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: STACIE YERKS

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

DANIEL BOWLES, Executive Director of Finance &
Operations
Minnehaha Academy

THOMAS TOBIN, Esq.
Wilson Elser
(On behalf of Ms. Yerks)

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

(3:03 p.m.)

MR. EVANS: Good afternoon. It is now 3:03 p.m. Today is August 6th and my name is Roger Evans. I'm the investigator in charge with the National Transportation Safety Board, Washington, D.C. We're at the Minnesota Fire Department at Station #21. This interview is being conducted as part of the investigation into the Minnehaha Academy school in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the blast that occurred on August 2nd, 2017. The case number for this 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.

Stacie Yerks, you are permitted to have one other person present during the 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, employer, and who you have selected to represent you during this interview?

MS. YERKS: My name is Stacie Yerks, S-T-A-C-I-E, Y-E-R-K-S. I'm an engineering specialist for CenterPoint Energy and I have Thomas Tobin as my representative.

MR. EVANS: And, Mr. Tobin, can you please spell your name

[1] Corrected accident number

and the spelling of your firm?

MR. TOBIN: It's Thomas Tobin, T-O-B-I-N, and I'm with the Wilson Elser, E-L-S-E-R, law firm.

MR. EVANS: Thank you. Now let's go around the room and have each person identify themselves with saying their names, spelling of their name and their affiliation.

MR. JONES: Shane, S-H-A-N-E, Jones, Area Manager, CenterPoint Energy.

MR. BOWLES: Dan Bowles, Executive Director of Finance & Operations at Minnehaha Academy.

MR. PIERZINA: Brian, 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. WOLFGRAM: Jon Wolfgram, J-O-N, W-O-L-F-G-R-A-M. I'm a chief engineer with Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety.

MR. HOEPF: Mike Hoepf, H-O-E-P-F. I'm the Human -- sorry -- NTSB Human Performance Group Chairman.

MR. EVANS: Thank you.

And thank you Stacie for agreeing to speak with us today.

INTERVIEW OF STACIE YERKS

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Before we begin the interview we'd like to get some basic information about your background: how long you've been with the firm, what firms you worked for prior to CenterPoint, what your job title is, if you have any people that report to you or the

person that you report to yourself, as well.
A. I've worked for CenterPoint Energy for -- it'll be 17 years in October. Prior to that I worked for Ambassador Steel for 2 years. At CenterPoint Energy I do not have anybody that reports to me. I am an engineering specialist. I work with other engineering specialists who report to Mike Gilbertson.
Q. And can you spell that name please?
A. It's Mike Gilbertson, G-I-L-B-E-R-T-S-O-N.
Q. And what is his title?
A. He would be supervisor of engineering.
Q. And what is your education level?
A. I've had some community college, different courses.
Q. And major?
A. Major is engineering right now.
Q. Okay. And how many years have you been at your current level in this company?
A. For 4 years.
Q. Four years. And what were you before that?
A. Before that I was in emergency dispatch. I was a dispatcher.
Q. And do you use AutoCAD?
A. No, I do not.
Q. So your department that you work in has to do with meters, correct?
A. That's right, meters and service lines.
Q. Okay. Are these commercial meters or residential and

commercial?
A. Commercial meters.
Q. Commercial meters. Okay.
So can you go through the workflow? Let's just say that there's a company that needs to get a new meter and -- you know, a corporation, a commercial company. And can you go through the workflow and tell us exactly how all that would go about?
A. Um-hum. So when a customer is interested in changing out their equipment, they contact our order origination department or they would contact an energy sales representative that they work with. That person then gets some information from them as far as their natural gas equipment. We also gather information on what existing equipment they have that we've installed. And then that information is passed along to the Engineering Department to decide who will take on the responsibility of that job and what will be needed as far as repairing or replacing any gas service lines or meters.
Q. Okay. What is the -- well, let's just say, what are the motivations for someone to get a new meter in a commercial location? What would be the motivations for that to happen?
A. Per their request, because they've changed out or upgraded or added equipment, natural gas equipment. Otherwise it can also be driven internally by us upgrading equipment.
Q. Okay. The old meters versus the new meters, what are the big advantages?

A. I don't know that there's a lot of advantages. It's just kind of -- you know, we keep on top of upgrading our equipment. It's better, I think, for reading purposes, billing purposes, in that way it can be better.
Q. Okay. Just -- I was just asking because we're going to have to explain that in the report and I want to make sure that I understand what the motivations are. Reading purposes --
A. Yes.
Q. -- and?
A. It's mostly about upgrading equipment. We have to replace older equipment with new equipment because we no longer have parts available to repair --
Q. Oh, spare parts are one of the reasons. Okay.
A. That's, yeah, that's a big driver internally. And it's also for meter reading and billing purposes, as well.
Q. Now I'm going to ask a stupid question probably, but I'm going to ask it anyway. There are no natural gas savings type advantages? A meter is a meter. It's going to meter the gas going in and the gas coming out?
A. That's correct.
Q. So regardless of the meter, it's still going to use the same amount of gas, right?
A. That's right.
Q. Okay. I just want to make that clear. Okay, good. So a customer has gone to your order origination department or your

sales department has contacted the business. They say how would you like to have a new meter? These are the buzz words that we have and here's what you're going to get with this new piece of equipment. So once that customer has agreed to get a new meter, tell us what happens then.

