UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
	*	
MINNEHAHA ACADEMY SCHOOL EXPLOSION	*	
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA	*	Accident No.: DCA17MP007
August 2, 2017	*	
	*	

Interview of: SHANE JONES

Fire Station #21
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Saturday,
August 5, 2017

APPEARANCES:

ROGER EVANS, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

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

EDWARD KENDALL, Attorney
National Transportation Safety Board

DANA SANZO, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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

BEVERLEY MELCHISEDECH, Vice President Operations Support
CenterPoint Energy

DAVID SCHULTZ, Chief Executive Officer
Master Mechanical

SYLVIA SCHWARZ, Senior Engineer
Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety

DANIEL BOWLES, Executive Director of Finance & Operations
Minnehaha Academy

THOMAS TOBIN, Esq.
Wilson Elser Law Firm
(On behalf of Mr. Jones)

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

(1:42 p.m.)

MR. EVANS: Good afternoon. Today is August 4th. It is now 1:42 p.m. My name is Roger Evans. I'm the investigator in charge with the National Transportation Safety Board in Washington, D.C. We are at the Minneapolis Fire Department, Precinct No. 21, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

This interview is being conducted as part of the investigation into the Minnehaha Academy School --

MR. HOEPF: Sorry, Roger. You said the 4th. It's the 5th.

MR. EVANS: Thank you. August 5th. Excuse me. We're at the -- excuse me. This interview is being conducted as part of the Minnehaha Academy School explosion that occurred on August 2nd. This 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.

Mr. Shane Jones, you're permitted to have one other person present during the interview. This is a person of your choice -- a supervisor, friend, family member, or nobody at all. Please state for the record who you have selected to be present during the interview, as well as the spelling of your name and your job title.

[1] Corrected accident number

MR. JONES: My name is Shane Jones, S-h-a-n-e, J-o-n-e-s. I'm an area manager at CenterPoint Energy. I've picked Thomas Tobin as my representative.

MR. EVANS: And, Mr. Tobin, can you please spell your name and spell the name of your firm?

MR. TOBIN: Thomas Tobin, T-o-b-i-n, and I'm with the Wilson Elser, E-l-s-e-r, Law Firm.

MR. EVANS: Okay. Let's go around the room now and have introductions of your name, spelling of your name and your affiliation.

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

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

MR. SCHULTZ: David Schultz, Schultz, CEO, Master Mechanical.

MS. MELCHISEDECH: Beverly Melchisedech, Melchisedech. I'm Vice President, Operations Support for CenterPoint Energy.

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

MS. SCHWARZ: Sylvia Schwarz, S-c-h-w-a-r-z, senior engineer, Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety.

MR. PIERZINA: Brian Pierzina, B-r-i-a-n, P-i-e-r-z-i-n-a, senior investigator with the PHMSA Accident Investigation Division.

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you.

Thank you, Shane, for agreeing to talk with us today.

INTERVIEW OF SHANE JONES

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Before we begin the questioning, I'd like to get some background information: education, how long you've been at your current position, previous positions within the company, and perhaps going back to, if it was a short stay at this company, the company before CenterPoint.

A. I have a Bachelor's of Science in Geography, minor in cartography, from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. I've been at CenterPoint for about 19 years. Before that, it was miscellaneous jobs going through school.

Since I've been at CenterPoint, I was hired as a GIS specialist, where I entered data into the computers for the mapping on gas. I then moved to a AutoCAD specialist where I drew up the detailed drawings for regulator stations and -- you call them trees and posts, posts and loops that cut pressure down.

Then I moved into a commercial designer. I think I did that for about 3 years, where I was designing commercial services and meter sets, helping out engineers with rehab jobs and things for main jobs. I did a stint of inspecting as a steel inspector for about 3 months for CenterPoint.

Then I moved to a supervision role with new market and development. I had the new construction for the State of Minnesota, working with our contractor. Then I took on the steel as well, so I was doing new and steel with the contractor for

about a year and a half. Then I moved to DRO, District Regulation Odorization. It's actually instrumentation as well. I did that for about 5 years, and now I'm an area manager for the South Metro District, and it's been about 2 years.

