work with and who you have to represent you today.

MR. McCOY: Charles, C H A R L E S, Wellington, W E L L I N G T O N, McCoy, M C C O Y. Sorry --

MR. EVANS: And who have you asked -- who is going to be representing you today?

MR. McCOY: I have nobody here. I've been with the company,

[1] Corrected accident number

CenterPoint Energy, for 43 years and a few months. I have -- I'm the advanced foreperson for the Southeast Metro. Southeast Metro, is -- oh, I'm sorry. I have the company lawyer representing me. And his name is Wilson Elser, W I L S O N, E L S E R. Or, Thomas W. Tobin; T H O M A S, W, T O B I N. Sorry about that.

MR. TOBIN: Excellent. Thank you. There's no need for me, then, to spell my name.

MR. EVANS: No. Okay. So we're going to go around the room and do introductions, starting to my right. And I would like to have the person state their name, the spelling of their name, and their affiliation.

MR. HOEPF: Oh, sorry. I am Michael Hoepf. That's H O E P F. I'm the NTSB human performance group chairman.

MR. WOLFGRAM: Jon Wolfgram, J O N, W O L F G R A M. Chief engineer, Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety.

MR. PIERZINA: Brian Pierzina. B R I A N, P I E R Z I N A. I'm a senior investigator with the PHMSA accident investigation division.

MR. BOWLES: I'm Dan Bowles, B O W L E S, Executive Director of Finance & Operations at Minnehaha Academy.

MR. JONES: Shane, S H A N E, Jones. I'm an area manager at CenterPoint Energy.

MR. LARSEN: Ryan Larsen -- Larsen, L A R S E N, controller of Master Mechanical.

MR. EVANS: Okay. Thank you.

And thank you, Charlie McCoy, for agreeing to meet with us today.

INTERVIEW OF CHARLES W. McCOY

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Before we begin, we'd like some background information. We know you're an advanced foreman and you work for CenterPoint and you have 43 years. Can we go forward with that, and if you can tell us your job description, what type of work you do, and how many people report to you?

A. As the advanced foreman, I have seven foremans that I issue work to. My job consists of meeting with engineers, city -- people from different cities, engineers, homeowners, any customers -- anybody who wants work done from CenterPoint Energy in the Southeast Metro. I usually make the appointments, meet with, talk and set up the jobs.

Q. Okay. And the boundary of your work, is the work that you perform with your crews, is it before the meter or after the meter?

A. Before the meter.

Q. Okay.

A. We stop at the shut-off valve.

Q. Okay. So your work consists of all the type of work that entails the -- getting the service up to the meter. Is that correct?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And you use vacuum trucks and backhoes --
A. Machines, backhoes, machines --
Q. Okay. And do you also do work that has to do with odor complaints and leaks?
A. Yes. Leaks, yeah. Respond to leaks. If it's a grade B leak, because service is fine, I will get that work order on my queue in the morning. SAP is our system. And when I come in, in the mornings to sign on, any work that came in from the service department will be on my route.
Q. Uh-huh.
A. And then we have a night log. Any work that came in from our night crews who cover in the night will be on there. And then I pull up the ones in my area, set up cable plans, set up for a crew to get out there and fix it.
Q. Okay.
A. Depending how bad it is.
Q. Okay. When you first heard that there was going to be work at the Minnehaha School, did you -- can you describe for us when you heard this and what the scope of the work you understood that was to be done?
A. I got a work order sent to me, and I read the work, you know. On the work order it describes what I do -- my crews will be doing. It was a 3-inch plastic tied into 4-inch steel. We were going to test the 3-inch plastic approximately 30 feet out from the building, run it to the new meter and tie in. That's what the

work order said we were going to do.
Q. Okay. And based on that work order you're talking about -- the date that you received that work order was when?
A. I want to say early July.
Q. Okay.
A. About 7th, 8th -- maybe 9th, 10th of July. Around there sometime.
Q. Okay. Early July. That's fine. And when you say that that work order came in, did that work order come in across your electronic system?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. And when that work came in, who would have requested that work?
A. You know, I don't get involved in that. We get requests from -- you know, we do schools in the summertime, because that's the best time to do them.
Q. Right.
A. So, I wouldn't -- you know, I request some schools that I want done, you know, that I know are bad.
Q. Right.
A. And then, the engineers pick schools, I guess, on theirs. So I don't know who requested that work.
Q. Okay. Okay. Did you have a -- when you got the request, did -- was there some sort of a date that this was to be completed by?
A. No. Usually when we get orders, there's no specific date. I

call Al Ebel, the foreman for the meter shop, because I got to touch base with him. And he let me know Master Plumber was doing the piping at that time.