A. We look at their equipment loads, delivery pressure, kind of space that the meter is located in, to decide what equipment or size meter we can replace it with. And then from there, we get orders created, sometimes designs done to piece together larger meters, and then we work with weld shops and meter installers to get them installed.

Q. So do you have, like, a catalog of typicals? If a certain flow rate matches what you need, you can just pull that out of a book?

A. Yes.

Q. And you can take that to the shop and they can fab it?

A. Yes.

Q. Is that a popular way to go about it?

A. Yes, it is. We have a lot of design standards that we use. We would use our AutoCAD group or design something different if there was a different requirement based on delivery pressure and load and we needed to adjust for a larger customer.

Q. Just curious, when you talk about meters, are -- is it the 80/20 rule: 80 percent of the meters that you install come from your templates, your typicals, and 20 percent probably come from

unique designs?
A. Yes, I would say that's true.
Q. Something like that?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. So when you do this design, and once you've got all the numbers to match the design you're picking and say, this typical will work for this situation, then, you don't have those sitting on a shelf. They are -- the assembled meter with all the valving and all that, you have to actually go to the fab shop with that template and say, here's typical 16; build me one of these for this company. Is that how it works?
A. That's true, yes, with the, especially with the larger meters. We would have on a shelf a meter, regulator, relief, and the piping. Depending on the size of the meter, it would need to be welded by our welders and then assembled on site by the meter installers.
Q. Okay. And then the meters themselves, just before -- I don't want to miss this for the record. So you said for reading purposes, spare parts -- I guess the other reason is for the accessibility, right?
A. Yes.
Q. Because you don't want to have to go into the building to go and work on it, you're bringing the meter outside. So that's the other motivation to have a new meter, correct?
A. Yes, that is something we consider.

Q. So access. Okay. So once the meter has been designed and you have a typical, is there a maximum amount of pipe footage-wise that can go from the outlet to the users in the building?
A. I would say there is. We also look into the footage of our service line to our meter inlet to make sure that the main that we're coming off of would be able to deliver the amount of pressure that they need through the meter. If they have any difference issues after that, then a mechanical contractor would look into their side of their plumbing, their run, their size.
Q. Okay. So once the meter has been -- the typical's been fabricated, then one of your crews will go out and mount the meter. Is that correct?
A. That's correct.
Q. Okay. And when they mount the meter, will they also do the supply from the main to the meter?
A. No. That is a separate crew.
Q. But will they do that shortly thereafter?
A. They would work with the service line installers, once a riser is installed off of a service line, to tie the meter into the riser.
Q. Okay. Do they wait for the inside piping to be completed before they do that tie-in?
A. We try to work with our customers to have the customer piping tied into our outlet and then tie our equipment in. Sometimes it can be done either way.

Q. So is there a preferred?
A. I would say each case is different based on timing, as far as when crews can be there.
Q. So let me get this right. Then there's two ways the -- you could mount the meter on the wall, you could have the -- their contractor with the customer piping bring the piping from the meter all the way through the building and hooked up to everything, and then call the gas company and say, hey, I've got my inside piping done, you can finish your connection to the main?
A. Yes, it can be done that way or --
Q. Or the other way would be --
A. Yes.
Q. -- you've got the piping all made up to, and all they have to do is tie in to outlet, and then they call the gas company to come and initialize the meter?
A. Yes, that's right.
Q. Okay. Do you know what was planned for this particular site?
A. That, unfortunately, I don't know. With bigger projects like this, the timing between the C&M crew that would need to replace that portion of service line and install a new riser and the timing between the mechanical contractor kind of makes that hard to say.
Q. Okay. Do you know the name of any person in your corporation that would know what the scheme was for this hook up?
A. Al Ebel, the meter installer foreman.

Q. Okay, and can you spell the name again?
A. Al, A-L, Ebel, E-B-E-L.
Q. And was Al Ebel on site at one time for this particular case?
A. Yes, he was.
Q. He was? And were you on site as well?
A. Not at the same time that Al was on site.
Q. So can you describe the -- from the -- when you went to the site and who you saw and what you discussed and all that?
A. On February 24th of this year, 2017, I scheduled a meeting with Don, D-O-N, DuBois, D-U-B-O-I-S. He works for Minnehaha schools, I believe, as their mechanical. We met on site at 10 a.m. on the 24th, and at that time he led me into the boiler room -- well, the custodial room/boiler room and then into our meter room to take a look at the meter setup that we had had. I took some pictures while I was there of the existing piping and meters that we had, as well as the service line exiting the meter room, to determine how we might possibly be able to replace those meters and probably move them outside. We discussed moving them outside. They weren't sure at that time if that was something that they would want, but it was something that, you know, we encouraged. And so then we looked at an outside location for the meters to be relocated to.
Q. Okay. And when you met with Don DuBois, did you have -- who else was there?
A. It was just me and Don and I believe his supervisor. I don't