Q. Okay. Thank you. In your current role, can you describe your roles and responsibilities that you have for this -- that particular position?

A. I manage seven supervisors, two on the gas operations side and five on the Home Service Plus side. Day-to-day management, HR, getting involved in -- with union negotiations and the day-to-day operations in the South Metro.

Q. In all these positions you've had with CenterPoint, have you had any involvement with the preparation of procedures for operational procedures?

A. As far as creating a procedure to do a task?

Q. Yes.

A. I cannot remember one off the top of my head.

Q. Okay. Fine. When you -- can you describe for us a typical scope and how you would involve those individuals, the seven individuals that report to you, just a typical workday?

A. So typical workday, touch base with the folks in the morning and find out if they have any big projects that they need help scheduling, pulling other groups together in; see if they have any employee issues. Try and give assignments, if some are overloaded, trying to move the work around a little bit to even

the workload out, make sure we're making our dates.
Q. And what is the extent of the scope that these ops people are doing in the home service? Just roughly what -- the generalized --
A. The two operations supervisors are strictly on the gas side. The five HSP supervisors are strictly on Home Service Plus. So there's regulated and there's non-regulated, so there's a direct line. The HSP folks do help and respond for emergency response. Sometimes they're closest, so they'll be the first responders to come out and help develop the zero perimeter and take gas reads, help make the area safe, while the construction and maintenance crew is en route.
Q. Okay. We just had Reggie in here, who was out there on the pipeline side. That's not the meter side, he was telling us. Would that person report to someone that reports to you?
A. Yes, he would. He reports to Nathan Toedter, T-o-e-d-t-e-r.
Q. T-o-e- --
A. D-t-e-r.
Q. Nathan, okay. And what's Nathan's title?
A. Supervisor.
Q. Okay. And how many of the Reggies of the world does he have under him, just roughly?
A. He has seven foremen under him right now.
Q. Okay. So as far as OQ, only those in the ops -- the two that report to you, are they OQ qualified?

A. Are they OQ qualified? Yes.
Q. Okay. Are you OQ qualified as well?
A. I don't do the one-on-one with the pipe or anything. So --
Q. Okay, okay. Some companies are a little bit different. I just wondered. Okay.

So the accident that happened, were you aware of what was going on at that particular school? I mean, and when did you first hear about it, if you were aware of it?
A. As far as the job that was going that day, I didn't have any idea it was going on until Reggie called Nate, who happened to be standing next to me. So that was my first point of awareness that there was something going on that we had a crew at that location.
Q. Okay. So you weren't involved with any of the upfront planning or --
A. No. I did not know we had a crew going out there that day until then.
Q. Okay. And if this becomes a very short interview, which it could, because I see what your role in all that is, but I just want to ask some questions and see where this goes. But one of the things I'm wondering about is, do you have any involvement of -- let's say, business versus home, you know, the meter change-outs. Is that process anything to do in your line of work at all?
A. In my current position or --
Q. Yes.
A. -- do I have knowledge of how it works?

Q. No, in your current position.
A. In my current position, I do not have the meter installers. So the only involvement my group would have would be what Reggie was doing. So typically if there's a in/out project, obviously you're moving the below ground entrance for the service --
Q. Right.
A. -- outside to a riser. So Reggie's title and group would come out and coordinate with our meter installation group, and if there's a contractor involved, on the scheduling of the day when they're going to shut the gas off. So someone like Reggie would come out, shut the gas off, cut the service, put the riser up, and then work with coordinating the schedule to turn it back on. And then the other department, which is actually out of our North District, meter installation, they would do the meter work, where they would cut and abandon the customer piping, thus allowing the contractor to take over and do their tie-in for the new pipe.
Q. Okay. So with your role, versus the two ops guys that work for you, you're kind of isolated from those day-to-day decisions about the -- like a large 3-inch line going into a facility that's going to have a meter change-out, that's kind of outside of your bailiwick in a way?
A. Yes and no. The day-to-day operations, if it's a smaller job, relatively simple like this, I typically wouldn't get involved. If it's a bigger job, they come to me and ask is this something that we want to contract out to a larger contractor,

that we do work with. They are qualified to do work on services and things depending on the scope of the work. They've got more folks, more equipment, and we concentrate on our emergency response. We'll do the smaller jobs and something larger, more difficult, typically they come to me and say, is there something you want or this is something we're going to send to the contractor?