Q. Okay. And can we be sure that -- the spelling of Mr. Ebel's -- how do you spell his name?

A. Ebel is A B L E [sic].

Q. Okay.

A. Alan, A L A N. I call him Al. I imagine he's Alan.

Q. And Alan Ebel is the guy from the meter shop?

A. Yeah. He's the --

Q. What's his title?

A. He's the meter foreperson.

Q. Okay. And when you get that request from him, would he have a date on that, as far as --

A. No, he informed me that Master Plumber was doing the work. So then I made a call to Master Plumber.

Q. Is this Master Mechanical, is what you're --

A. Yes.

Q. Master Mechanical?

A. Yeah. I'm sorry.

Q. Okay.

A. Master Mechanical.

Q. So Alan Ebel informed you that Master Mechanical was going to be doing the work --

A. Uh-huh.

Q. -- for this school?
A. Right.
Q. Okay. So let's go forward to August -- excuse me -- yeah, August 1st. Did you have any involvement with this work --
A. Yes.
Q. -- on or about August 1st?
A. I got a call from Pat. He's the foreman of Master Plumber, who we usually deal with, letting me know that he was out of town the week before, that's why I didn't hear from him. He was back in town, and he wanted us to dig a hole so he can tie into our meter and go back inside.
Q. Okay.
A. I let him know at that time that I didn't have cable clearance out there because it had expired. We were supposed to originally do the job the 17th of August [sic]. And we didn't do it because somebody from the school called and said they were having some kind of event the weekend of the 22nd, and asked us not to dig any holes until the 24th. So my cable clearance had expired. They're only good for 14 days.
Q. So did you mean to say July?
A. Yeah, July. We were originally going to do the work the week of July 17th.
Q. July 17th was the original date?
A. Yeah. Well, we were going to do it on that Wednesday, whatever, the week of the 17th.

Q. The week of the 17th. Okay. When you -- did you make a site visit to look at this at all?
A. No.
Q. Can you tell us if you were ever -- if you ever visited this site?
A. No.
Q. You have not visited this site?
A. Uh-uh.
Q. Okay. Were you ever on scene during or after or --
A. Uh-huh.
Q. When the place exploded, were you around this?
A. I've been there, but not in the last couple years. I was up there on a repair years ago, so I knew what the site was -- looked like.
Q. Okay. Did you go out and look at the job, though, as far as, you know, whether or not you could staff it and -- did you actually --
A. No, I know what the site looked like. I said, I was there years ago on a repair on the gas main. So I know what the site looks like. So --
Q. Okay. So you didn't feel a need to go to the site?
A. No.
Q. Did you have any of your people go to the site?
A. Yes. I had Reggie Metcalf --
Q. Uh-huh.

A. -- R E G G I E. I think it's M E T C L A F [sic].
Q. Uh-huh.
A. Go up there to mark it out for cable clearance the week of the 17th. And which, that's the time we got our cable clearance.
Q. A line locate kind of thing?
A. Yeah, for line locate.
Q. Okay.
A. They like to box out, so they know where we're going to go from there to the building.
Q. Okay. Did you speak with Reggie when he came back from this locate, or had you talked to him since -- you know, since this visit up to the time of the explosion, had you ever talked to Reggie about this particular --
A. Yes. Yes.
Q. Can you describe that conversation for us?
A. Well, Reggie called and told me he marked it out on the 17th and got cable clearance. When I got a call from Pat telling me that he needed a hole dug under our meter, I asked Reggie on -- that was on Monday -- I don't know what the date is, last Monday, but -- so I asked Reggie Tuesday to go out there and dig a hole. Find out from Pat how big, because the holes vary, on the job with them, and dig the hole.

Wednesday morning Reggie informed me that he wanted a 5-foot hole, and they were going to get the Goliath and suck the hole with the Goliath because we didn't have cable clearance for him to

get his machine and --
Q. I see.
A. -- right there at that time.
Q. I see. So, a 5-foot hole, was that -- in the realm of things for your kind of work, is that a small hole, big hole, or a gigantic hole?
A. It's deep. He wanted it 3 feet off from the building, 5 feet deep, so he could go into the building with the piping.
Q. Okay. That's 3 by 5 feet deep?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. And that was to accommodate the piping going into the building?
A. That's for Master Plumber to tie into our meter that was hung, and pipe back into the building.
Q. Okay.
A. So, I -- when I talked to Master Plumber on Monday, and he was going to do this hook-up on Wednesday, I told him we would do our tie-in on Thursday because that's when I got cable clearance.
Q. Okay. So, with all those dates in mind, all that then, how did it actually work out as far as what actually happened? This was what was scheduled, correct?
A. That was the schedule.
Q. But what actually happened?
A. Wednesday morning, Reggie was out there to dig the hole and that's when the explosion happened.