recall what his name is. He stopped in just for a moment.
Q. Okay. Did you make a sketch of how the piping might run from the new meter that was to be hung outside to get into the -- to the equipment room and just to the boilers and all of that? Did you --
A. No. That's something we rely on our mechanical contractor to work out, being that it's customer piping.
Q. Is there ever a time when the -- when your group or anyone at CenterPoint actually designs the customer piping?
A. No, we do not.
Q. Do you approve customer piping?
A. No, we do not.
Q. Do you inspect it?
A. No. That would be the mechanical contractor.
Q. I mean, if you had gas required drop legs. If the person didn't put a drop leg in and you had dirt -- you don't look for things like that?
A. I don't know if there would be a way to. I'm not sure. On our end.
Q. So ever since you've been with this company, every case you -- every installation you've ever done, there's never been a case or you've never heard of a case where the piping, the customer piping, was ever -- you ever advised anybody on or sketch it up?
A. No.
Q. Nothing?

A. No.
Q. Okay. Once the piping is -- the meters are mounted and, let's say, the piping's been -- on the inside has been completed, what is the crew that comes out and does the rest? Who would that be in your company?
A. It would just be the meter installers that would have the meter already installed for them with an outlet. The mechanical contractor would tie in to the outlet we provide.
Q. But the -- but you're going to have to take something from the main to the meter because it wasn't done yet, who does that work?
A. That would be one of our service crews, service line installers.
Q. Service line installers?
A. Um-hum.
Q. Okay. So they take it from the main to the meter?
A. That's correct.
Q. Do you have times when you design a meter set and it gets installed and it doesn't work?
A. Yes, that has happened.
Q. That has happened?
A. Um-hum.
Q. The flow was off or something like that or --
A. Yup. So in those cases what we do is we check our regulators, relief valves, things like that, to make sure that

they're sized correctly. If we don't see any issues on our end with our equipment, we suggest that the customer hire a mechanical contractor or a pipefitter to take a look at their fittings, their pipe.

Q. Okay. What about the specification of the material that's going to be tied into your piece of equipment, the customer supplied piping? Do you have any influence whatsoever on the pipe specification and materials spec and what poundage the valves are, set bolts, gaskets?

A. No, we do not.

Q. None of that is part of your work?

A. No. A customer will ask us for a specified delivery pressure and we will provide that after our regulator. And then their mechanical contractor works with any mech controls or fittings that are needed to change that.

Q. Have you heard of any cases since you've been -- in your 4 years that, where the pipeline was installed on the customer side and there were problems with it?

A. I myself have not heard of that, no.

MR. EVANS: Okay. That's all I have for right now.

MR. HOEPF: Go around this way maybe, change of pace?

BY MR. JONES:

Q. My name is Shane Jones. You mentioned tying in the meters, you mentioned that they tie in and then they call and ask for the gas to be turned on. Can you specify, when you're talking about

tying into the meters, were you talking about tying into the meter itself or the meter and the customer piping?
A. I was talking into the outlet that we provide after the meter. The customer or their mechanical ties into that, and then they let us know that it's been tied in so we can turn on the gas and relight any equipment.
Q. But if there's existing equipment out there, is it the same scenario? So if you've got existing meters out there --
A. If it's existing and we are performing work because we need to replace something due to repair or due to age, something like that, then we would go ahead and connect the existing customer piping back to our equipment. But that would be the only case and that would be due to us needing to do it for a repair.
Q. Okay. So if you've got a live gas line and the contractor was out there tying in, the way you design it, do you have them tie into our meter and tie into the customer piping? Or what scenario do you use when you've got an existing meter fit inside live that's going to be changed out?
A. There would be a shut-off before the meter that would be used to shut off the meter or a bypass of some sort if they needed to stay live. A bypass would be connected or hooked up, and then the meter would be disassembled or a meter removed and installed and then all piping hooked back up before the bypass is removed or gas is turned back on.
Q. So just to clarify, so you would have the gas off for them to

work on it?
A. Yes.
Q. And you mentioned the service crews. Service crews, you're talking CenterPoint service crews or you're talking a mechanical contractor, or who would do the service work?
A. When I'm talking about the service crews I'm referring to the crews that would come out and attach a service line to a main and then run it to a riser which would then be attached to the meter. That would be our crews. However, we do also contract out work to Michels Corporation.
MR. JONES: Okay. That's all I have.
BY MR. PIERZINA:
Q. This is Brian Pierzina. I'm with PHMSA. Going back, can you explain how Master Mechanical got involved in this meter change-out?
A. With this situation, actually, I can't. Al Ebel was the one that contacted Master Mechanical on my behalf. I talked to Al when I saw the situation at Minnehaha and after we decided that we would like to install new meters outside, and made him aware of the fact that we would need a mechanical contractor to tie in that customer piping.
Q. Okay. So you weren't involved in providing the requirements that were going to be bid out?
A. No. Al Ebel met on site with Pat Boland from Master Mechanical to go over that.