Q. Okay. So one of the things that I think we have all noticed about this particular accident was the lack of an involvement with any CenterPoint person at the planning stage. Can you describe for us at what time and what scope of job does it take to have CenterPoint be hands-on with the meter replacement work?

A. Verse a job like this?

Q. Any job that has to do with meters that would -- where you folks would say, we have to get involved with this hands on. What's the dividing line for when you folks would get involved with the planning and with the material and produce drawings and all that type of thing?

A. So a meter job like this, particularly they would do a drawing of what the meter's going to look like to replace it. There were some pictures that were handed out this morning of the existing meters in the basement of the location we're talking about.

The engineer would typically go out, take a picture of that, use that information, as well as gathering the load information,

to decide what kind of a meter set they want to design. They'd design that. It would go to our fab shop to be built. And at that point, depending on how much customer piping was involved, they'd decide if they wanted to bid it out to a contractor to do the customer piping or is it just a simple tie-in.

Once it's gone through that process and it's decided do we have a third party helping or are we doing it our self, then they set a date with the customer. The C&M crew, the meter installation crew, and if there's a contractor, would be there that day and it would be coordinated so the gas was shut off. Then they meter crew would go after disassembling or assembling the new meter. Once the pipe is dead, the contractor would take that.

So the actual hands-on scheduling, the meeting -- like in this case, the meeting the day before to come and see, okay, what's the job, make sure I got the right equipment, finding out the hole is deeper. They had to go back; otherwise, that one would have been done. At that point we'd start talking about when is the gas going to get shut off, when are you going to have enough of your customer piping put together so we can do the tie-in. So --

Q. Okay. So let's go back.

A. Did I answer that?

Q. Yes, you answered fine. Yeah.

A. Okay.

Q. So let's go back a little bit though. So if I'm ABC Company -- and I guess you might as well tell us. Are you instigating the meter change-out? The companies aren't saying, hey, I need a new meter set. You folks are taking the meter from the inside, bringing it to the out for convenience and all that stuff, correct?
A. CenterPoint is, yes.
Q. And that's -- the reasons that you would replace the meter, what are all those reasons?
A. A lot of it depends on the type of meters. In this case, it was a dimensional meter. So a dimensional meter is a meter that's not made any more, and in many cases, you can't get parts for them.
Q. Right.
A. So because of the obsolescence of the meter itself --
Q. Right.
A. -- there's one reason to replace it.
Q. Okay.
A. If they're older, we can get a newer meter that actually has the electronic capabilities to help do calculations and it aids in billing.
Q. Okay.
A. And the ability to move it outside and upgrade all the piping at the same time. So, yes, they are targeted as meters that we do want to replace.

Q. Okay. Is there a campaign in the entire CenterPoint Corporation that says, guys, we're going to bring every meter we can possibly find from the inside and move them outside?
A. Yes, there is.
Q. And that's like a 10-year plan or something?
A. It depends on the meter type.
MS. MELCHISEDECH: Yeah, if I can interrupt. This is Beverley Melchisedech. I've got the -- this particular meter project plan that was sent to me this morning, that I have not yet sent to you --
MR. EVANS: Okay.
MS. MELCHISEDECH: -- but it would be available to explain why we were at this location --
MR. EVANS: Okay. Great.
MS. MELCHISEDECH: -- to replace these meters.
MR. EVANS: And then I guess since we're going to be interviewing you --
MS. MELCHISEDECH: Right.
MR. EVANS: -- we'll introduce that evidence at that time, okay?
MS. MELCHISEDECH: Okay. I'll have to read it off my iPhone.
MR. EVANS: That's fine.
MS. MELCHISEDECH: Okay.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. Okay. So when the -- when you have this meter replacement