Q. Okay. And when that explosion occurred, did you -- you never made a trip to there, even after the explosion?
A. Uh-uh.
Q. Okay. That's all I have.
A. I been, I --
Q. Go ahead.
A. I been on explosions before. I was just talking to crews, then, the supervisor is on the phone. Usually there's a lot of people there, adjusters and stuff.
Q. Okay. Okay.
A. And I had another appointment with another customer that day that I had to go to.
MR. EVANS: Okay. That's all I had.
MR. McCOY: That's it?
MR. HOEPF: We're going to go this way, and around. Questions?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions here.
MR. PIERZINA: So, Brian Pierzina. Thank you.
BY MR. PIERZINA:
Q. You said Monday you talked to Master Mechanical. And was that -- who is that, again?
A. Pat.
Q. Pat Boland?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. And what did you guys -- that's when Pat told you that

he needed a hole?
A. We discussed, yeah, he was going to pipe -- normally when we do these jobs I dig a hole, he pipes from the meter inside, and then a day or two, depending how tough the job is for him to pipe, we come back out. We do our -- put our service, he does his final tie-in to the existing pipe.

So when he's digging the hole on Wednesday, I -- I don't want to use the word assume, but I knew Pat's practice. That meant he's tying from the meter into the customer piping, but not breaking in the customer piping until we're out there to run our line. That's how we do the job. So we don't disturb the customer offline for more than a day.

Q. All right. And I might have missed part of that. So you know in your previous dealings with Pat that he knows not to break into the customer piping?
A. Yes. He knows -- there's no hole dug. He knows we're still live until we're out there disconnecting, to do the meter.
Q. Okay. So what are the limitations on his work, then?
A. When we dig the hole, he usually takes a day, that -- from the outside meter, he has to bore a hole through the building, go inside to the building. He usually runs his line up to where he's going to make the final tie-in. He doesn't go into customer piping. And the next day or the day after, when he calls and tells me he's ready, my crew goes out there and we disconnect the line, we run the new line, and he does his final tie-in.

Q. Okay. Prior to this job, when was the last time you had worked with Pat Boland?
A. We did Holy Angel School. That's --
Q. Do you remember about when that was?
A. I want to say first part of July.
Q. Okay. And was that also an in/out meter change-out?
A. Well, the meters were out, but we were moving the meters, and he did all the piping to the --
Q. Oh, so it was a relocation?
A. Relocation. Yes.
Q. All right. Holy Angel School, that's -- is that Southeast Metro, or is that --
A. That's 18th and -- 18th Avenue and Cedar -- 18th Avenue and 24th -- East 24th Street and 18th Avenue.
Q. All right. And that was early July?
A. Yes.
Q. All right. How about prior to that one?
A. Now -- let's see. We did an apartment building on Penn Avenue, 80th and Penn. And I'm not even sure that was this year. That was last year. This year -- that might have been the only two I worked on in this year, so far.
Q. All right. Was the apartment on Penn, was that an inside to outside?
A. That was one we dug the hole, yes.
Q. Okay. All right. Thank you, Charlie.

A. Okay.

MR. WOLFGRAM: This is Jon, with Pipeline Safety.

BY MR. WOLFGRAM:

Q. In any of your previous jobs, would Master Mechanical work on any CenterPoint piping --

A. No.

Q. -- as far as removal, demo, anything like that?

A. No, sir. We don't let anybody touch our inside piping to the shut-off. So, if I had had that service cut off, we would have took the meters inside, shut off the inside valve, and capped it. That's our procedures. So no, we touch -- no, he's -- he ties in our customer piping only. He doesn't touch our pipes.

Q. Okay. You talked a little bit about beginning, just kind of prioritizing work and things. You talked about, you know, if there was some bad meters that you knew about you would kind of --

A. Bad services.

Q. We're just talking services, we're talking meter sets or --

A. Services.

Q. Okay. When you say bad, what do you mean by that?

A. They're 30 years steel, bare steel with couplings, bad screws.

Q. Okay.

A. We've already covered -- a coupling is the mechanical fitting that joins the piece of steel.

Q. Yeah.

A. We put a coupling on one, and we know we got three more in there, and they're on a school, I would make a suggestion that we replace that service to the engineers and --
Q. Okay.
A. -- they do it. In my job, I can only set up in and outs and -- what we call in and out, moving meters outside, on residential. Anything commercial, big industrial, whatever, goes to the engineers. I turn it over to them.
Q. Okay. And my other question would be, is it typical that you would use a vac truck to dig?
A. No. No, sir. In fact, thank God our vac was busy that morning and the crew had to wait for it to get there. Otherwise, they would have been there at 8:00 sucking. That what we call when you vac. No, we dig. But I didn't have cable clearance because it expired, so the crew knew that my cable clearance wouldn't be valid until Thursday. So I told them to hand dig it.
Q. Yeah.
A. They chose not to hand dig 5 feet, which I don't blame them. We thought we were going to go down 2, the normal. So that's when they called for the vac truck and was waiting for that.
Q. But you would use a vac truck when you had an expired ticket?
A. Yes. Because --
Q. Is that --
A. Yes, because then you can -- you're not digging with a machine, which you can't do without a clean ticket.