Q. Okay. So that was a sole source bid?
A. I believe so. I'm not sure if there was another mechanical. I only received one bid.
Q. Okay. And what information was available to Al Ebel and Pat Boland to prepare that bid?
A. So I would have given Al work orders which detailed what kind of new meter we would like to replace the old meters with, and the location of the new meters and what type of outlets we would be using on those new meters that the contractor would need to tie into.
Q. Okay. And then, so in a meter change-out process like this one, when you prefer to have the customer piping tied into the meter before you turn the gas on, how does that typically happen?
A. The -- well, that's why the meters were installed prior to the mechanical contractor coming in, so they would be able to see them and their placement and be able to see how they would need to come through the wall to connect them.
Q. All right. So in order for the customer to connect to the outlet of the meter, the gas inside has to be turned off at some point?
A. Yes.
Q. How does that process take place?
A. Being that we were replacing a portion of the service line as well, that service would have been shut off probably at a roadway valve or at the main. And at that time, once that was all shut

off, then the tie-ins can be made and the service line can be replaced.
Q. So it would have to take place at the time that the company, the service folks are doing their work?
A. Yes.
Q. What if your mechanical contractor needed to do something before they ran the service line?
A. They would want to talk to our meter installers about that so the gas could be shut off at the meters.
Q. And so your mechanical contractor would contact who?
A. Al Ebel.
Q. Al Ebel?
A. Who they met with on site, yup.
Q. Okay. When did they meet with Al Ebel?
A. I don't know of an exact date, unfortunately.
Q. So I'm just trying to think would it have -- would it have been, like, a day or two before the project? Or would it have been weeks or months before the project?
A. It was weeks before the project. The reason I know that is because I got a bid from Master Mechanical emailed to myself, I believe, in June. I don't remember an exact date. And so we knew we were going to have, you know, a mechanical contractor at that time, we were going to work with them on scheduling. Then we also made sure to work with the school because they have programs during the summer and they didn't want to be without gas for those

programs or to have crews there when the children are there.
Q. Right. Okay. How many other meter move-outs, inside meters to outside meters, have you been involved in this year?
A. This year, completed, probably quite a few. The one most similar to this one would be -- would have been another dimensional meter at a school, and that was completed in June.
Q. Forgive me, what does -- what do you mean when you say dimensional meter?
A. Oh, I'm sorry. It's the larger size meter that was the interruptible meter, you could also say. They're some of our older meters in the system and they're just referred to as dimensional because this one happened to be a 3.5 inch by 10 inch meter.
Q. Okay. So, and that -- and where -- what was the location of this one that was most similar to this application?
A. That was also in a basement boiler room.
Q. Okay. What was the location?
A. Oh, the -- sorry -- physical? It --
Q. Yeah.
A. -- was Bloomington. It was Poplar Bridge Elementary School. I believe the address was 8401 Palmer Road in Bloomington.
Q. All right. And when you say most similar, is that because it involved a significant amount of customer piping modifications as well?
A. Yes, it did.

Q. And how was that process -- how did that process go from your initial design to -- was it bid out as well?
A. That one was not bid out. The school actually, with that one, when we contacted them to work on the meter, they said timing is perfect, we happen to be replacing a lot of our gas equipment as well as piping, and they took care of their customer piping on their side.
Q. All right. And so did they hook up to your -- the outlet of your meter before you ran the new service?
A. On that one, I'm not sure. I believe they were well into the process of replacing their equipment and their piping by the time that we had our meters installed and ran a service line. But I can't say for sure, you know, if it was connected first or if the riser and meter were connected first.
Q. Okay. If a meter crew had to come out and shut off and/or remove your inside meters, would there be specific documentation of that?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. And that if it was done over multiple, say, two or more trips, there'd be separate documentation for each trip?
A. Usually, I believe, what they would do is they would have a work order that they're working on. They would use that for any notes as to why they would have to put the order in what we call pending status, which means the work had not been completed just yet. So it would be to go out there to remove meters and then to

go out and install meters. And then finally once the gas is actually all connected and relights have been done, meters -- or the work order is closed.
Q. Okay. Can you think, what's the most recent meter change-out that you needed to bid the customer pipe-in portion?
A. That one, I had one at Franklin Avenue. It was Minneapolis Council of Churches. We actually had Pat out there just a week before the incident, so we didn't get to do any of the work yet, but he had been out for a bit.
Q. Okay. So that, is that again Alan Ebel meeting with Pat --
A. Yes.
Q. -- Boland? And so, they walked through the project and Master Mechanical shoots you a price of what it's going to cost, and so --
A. That's correct.
Q. So, and that one you're only getting one bid on as well?
A. Yes, we only did get one bid on that one.
Q. All right. So can you explain the process how -- so getting back to, I think there was a question about a preferred vendor or whatever. So is Master Mechanical a preferred vendor for customer-owned piping?
A. I would say we work with them quite a lot. We have used other mechanical contractors in the past and we've also used the Michels Corporation that we work with, that we do have a contract

with on smaller jobs. But I'd say the majority of our work has been done by Master Mechanical.