program, I guess, there was a priority of who gets what when and all that type of thing. And what are those priorities based on?
A. That one would be with engineering. I'm not aware of their priority of the listing.
Q. Okay.
A. I know there are a number of them and there's a goal to have those completed by a date.
Q. Okay. So this is no -- I mean, there's no enormous surprise that a meter is going to be moved from the inside to the out?
A. No.
Q. The average person on the street might think that, why are they moving the meter? Why did they have to do that in the first place? Which is what we heard. So anyway -- so we have the meter destined to be relocated and you say that the parts for the other meter may have been stale and you can't replace them and all that kind of thing.
A. Right.
Q. So then someone comes out from your engineering department and they take the physical dimensions of the space available, penetrations and things like that, I imagine. They put that in AutoCAD or something and come up with a fabrication that your shop does?
A. Sometimes, yes. Sometimes they're standard drawings. Let's say you want to do a standard 5M fit. There's already a drawing created. So they can say this is the one I want. They can copy

that, send it to the fab shop. They'll build it. And then the meter installation group just has to go put brackets on the wall, hang the top piece and then screw the piece together. So it's relatively simple to install after fab.

Q. Okay. So once the meter is fabbed, someone from your company always is going to mount that meter on the wall? Is that most of the time?

A. On commercials, I believe most of the time. We do have a subcontractor who is qualified to hang meters. They do, do some of the industrial commercials standard fits.

Q. Right.

A. But the majority of the larger commercial fits are done by our CenterPoint meter installation crews.

Q. Okay. So once that drawing is completed, I guess it gets a sign-off and stuff like that by somebody, approved and everything like that. And then does that -- you go and get the parts and pieces and get it built, and then is the drawing annotated with all of the -- you know, this is the outlet, the 3-inch inlet goes here, this goes out there? Is that a work plan or is that just stated on the drawing?

A. There's actually drawings on them. As an example, a standard fit 5M, you've got the drawing and on the drawing you can see the arrow for the strainer to see the gas flow. It does have a picture of the regulator. It has your measurements and off/on. I believe it's the right side has got a detailed list. So you see

item number 1, you look over to the right, item number 1, and it describes it's a --

Q. Yeah.

A. -- 2-inch strainer.

Q. A building materials type thing?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. So when that meter leaves the fabrication shop, I trust it gets tested in place at the shop of some sort, as far as to make sure that the meter works?

A. The flow rate and stuff?

Q. Yes.

A. Yes.

Q. There's some sort of testing that takes place?

A. On the larger meters, yes, they set them up on the bench and they actually test the rate and the meter is prequalified. I believe the Roots meters are prequalified by Dresser. So it comes with a statement of authenticity.

Q. Oh. Right. Okay. So then they get shipped out to the site and someone's going to mount it on the wall, correct?

A. Correct.

Q. So once that's mounted on the wall -- are there piping drawings or ISOs or fabrication drawings that actually connect the dots from the old piping through to the new meter and, you know, into the main and all that?

A. It depends on how complicated the design is. If it's pretty

complicated, yes, they do drawings to be able to show the intended route. If it's just coming off the meter, going down and going through to tie in, a lot of times it'll be just a rough sketch. But it is communicated between the engineer and the person installing.

Q. Will there always be a rough sketch?

A. On commercials, I believe so.

MR. EVANS: Okay. Beverley -- a question for Beverley. The rough sketch for this particular installation, would it be part of the installation package that --

MS. MELCHISEDECH: I called during the break -- this is Beverley -- and asked for the job packet that would have been given to the mechanical contractor, the job packet that would have been given to the construction crew, and then the meter crew work that had already been out there and hung the meters.

MR. EVANS: Okay.

MS. MELCHISEDECH: And they're gathering that now.

MR. EVANS: Okay.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. So are you aware of the interface that went on between CenterPoint and the mechanical contractor for this job? Are you -- do you know what actually went on between -- what type of interface they had? If it was a discussion? Was it emails or was it texts or what?