Q. Is that something that occurs routinely, that you're using a vac truck without a valid --
A. On emergencies.
Q. -- locate ticket?
A. Yes. Without -- in emergencies, naturally, we use a vac truck. Yes.
MR. WOLFGRAM: Okay. That's all I had.
MR. HOEPF: Thanks.
BY MR. HOEPF:
Q. Hey, Charlie. This is Mike Hoepf, with the NTSB. Can you just talk a little bit more about the work order that you received in relation to this job? Is that a one-page document? Is that a 20-page document? Does that --
A. It's two pages, but that's the way the printer prints it.
Q. Okay.
A. It's actually one page that I need to see. And it's got the address of where the work is to be done at, and then there's a description of what has to be done. And that description said tie into existing 3-inch PD for approximately 30 feet to eliminate 30 feet of steel. That's what the order basically said, if that's my remembering, that's what it said.
Q. Okay. Is there anything about safety on there? On that work order, does safety come into play?
A. Safety always plays -- every job we do is safety, you know, is a safety matter. But there's nothing on that order that says

anything about safety.
Q. Okay. Just, can you help me to understand a little bit about how do you ensure safe -- a safe working plan between your workers and your subcontractors? How do they --
A. Our workers, and I'm -- you know, I was in the construction on a truck for 37 years before I got this job.
Q. Uh-huh.
A. You know, we know what we're dealing with is a chemical that can be hazardous if you're not safe around it and work around it safe. And we know how to work with it safe, and we are trained and qualified to work with this product safely. We have safety meetings. We have crew health. We have experienced foremen that work with less experienced people, training. And if the crews have any question, that's part of my job. They call me and I give them -- tell them what to do. Experience.

So, that's what the advanced is. There are four of us. That's our job too. We got all the young foremens. They will call and ask how they do it. And either I'll go out to the job, if that's what I need to, or explain it on the phone. If they can't get it on the phone, then I'm on my way out to the job. And they would tell you, then I walk them through it.
Q. All right. Did that work order specify where the gas would be shut off?
A. No.
Q. Who would make that determination?

A. Well, I could, if they asked, you know. If somebody asked me to shut off that valve -- there was a valve there. I know there was a valve, we were going to use it when we ran the new one, I would shut the valve off after I cleared it with the people that live there or are there, you know, if they can go without gas. I'm not going to shut their gas off unless they do it. But if I'd have shut that valve off, then I'm going inside and shut that main valve off, and then I'm breaking apart that inside and putting a cap on it. Those valves are safety valves. They're for emergencies. They're not for permanent or temporary shut-offs.

Q. Okay. So did you indicate to Master Mechanical -- I'm sorry, I'm not -- just -- I think I missed what you said there. They could have asked you about where to shut off the valve, but they --

A. If Master Plumber or the engineers said that the customer can go without gas and to shut them off, which does happen on some certain jobs we get -- schools can go without gas -- we might shut them off the day before we do the job so our people can be at work, to do their work. If they'd ask, and I'd clear it with the customer. Because I don't do anything a contractor asks me until I clear it with the engineers and our customer. Because contractors, to get their work, will sometimes mislead you. You know, they just want to get their work done. So after I clear it, then I will check -- you know, I shut whatever I need to shut off to make it safe.

Q. Okay. Can I talk to you a little bit about the -- there was a walkthrough on Monday, July 31st.
A. I wasn't there.
Q. You weren't there?
A. No. You talking about at the job itself?
Q. So this accident occurred on August 2nd and it was -- perhaps I'm mistaken. I was -- I understood that there was a walkthrough that occurred on -- a couple of days before.
A. Not with me.
Q. Not with you? That wasn't you?
A. No.
Q. Okay. Okay. You know what, maybe I'm -- was it -- it was Reggie that was there. It was not you.
A. Yeah. Reggie was there on the 31st, that Tuesday, whatever day that was, to dig the hole. I sent him up there that Tuesday morning to dig the hole.
Q. Okay.
A. Then Wednesday morning, I asked him did the hole get dug, figuring I can set in progress to do my hookup the next day because that meant Master Plumber done his work.
Q. Uh-huh.
A. And he told me it was 5 feet deep, they couldn't get the Goliath, it was too hard to dig, that they were going out in the morning and dig it. I said fine.
Q. Okay. So you did not -- did you communicate any information