MR. PIERZINA: All right. That's all for me for now.

BY MR. WOLFGRAM:

Q. This is Jon Wolfgram with MNOPS. Can you talk a little bit about the scope of the work that Master Mechanical would typically do on one of the projects that you're kind of running and working on?

A. So when we get them involved is when customer fitting or customer piping is much larger. It would need to be maybe welded off and certain fittings, installs that, you know, we wouldn't be able to do on our end and we -- if it's far enough back on the customer piping, then we wouldn't work on that. So that's when they would get involved. They also help us to install vent lines from our regulators and reliefs on inside meters to the outside. They pipe those as well.

Q. All right. Kind of back to your design process. Can you walk us through when you're going through and specing out, you know, kind of the -- for this type of project, you know, all the different pieces, what is the document or what is the deliverable that you would produce ultimately to hand off to the next step, you know, to actually to get the thing built and all those things?

A. We have a manual and design standards for us, for our meter installers and for our weld shop. We decide, based on those specs and the information that we have, which size meter to use, which

size or type regulator will best work for that project. We have specs for our regulators and relief valves from the companies to help us determine orifice sizes for our delivery pressure.

And so based on those things, what we would do is create a work order detailing whether or not we are replacing the meter, moving the meter in to out, or repairing the meter. In those work orders we put in notes as far as what size meter, the total gas load that meter is going to need for their equipment based on the customer and what they've given us, delivery pressure based on their needs, and then we also note what type regulator, size regulator, orifice, relief valve, things like that, we would like to have when the meter is built. Then we also go into a parts list and we provide parts that we are going to need from our material shop to be sent to either our welders or our meter installers to be fabricated and then installed.

Q. Okay. So is there a drawing created of how this all looks?

A. If it is a meter that can be used from the manual that we already have, there isn't a drawing; there's a manual drawing that we all have access to.

Q. Okay.

A. Larger fits, we would work with an AutoCAD designer to get a meter fit and then it's the same process. We would just attach that AutoCAD drawing to the work order.

Q. Okay. Do you know if any of the -- that template drawing would go to the contractor? Would something like that go to

Master Mechanical?
A. No. No. We would let them know what kind of fittings are on our outlets and what size outlet we would have to provide them for their tie-in. But that's pretty much it.
Q. So just the fitting size --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- at the end of the meter would go to the subcontractor?
A. Yup. Oftentimes we'll, you know, let them know delivery pressure, obviously, for their piping purposes. And they may, you know, know that we're using a certain size meter, but I don't know how much that affects their work. It's mostly a delivery pressure and the outlet size.
Q. Okay. Is there any sort of gas handling plan for a switch-out like this and, like, if you typically have an outage or something like that, I know engineering would develop a gas handling plan. Is there a gas handling plan or procedure that you could think of that would talk about all the different pieces of, you know, going from an old meter and deactivating that section, you know, piping up a new meter and gassing that up? Is there a process or procedure that --
A. We do have a manual that I'm sure the meter installers would use and have to follow. I don't know the specifics of what's in the manual, but --
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah.

Q. I've got two more questions. Is there any kind of demolition plan or a drawing made of what to actually remove out in the field for the CenterPoint personnel? So, do they know what to build new and what to remove that would be existing? Is there any kind of documentation created that way?
A. No, not that I'm aware of. When they go on site they would be able to see, you know, what we have for piping from our riser.
Q. Okay.
A. So sometimes we provide them with that information or we change out a riser or a header so they would have the proper inlets to put in a new meter. But other than that, no, we don't get into specifics as to how to remove something. That would probably also be in the manual.
Q. And the last thing is, is any of the deliverables that you produce, is that something that gets approved by a supervisor or is that something that has to be approved before it goes out to the field?
A. All of our designs that are in our design standard or manual have been approved by a engineer. And so when we use those standards, that's -- we don't need any other approval than the engineer that approved the original design. If there is an AutoCAD drawing, we do sign off on each other's and we also have our supervisor review the AutoCAD design and sign off on that. And he's a PE engineer.
MR. WOLFGRAM: Okay. That's all I have.

MS. YERKS: Okay

BY MR. HOEPF:

Q. Thanks. Hey, Stacie. This is Mike, NTSB. I'm just wondering if you can kind of help me to understand a little bit about the process of how does CenterPoint evaluate the qualifications of their subcontractors?

A. That I do not know. I'm -- when I came into the department 4 years ago, I know we had a few different mechanical contractors that we worked with. It was prior to me coming in, so I'm not sure exactly how they were selected.

Q. Okay. And I don't want you to speculate on something that you're not comfortable with. Do you know anybody that we should talk to that might have a better idea about how that works?

A. I can't think -- possibly my supervisor. But I do believe at one time our meter installers themselves were the ones that would contact the mechanical contractor. So they would have worked through a supervisor. So a meter supervisor would have a better idea of who we would have decided to choose for a mechanical contractor and why.