A. I do not know. I only know what I've heard in here.

Q. Okay. So whenever the package gets out there, the decision to tie in live, to a live line, whose decision is that?
A. Typically we're not going to tie in live. So that would be CenterPoint's. We own the valves. We operate the valves. So if we're going to do a live tie-in, it would be live tie-in like on a service or something. But as far as tying into an aboveground pipe, I can't think of a scenario where we would do it live. We would shut it down.
Q. But you know that this system was live when they made the attempt to install this -- to do this change, correct?
A. Yes.
Q. And so why would it be live that day?
A. Because it wasn't scheduled to go till next week.
Q. So had it gone next week, they would have shut the gas down?
A. They would have shut the -- or, yeah, they would have squeezed the service. And while they were removing that, it would have been dead, so they could do their tie in.
Q. So how did that not get communicated back to the people doing the work that, hey, we're not supposed to be working on the line?
A. My understanding from what we've heard is they were doing pre-work. So I don't know. I wasn't involved in those conversations.
Q. So you're saying that whenever you install a meter in a building, they are not supposed to be on live lines?
A. You're talking in to outs? Can you explain that a little

more?
Q. Yeah. If you're going to install -- if you're going to touch the piping to the gas system that has to be modified to get into the meter, are you telling us that the gas is intended to be offline completely?
A. If you're doing a tie-in, yes. Offline through closing a valve, through squeezing a service.
Q. I want to make sure I've got this correct for the record. I don't want to be confused myself, let alone everyone else, but -- let's go back and ask this question again.
A. Um-hum.
Q. We have -- two gentlemen are in a building. They're installing piping, getting ready to tie a meter that's already mounted on the wall, correct?
A. (No audible response.)
Q. At the time that they were to make this -- these piping changes, this line should have been off. Is that what you're telling us?
A. No, they should not have been doing those changes. The coordinated date was supposed to be next week when C&M would shut the gas off, the meter installers would be there. They can tie into the customer piping when we've abandoned that. So when it's live, it's ours up to the outlet of the meter. Once it's abandoned and shut off, then we work with them to do the tie-in. So the tie-in shouldn't have been going on right now.

Q. So with the job planning that -- and we have to look at the job plan, but would something like that be noted on the plan, that this job is to be done with the gas in a non-energized position?
A. I do not know if that would be on the plan or not.
Q. Okay. Is there any communication -- I mean, I can see how you have perhaps a typical type of meter that has a number related to it. They build that meter. They hang it on the wall and they have people that are going to pipe that up, right? Is there not coordination, like hold points like a lot of companies use, to say, you can't go beyond this point if the line is not deenergized? Is that philosophy in your company, the phrase, hold points, for --
A. I understand what you're saying. That's what the scheduled date next week was supposed to be for. We shut it down, we do our tie-ins at that point.
MR. EVANS: Can we go off the record?
(Off the record.)
(On the record.)
MR. EVANS: This is a continuation of the Shane Jones interview. We've decided to terminate this interview. That will be fine. Thanks.
(Off the record.)
(On the record.)
MR. EVANS: On the record with the continuation of Shane Jones interview. We have decided to curtail this interview until

we've had an opportunity to read and comprehend some of the procedures that are associated with this case. We expect to interview Shane in the near future.

Off the record.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

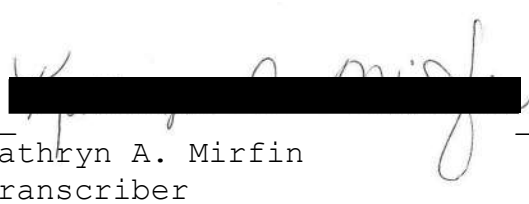
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	MINNEHAHA ACADEMY SCHOOL EXPLOSION MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA AUGUST 2, 2017 Interview of Shane Jones
ACCIDENT NO.:	DCA17MP007
PLACE:	Minneapolis, Minnesota
DATE:	August 5, 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.



Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber

Interviewee Name (please print): Shane Jones

Organization: Center Point Energy

Date of Transcript Review: 10/25/17

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: DCA17MP007 - Minnehaha Academy School Explosion

Interview Date: August 5, 2017

Investigation Of: Shane Jones

Page	Line	Existing	Correction
13	7	CenterPoint is, yes.	CenterPoint is, yes in this case. However, there are instances when the meter work can be initiated by the customer.
16	23	Sometimes, yes. Sometimes they're standard drawings. Let's	Sometimes, yes. Sometimes there are standard drawings. Let's
17	15	they actually test the rate and the meter is prequalified.	they actually test the regulator and the meter is prequalified by the manufacturer.

[redacted]
Shane Jones