to Reggie about where the gas would be shut off?
A. No, at that time he wasn't there to shut the gas off. He was just there to dig the hole.
Q. Okay.
A. The gas was going to be shut off when we moved the service that Thursday.
Q. That was going to be Thursday?
A. Or Friday, depending when Master Plumber got through doing their work.
Q. Thursday as in August 3rd?
A. Yeah. Well, Thursday whatever -- yeah. That was Thursday.
Q. So this accident happened on August 2nd. Reggie was there to dig a hole.
A. That's the --
Q. To dig a hole.
A. -- saw he was there.
Q. August 3rd, the plan was to cut off the gas?
A. Yes.
Q. On that Thursday?
A. If Master Plumber was through --
Q. If --
A. -- doing their thing.
Q. Okay. Okay. So did you have a time set up on Thursday that you were going to --
A. No. Generally Master Plumber calls and let me know he's

done. He'll -- oh, I let him know when I talked to him Monday, when he says he's going to pipe it on Wednesday, that we'll probably be here Thursday to do the tie-in. He said okay.
Q. Okay. How long do you think you'd shut the gas off for? How long -- an hour, 2 hours?
A. To do that kind of job there?
Q. To do that kind of job, yeah.
A. That would have been a 6-hour job.
Q. A 6-hour job?
A. From the time we start till --
Q. Okay.
A. If everything go right, we might get done in 3, but I'm going to say 6, if we run into problems.
Q. So did you talk to anybody at Minnehaha Academy about the gas being off for 6 hours --
A. No.
Q. -- on Thursday, August --
A. Because I hadn't planned on doing the work yet.
Q. Okay.
A. Like I said, I wait until Master Plumber tells me he's ready. Then I contact the customer.
Q. Okay.
A. Because I don't want to go to them premature and say we're going to be there; we're not there.
Q. Yeah. Right.

A. So I wait until he contacts me. Then I make sure whoever we're working with -- customer, apartment building, tenants -- they're aware their gas is going to be off that day for that period of time.
Q. So help me to understand how I should think about the timing of the shutting off of the gas. That could have happened on Thursday, August 3rd. Could that have also happened on Friday, August 4th?
A. Yes.
Q. Just depending on --
A. When he's ready to go.
Q. -- where the work is ready to go?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about what you would be expecting Master Mechanical's contractor to be doing on site on Wednesday, August 2nd?
A. My expectations of them, from working in the past, they were going to, for their outside meter, they're going to run pipe down. They're going to bore a wall through the wall for the new pipe, go through the wall, go up, tie in it -- go up where they're going to tie in, and stop. And that's what they normally do. So they're all ready to go. There's -- you know, then when we come up there, cut the pipe and run ours, they're making their final tie-in.
Q. Okay. Okay. That makes sense to me. So, if you were to find out that they were shutting off the gas inside to demo some

equipment, would that be surprising to you or would that be --
A. Yes. Unless they had a customer valve they could shut off.
Q. Unless they had a what?
A. A customer valve. Customers have their own valves inside too.
Q. Okay.
A. They have a valve -- unless they have a customer valve and the customer okayed it with them, that they go without gas, they could shut a customer valve off. We still have gas up to that valve on our line. But far as shutting our valve off, that would be surprising. They don't normally touch our valves.
Q. Okay. Okay. So you would be fine with leaving the gas off on the street while they shut off a valve inside the building to do some work --
A. I wouldn't be fine leaving no valve open inside a building, no matter how many valves you got, personally.
Q. No, no, what if they -- you'd be okay with them shutting off the valve --
A. If it's on customer --
Q. -- inside the building, if it's on the customer's property --
A. Yes.
Q. -- and doing whatever work downstream of that valve?
A. Yes. That's between them and the customer.
Q. Okay. And that's -- so who is -- does CenterPoint have some system to be sure that your subcontractors are following safe work

practices when they're doing that sort of work? Is there some sort of auditing system for that?
A. I'm not sure of that. I mean, if I see they're doing something wrong, I tell them, you know.
Q. Yeah.
A. But far as -- they're inside. My guys are outside, you know.
Q. Okay.
A. They work outside. That's what we do. We go to the shut-off valve. They tie in the shut-off valve. Master Plumber, the meter shop or whoever doing the inside is inside.
Q. Okay. So you would not have expected Reggie to go inside --
A. No.
Q. -- and pay attention to anything that they were doing?
A. Reggie did -- or was out there to dig the hole. That's all he was going to do. He didn't know, and I don't expect him to know, the ins and out of that job. What the plans were, as far as where we were going to dig it, where we were going to cut it.
Now, if I send Reggie out there Thursday to do the job, that's when I say, hey, Reggie, we got a valve 30 feet out, shut that off, squeeze the plastic down, going to run 30 feet of -- you know, that's when I -- the morning I send the crew, that's when they get told what I expect them to do.
Q. Got you. Got you. Okay. All right.
MR. HOEPF: Thank you very much. That's -- it's very helpful.

Roger?