Q. I'm not trying to paint you into a corner here. Did you say it's your supervisor, as in Mike Gilbertson, would be more knowledgeable about that or did you say more so somebody such as Alan Ebel who is a installer foreperson, might be more knowledgeable about that, or you're really not sure? I really don't -- if you're not sure, that's okay. Just -- that's fine.

A. Yeah. My supervisor may have known if there was sort of a group that we decided to choose from or when the meter installer supervisor started having us contact mechanical contractors.
Q. Okay.
A. So --
Q. Yeah, that's fine. That's totally fine.
A. Okay.
Q. Okay. And, again, another question, you know, if I'm talking to the wrong person, I don't want you to speculate outside your comfort zone.

Can you help me to understand how CenterPoint ensures that their subcontractors are following safe work practices?
A. That I don't -- I'm not sure how they would decide that.
Q. Okay. Great. I think -- really again don't -- you know, it's -- that's okay if it's not in your comfort zone.

MR. HOEPF: That's all I have. Roger?

MR. EVANS: Okay.

BY MR. EVANS:
Q. This is Roger Evans. When you had the meeting with Don DuBois on February 24, 2017 at 10 a.m., did you discuss downtime, you know, how much time the -- you could expect to not have your gas?
A. Yes. Yeah, with that situation being that we did need to replace a portion of the service line, and I was thinking at that time that we were going to have to have a mechanical contractor

tie in to the meter outside, I did let him know that we would prefer to have a whole day of downtime, but if they had things that they needed, that we could work with, you know, the service line installer, the meter installer and the mechanical contractor to try to minimalize that time.

Q. And when you set a day, did Mr. DuBois have anything to say about a scheduling impact or --

A. If I recall, the only issue at that time, being that school was out, was that they notify any employees that would be there and make sure that no programs were going on at that time.

Q. Okay. When you design a new meter for a commercial location, whose responsibility is it to pull the permit to be able to do the work?

A. The mechanical contractor would pull their own permit for the customer piping inside. We would pull any sort of city permits or street permits that would be needed. I don't believe that was necessary in that case because we weren't working out in a street. And then I believe the meter department, if they needed to pull any permits, they would. That's all I can think of, though.

Q. Okay. But there was -- do you know for this particular new meter that got hung on the wall in all this, was there a permit, was there a permit required for that, that the school had to get or something?

A. Not to my knowledge, no.

Q. Okay. The line, you said earlier that -- when you explained

how the options that one has to install these meters, that you could wait to tie in the meter from the service line or you could tie in the source line and then tie in the customer line later, and all that. Do you have customers that are allowed to work on live piping to do a portion of the -- any of the work, as like a prefab job with a blind flange in place or perhaps, you know, some sort of separation between the live line and the fabricated pipe?
A. So I guess, let me try to understand. So you're saying would somebody not from CenterPoint Energy be allowed to shut off our gas to work on it, or --
Q. No. I'm sorry.
A. Sorry. Yeah.
Q. I probably confused you now. I'm sorry. Let's just go back. If I'm the school and I have hired, you know, a mechanical contractor to, or -- excuse me. You folks hire the mechanical contractor to finish up the piping, correct?
A. Um-hum.
Q. All right. So if you hired that person, is there some sort of a "thou shall not" clause in some contract that says about live feed, working on live feed versus a feed that's not live?
A. I don't know of any documentation that we provide to the mechanical contractor that would stipulate what they could or could not do when they do their work.
Q. Okay. But when you had the meeting back in February in '17, is that something that came up, that you talked about, was that,

you know, that you asked that it be not completed on -- as a live line?

A. I didn't meet with the mechanical contractor so I wouldn't have had that conversation.

Q. I mean -- I'm sorry --

A. Sorry.

Q. -- Mr. DuBois?

A. DuBois.

Q. Yes.

A. No. The only conversation we would have had was when would be a good time to be shut down.

Q. Okay. Do you have any sort of a contractor, like, templates for like whenever you have a contractor out there, that they have to meet some minimum requirements? Like do you look for journeyman tickets? Do you look for, did the guy used to weld tractors or he used to weld plate or, what -- how do you qualify to make sure that that person is a, quote, "welder" and all that for gas systems.

A. I myself do not qualify them. So I'm provided with contractors we've used in the past, and that's how we contact them.

Q. So you're not part of the qualification at all --

A. No.

Q. -- for the -- is that an Al Ebel kind of guy that does that?

A. That would more be Al Ebel's supervisor.

Q. And who's that?
A. His name is Kyle Meyers.
MR. EVANS: Okay. Just a second here.
That's all I have. Shane?
BY MR. JONES:
Q. I got one more question. When you talked about standard drawings, they're actual drawings or --
A. Yes.
Q. How are they available?
A. They're in our manual.
Q. And the manual's available to who?
A. CenterPoint employees.
Q. So any CenterPoint employee can pull it up and see one of those drawings?
A. I believe so. I believe our manual is available on CenterPointEnergy.com and then under Engineering.
Q. So you said the people that are fabbing up these meter sets, if you pick a standard fit out of the design manual, if a welder wants to fab up a meter set, you can go online, either look at or print off this design so he has something on -- does it have what on it? Describe what's actually on the design itself.
A. Yes. It describes, you know, from the outlet -- or inlet, I'm sorry, to the outlet what type of nuts, bolts, flanges, pipe, size pipe, meters, regulators, all of those things we want and how it's laid out when it's installed. And then there's also a list