MR. EVANS: Yeah, just a couple more questions.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. I want to get a clarification, just to make sure I heard this right. So we know that you have the fire valve outside the building. We've been told that by other interviewees, okay?

A. Right.

Q. And we know that that's how they shut the gas off during the event. Okay. So beyond that valve, though, there is a customer valve.

A. Inside, yes.

Q. Inside the building. So I just heard you say that if there was a customer valve -- even though that outside valve was not closed, let's say, because they don't even know that valve exists out there. Right?

A. Right.

Q. Most of them, most --

A. No.

Q. -- commercial operations --

A. Yeah, they don't know it's there.

Q. Right. They don't know it's there. So -- but if they do have their own valve inside the building, it's your understanding that they could close that valve and work on the piping that they have to do in the building?

A. Yes. Most gas pipes inside -- same as all of ours outside,

or inside -- have a shutoff valve. Schools, homes -- even homes got customer valves. They got to change the hot water tank, they shut the valve off to the gas. They don't call us out, because those are customer valves. Yes, there's valves inside most places that we call customer valves. Their plumbers have put them in for them, where they can shut the gas off to that appliance or to the whole building, if they got that kind of setup, you know, inside.

We don't -- it's hard to say. Each customer can have their own -- after the meter, that belongs to the customer. What they do, you know, is basically their thing. Their piping, their stuff they're responsible for. We stop at the meter, or the first U joint -- the first fitting after the meter, which is a (indiscernible) union, we call it off. But that's where CenterPoint stops.

Q. Okay. So, with that said -- and I don't want to put words in your mouth, but if Master Mechanical were to buy a blind flange with a gasket and stud bolts and hex nuts, and they wanted to put a brand-new blind flange on their valve inside their building such that they could work on that line, that would not be unusual to you?

A. After our shutoff, yes, they can put their blind flange, whatever. But you got to remember that line is live.

Q. Yes.

A. So they're probably going to try to catch it on the fly. This is just what I'm guessing. And saw what happened. I'm just

saying, you can't -- you have to shut that gas off to put a flange. That's a 3-inch line in there.
Q. Right.
A. That's a lot of volume of gas.
Q. That's right.
A. You know, and I mean, I've fought -- that's Class 2. In my time I've fought Class 6 blowing, to put a flange or flange and stuff on. And, you know, but I'm trained and qualified to do that.
Q. Uh-huh.
A. But never inside a building. Never inside a building.
Q. Okay.
A. Outside. You know, the gas has got somewhere to go.
Q. Right. So just to clarify what -- this question, though. So are you saying that the placement of a blind flange on an existing valve inside the building that's beyond the meter, is or is not a customary thing for a Master Mechanical company to do? Allowable kind of thing?
A. I would think a Master Plumber is qualified to do it. If that's what you're wondering, if they're qualified, yes.
Q. Even though the line is live?
A. Not when it's live. No. Well, it can be done. I wouldn't try it, you know. But I'm just saying -- no, not when it's live. Now, and I don't -- why would you take the chance? I mean, our valve --

Q. So your --
A. -- is right there to shut it off. You know, and it's -- why would you take the chance? They could shut our valve off -- I wouldn't know; I wasn't there, you know -- to do what they want to do. Customers do, do that. People do that. You know, we're not there to see it. Or they could call me or Al, you know, to get the valve shut off, if that's what they wanted. They could make that request. And then they can do the flange if they wanted to.
Q. So the fire valve that you're speaking of, I guess, right?
A. Yes.
Q. They could have called you in and said, hey, Charlie, I'd like to have my fire valve closed, and you would have sent someone out there immediately to --
A. No. No. I'd have said okay. Then I would have drove out and talked to whoever is at the Academy, (indiscernible), maintenance person, or whoever -- you know, or I would have asked Pat who is he dealing with that out there. You know, I would have confirmed that they know about gas, that if I take them offline I'm responsible. If Master Plumber don't finish their work for 2 days and they're having some hot dog sale on Saturday, I don’t want to get screamed at for shutting their gas off.
Q. Uh-huh.
A. So I would confirm with the customer you're all right with this, that I'm cutting off your gas. If the customer says yes, then I would send a crew out there to cut their gas off.

MR. EVANS: I'd like to go off the record for a moment.

(Off the record.)

(On the record.)

MR. EVANS: Back on the record with the interview of Charlie McCoy.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Now, Charlie, I understand that there is a valve that's called the fire valve that's outside the building, and it has a yellow cup or something on -- cap on it, that's used to shut the gas down in case of a fire.

A. Yes.

Q. I also understand that there are two meters in this building. One is an interruptible meter and the other is not; it's a standard meter. Each one of these meters have a block valve that's between the outside valve and the meters. So they each have their own valve. If the Master Mechanical were wanting to install a blind flange on the downstream side of the valve that goes to the interruptible meter, would that be a reasonable thing to do?