of parts, and they're all numbered on the design.
Q. So it gives you a picture of what the final product's going to look like?
A. Yes.
Q. And it gives you dimensions of what size pipe, what lengths' pipe?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. Was there a drawing available for this job for the meter fits?
A. Yes. That meter would have been in the manual.
Q. Thank you.
A. Um-hum.
MR. HOEPF: Dan? Anything?
MR. BOWLES: No questions here. thank you.
MR. PIERZINA: Going back --
MR. EVANS: (Indiscernible), please.
MR. PIERZINA: Oh, Brian Pierzina. I'm sorry.
BY MR. PIERZINA:
Q. Going back, you said that Master Mechanical was the only bid that you'd received for this job?
A. Yes.
Q. Do you recall what that bid looked like? Was it just a price or was it a scope? You know, what all did you see?
A. What I saw was -- it was -- there was a price. It described the size of pipe that would be needed. I'm trying to think. It

probably would have described kind of the length of, or how long they thought the job would take.
Q. Oh, time, time-wise?
A. Yeah.
Q. Do you recall how long that was?
A. I don't, no.
Q. Did it have a length of pipe?
A. I know it would have definitely diameter of pipe. I don't remember from looking at it if it had the length of pipe. I believe they also would mention fittings being used.
Q. So enough -- in your mind, did it have enough detail to tell what they were going to install or was there some fudge words to say plus whatever necessary or something, or --
A. There probably would have been some fudge words, yes --
Q. Okay.
A. -- being that it was kind of a bid, a quote, just letting us know basically about what they thought --
Q. That sounds (indiscernible).
A. -- yeah.
Q. And, again, what were they provided for a -- so the scope of work was just a walk-around with Al Ebel?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay.
A. Yes. And then, like I said, delivery pressure, size of outlet, and where we wanted it relocated to.

Q. During the walkthrough would -- typically would Alan have the drawing that Shane just discussed?
A. He might have that available. I'm not sure if he had that with him or not. He may have had the work order detailing the size meter that we wanted installed.
Q. Okay. Did the bid include vent piping?
A. There wouldn't have been a need for vent lines since they were moved outside.
Q. Okay. And I might have misheard. Did you say that the mechanical contractor would help CenterPoint in removing or installing vent pipe --
A. In other jobs. On other jobs.
Q. On other jobs?
A. Yes.
Q. They would assist CenterPoint to installing vent pipes off of your regulators or --
A. They would install the vent lines down to our regulators and reliefs.
Q. Okay.
A. And core drill through.
Q. Got you.
MR. PIERZINA: Just again, just a moment. I'll go ahead and pass it along.
BY MR. WOLFGRAM:
Q. This is Jon Wolfgram with MNOPS. So is there any type of

benchmark or any type of -- so when you get in bids, say, if you got in a couple different bids, what benchmark or standard would you compare the bid work to as you're going in and deciding what the contractor would be? I guess, what's the criteria or the process used to -- you get the bid, what's the, you know, bid compared to as far as the work they're going to perform and all those different pieces?

A. Typically what we would do is, if we receive a bid that's higher than, say, $10,000, then we would maybe go back and ask for additional bids from other companies. So we kind of have a threshold at about $10,000.

Q. That's on the monetary side, but is there any -- you know, you got the bid from Master Mechanical; it's got some lengths of pipe and all these different things. How do you know what kind of work they're planning to do? I mean, what do they base their bid off of in the first place as far as, do you give them some pressures and then they just go from there, as long as they come back with a price, or how does that work?

A. Yeah --

Q. I'm not understanding the whole --

A. Okay. So --

Q. -- bid approval process.

A. Yeah, they would go in and take a look at the customer's outlet from our existing meters inside and, based on that, they'd kind of give us an idea of what they believed they would need to

do. You know, on site, they would have that discussion, and then they would send us the bid. So yeah, they would kind of go over what they thought for as far as tying into existing piping, where they would exit to get to our meters outside, things like that.

MR. WOLFGRAM: Okay. That's all I have.

MR. BOWLES: I actually do have a question now.

MR. EVANS: Introduction.

BY MR. BOWLES:

Q. This is Dan Bowles. So the bid, is there a bid document somewhere in your records?

A. Yes.

Q. And you mentioned Poplar Bridge Elementary as being a pretty similar project?

A. It was, except for the fact that we did not need to hire a mechanical contractor on our behalf because they provided their own.

Q. Is there another similar project where Master Mechanical was used as the contractor in a similar project to Minnehaha?

A. My other co-workers would probably have had some similar projects.

Q. Would there be documentation from those projects that would show the dates when Master Mechanical was out on the site and what work was performed on those dates?

A. There would be dates as far as when we met to first initially start a bid process and then dates as far as when we received a

bid. And then we would know when we installed meters and when, you know, then Master would have tied into those meters, I guess.
Q. Would documentation from those other projects talk about when the gas was shut down and when it was live?
A. I'm not sure how the crew documents that on their end actually, so I can't say.
MR. BOWLES: That's all I have.
BY MR. PIERZINA:
Q. Brian Pierzina. At what point in the process is the mechanical contractor instructed to not operate CenterPoint's shut-off valve? And who, or who does it?
A. That I do not know. I would assume if there was a conversation had about that, Al Ebel would have had that conversation with Master when they were on site going over the job.
Q. Okay. So there's nothing written in the scope of work that tells your mechanical contractor not to operate that shut-off valve?
A. Not that I'm aware of.
Q. And so we would be relying on the walkthrough of the bid process to -- that would be one opportunity for CenterPoint to tell the mechanical contractor that they are not allowed to operate that shut-off valve. Is there any other opportunity that CenterPoint would have to inform the mechanical contractor to not shut off the valve?

A. The only thing I can think of is that it's just -- I hate to say implied but I'm going to word it that way.
Q. I understand what you mean --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- but it's also -- you know, I can also see where it's implied to the mechanical contractor that he needs to get from A to B, and in order to do that the gas needs to be shut off.
A. Yeah.
Q. And if it's not clear that he shouldn't shut it off, then maybe he thinks that's what he needs to do. Unless CenterPoint says, when you need -- you know, when you need to do that, you need to call us. And so I'm guessing, or I'm asking where -- you know, how would you expect that discussion to take place with your mechanical contractor? Is there a logical point in the process that it's either clear in writing or discussed verbally and confirmed that it's clear to everyone?
A. That would be at the time that our meter installer, Al Ebel, would have, first of all, done the walkthrough, and secondly, discussed how the project would move forward and dates and timelines for scheduling.
Q. Okay. So, and thank you for that. I don't know that you were the right person to ask that question, but it seems like, as I count, there were two opportunities -- your walkthrough with Don DuBois or Al Ebel's walkthrough with Pat Boland, that there would be an opportunity to say this is CenterPoint's valve and it can't

be turned by anyone but a CenterPoint employee. Fair?
A. I'd say that would be fair to say.
Q. And if there was any other opportunity, I guess, where CenterPoint met either on site or with anybody involved in the customer piping work, that that would be nice for us to know so we could --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- flesh that out.
BY MR. HOEPF:
Q. Hi. Mike again. Just wanted to talk to you real briefly, just generally speaking. Do you have a safety role that you do at CenterPoint? Any safety roles or just things that you do that are related to safety, or is that not your job?
A. You know, we do go through safety programs for our own personal purposes, you know, for working at CenterPoint Energy, using vehicles and things like that, but not pertaining to installations.
Q. Okay.
MR. HOEPF: Roger?
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. Yeah. Have you ever known of any time when -- or have you ever seen these, that your company would hang a "Do Not Operate" tag on a valve once a walkthrough has been completed, that has your logo on it, has perhaps a number on it, has maybe a signature on it, that says -- you know, once the walkthrough's been done,

they hang this tag and that's the tag that says, whatever, "you don't touch this valve"? Do you know if this has ever been done? Have you ever seen it? Every heard of that?

A. I personally would not know. The only time I can think of when a tag would be hung with a number would be when gas is left off, for the customer to call and have us turn it back on for relight purposes.

Q. Okay.

MR. EVANS: That's all I have.

MR. HOEPF: You done?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Nothing for me.

MR. EVANS: That completes the interview. Thank you so much.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

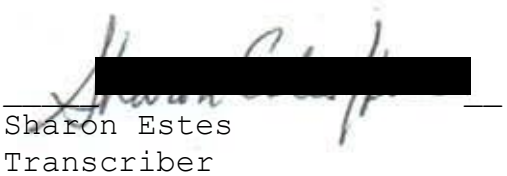
CERTIFICATE

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 Stacie Yerks
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.



Sharon Estes
Transcriber

National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C. 20594

Interviewee Name (please print): Stacie Yerks

Organization: CenterPoint Energy

Date of Transcript Review: 10/25/2017

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 6, 2017

Investigation Of: Stacie Yerks

Page	Line	Existing	Correction
6	12		Add: "Completed AA degree @ North Hennepin Community College June, 2017"
7	12	their natural gas equipment.	their added or new natural gas equipment.
11	4	I would say there is. We also look into the footage of our	I must have misunderstood the question. As far as customer piping there is not a maximum amount of footage. My answer was referring to the service line connection to our inlet.
11	24	tied into our outlet and then tie our equipment in.	tied into our outlet and then we tie our service line into the inlet.
22	5	is perfect, we happen to be replacing a lot of our gas equipment	is perfect, they happen to be replacing a lot of their gas equipment
24	12	able to do on our end and we – if it's far enough back on the	able to do on our end and we don't have the resources available if it's far enough back on the
25	2	specs for our regulators and relief valves from the companies to	specs for our regulators and relief valves from the manufacturers to

[redacted]

Stacie Yerks