A. They shouldn't be bothering our equipment. No.

Q. Okay. They shouldn’t be messing with your equipment, basically?

A. Right.

Q. Okay. If they were to do that, describe the consequences with that logic.

A. Well, you got a 4-inch line, and then -- depending which side of the regulator you're on, either 10 -- up to 10 pounds or 5 pounds. If they're on the live side of the regulator, they've got 10. If they're on the dead side, they got 5. That's a lot of push, a lot of push to try to get --

Q. A lot of pressure.

A. A lot of pressure, to try to get --

Q. Okay.

A. -- in there. Plus tighten down a bolt.

Q. Okay. And --

A. When we put flanges on dead lines, standard lines -- and I don't know what he had; I'm -- I know what a flange looks like -- we strap them because of the pressure.

Q. Right.

A. So we put welders, put a strap on the flange, on the flange to hold it down, and we open it up and slip the disks in. If we're doing it out in the street. Because those flanges are not made to hold gas from pushing out that hole. So that's why we strap them to hold them in place.

Q. So, you're talking about placing a blind --

A. Yeah. Yeah. Because now you've got the 10 pounds of gas pushing up against --

Q. Pushing against the blind. Okay.

A. Yeah, pushing against that.

Q. So had the contractor made a call to you and said, hey, can

you go ahead and shut this valve for me because I want to make a tie-in somewhere down here, you would have advised him -- how would you have advised that person about -- like, I guess, let's just talk about how to get rid of the gas in the building if he were to do something like that.

A. I would advise him -- although I'm not the inside man, you know.

Q. Oh, yeah.

A. I generally stay outside. But I know enough about gas, how this should have been done. I'm just going to say how I walk through it. Shut off that valve, squeeze it down, take the gas off of it. I would have told him to take that valve off, put a valve -- shut-off valve with threads. Thread in a new piece for his flange valve. So when I got done I can kill my (indiscernible). Follow me?

Q. Uh-huh.

A. And he could -- when we're all done, he could shut it off. Then I can disconnect it from our piping and put a cap on it. And then he's -- it's separated from our piping. That's how I would have recommended he do it.

Q. Let me make sure that I -- I'm going to repeat what you said and make sure I have it correctly. Okay?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. Okay. If we wanted to do a -- if we wanted to notify the school that we were going to shut down the gas to their building,

you would have not relied on that valve as a sole absolute shut-off because it -- you could have had blowback. Correct?
A. Yes. Plus --
Q. And you would -- you'd want to excavate and go to the --
A. Past the --
Q. -- for a squeeze-off. And you'd squeeze off that line to make sure that you have no blowback. Is that correct?
A. I would squeeze off that line to get rid of that gas that's topped up in this 4-inch pipe.
Q. In the leg there.
A. Yeah, 30 feet of 4 --
Q. In the leg between the valve and the two valves that go to the meters?
A. Right. Because if I don't bleed it off here, the only other place is -- to bleed it off is inside the building.
Q. Inside the building. Okay. So if you were to do that and you put the squeeze-off, you open this line up between the outside valve and the two other valves in the space, you would make sure that you could bleed off that gas on the outside of the building.
A. Yes.
Q. Correct? Okay. Once that had been done, then you would allow that person to make another tie-in and put --
A. I would have told him what we would have did. I'd have called the meter shop, because that's their work now we're inside the building. Went to this valve --

Q. The valve to the interruptible meter?
A. Yes. And had him -- well, let me -- you can't touch that side. He would've had to go on the other side of that meter. Somehow he's going to have to tie-in on the other side of that meter. He can't touch that. Or I could put a tee in here, you know. You can put a tee, put a piece here, a nipple. Have him put his bell --
Q. Oh, okay. If you put a tee in this section, then you had it isolated.
A. Right.
Q. Oh, I see.
A. And then I can isolate that when he's done and get rid of mine. Because see, you're getting into more of the meter shop expertise than mine.
Q. Yeah. Okay. That's okay.
A. They would have figured it out better than I can.
Q. Okay. Thank you. I understand.
A. That's one way you could do it.
MR. EVANS: I understand. That's all the questions I have.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, thank you.
MR. PIERZINA: Brian Pierzina.
BY MR. PIERZINA:
Q. Charlie, I don't think we asked you, who is your immediate supervisor?
A. Nate --

Q. Okay.
A. -- Toedter. I know it's N A T E.
Q. We have that.
A. Yeah. You knew that.
MR. EVANS: We know that guy's name.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.
MR. McCOY: Thank you.
BY MR. PIERZINA:
Q. And I apologize, if you said this or not. When Pat Borland called on Monday -- he called you on Monday?
A. Yes, to ask me to dig a hole.
Q. To dig a hole. Okay. And so, then -- and then, so then Tuesday morning the work order showed up to dig the hole?
A. I gave -- I had a work order created. Because I got the work order to do the service, but they had to -- they used that order for their time. So then I had to -- I believe I had to -- I can't remember for sure, but I believe I had an investigative order for their time to go out and dig the hole.
Q. Okay.
A. They have to charge their time to something, you know.
Q. I'm sorry. Who has to --
A. They have to charge their time to some work order so they get paid.
Q. Your crew?
A. Yes. My crew.

Q. Okay.
A. So they were sent out there to dig the hole.
Q. So when Pat called you on Monday, was he -- did he say, you know, we're ready for a hole? Or we need a hole and --
A. He said he needs a hole dug at the meter, which is proper procedure. I told him that I'm going to get cable clearance -- I got cable clearance, however when is he going to pipe it to, you know -- he said Wednesday. I said we'll be ready to do our tie-in and take it offline Thursday, then. Because it takes 48 hours to get cable clearance. So the time I got the cable clearance Monday, the first time I'd be able to dig would have been Wednesday afternoon. We don't start late in the afternoon. It would have been Thursday morning.
Q. All right. And I'm just trying to picture from Master Mechanical's standpoint -- they're needing the hole to run their piping from the meter back to the tie-in point.
A. Yes. I believe it was last -- a week ago Wednesday, the meter shop put the meter up, outside meter up. That when it was fabbed -- they let me know the meter was there. I said all right. I tried to get a hold of Pat. Couldn't get a hold of him. Then I found out he was out of town that week. And then Monday when I talked to him.
Q. So, and I'm just trying to -- and help me -- correct me if I'm thinking about this wrong. But while Master Mechanical is waiting for that hole, they're trying to keep busy doing other

things.
A. Probably.
Q. Right? And so --
A. Yes.
Q. -- they're doing as much as they can preparing waiting for the hole. And I guess at some point, if they're stuck, waiting for CenterPoint to give them a hole to do their -- and they bid a flat dollar amount for this job, their downtime is costing them money. Is that the way you would see it?
A. Yes.
Q. Is there a way for them to recover that downtime from CenterPoint?
A. No. Master Plumber knew that Monday I was going to try to get the hole done Tuesday. We weren't coming in there to take off the gas until Thursday. I mean, they could have planned their work on --
Q. Sure.
A. -- Wednesday, you know.
Q. Right. So I'm just trying to think --
A. I don't run Master Plumber.
Q. I'm just trying to think if it's me and I had downtime, I would be trying to keep busy doing something. Because if I'm not doing something, I'm costing myself money.
A. Yes.
Q. So, just trying to understand some of the logic that might go

into that.
A. I'm sure him not --
Q. If there's a way for your contractor to recover downtime because they're waiting on you, that would be a good thing to know. But I don't know if that's in the contract documents or not.
A. That I wouldn’t be aware of. I don't -- you know, the bidding and the contractors is not my skill --
Q. Okay.
A. -- on the job.
MR. PIERZINA: That's all.
MR. EVANS: I'd like to go off the record again.
(Off the record.)
(On the record.)
MR. EVANS: We're back on the interview with Charlie McCoy, and this completes the interview. Thank you very much for your time.
MR. McCOY: Thank you.
MR. EVANS: Appreciate it.
(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

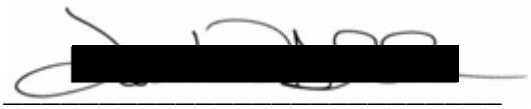
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	MINNEHAHA ACADEMY SCHOOL EXPLOSION MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA AUGUST 2, 2017 Interview of Charles McCoy
ACCIDENT NO.:	DCA17MP007
PLACE:	Minneapolis, Minnesota
DATE:	August 6, 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.



Jane W. Gilliam
Transcriber

Interviewee Name (please print): Charles W. McCoy

Organization: Centerpoint energy.

Date of Transcript Review: 10/24/17

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

☐ I have no comments to make.

☐ My comments are submitted herewith.

☑ My comments are marked on the attached copy.

ERRATA SHEET

Investigation: Minnehaha Academy School Explosion

Interview Date: August 6, 2017

Investigation Of: Charles McCoy

Page	Line	Existing	Correction
7	24	going to test the 3-inch plastic approximately 30 feet out from	going to install the 3-inch plastic approximately 30 feet out from
19	19	into existing 3-inch PD for approximately 30 feet to eliminate 30	into existing 3-inch PE for approximately 30 feet to eliminate 30
29	13	(indiscernible) union, we call it off. But that's where	2/3 union, we call it off. But that's where
34	14	his flange valve. So when I got done I can kill my	his flange vlave. So when I got done I can abandon my service.
35	9	topped up in this 4-inch pipe.	trapped up in this 4-inch pipe.

[redacted]
Charles McCoy